

GHĀTU PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

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LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

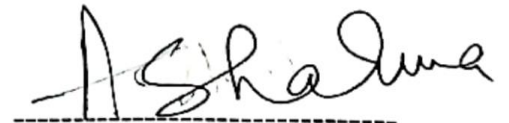
We certify that this dissertation entitled, “Ghãtu Performance: A Study of Symbols and Images” was prepared by Raj Kumar Gurung under our supervision. We hereby recommend this dissertation for final examination by the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of DOCTOR of PHILOSOPHY in ENGLISH.

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APPROVAL LETTER

This Dissertation entitled **Ghātu Performance: A Study of Symbols and Images** was submitted by **Raj Kumar Gurung** for final examination to the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfilment of the requirements for the **Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English**. I hereby certify that the Research Committee of the Faculty has found this dissertation satisfactory in scope and quality and has therefore accepted it for the degree.

Date:

15/02/2015


Prof. Chinta Mani Pokharel, PhD

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Research Committee

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Dissertation is my own work and that it contains no materials previously published. I have not used its material for the award of any kind of any other degree. Where other author's sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

Signature: 

Name: Raj Kumar Gurung

Date: 19 Jan 2015
(5/10/2071)

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I undertook the study of *Ghãtu* folk drama performance because of my very personal experience and academic interest. Being a member of the Gurungs, *Ghãtu* performance has always been a captivating cultural activity in my life. So, having keen interest eventually encouraged me to take this field of studies into a full-fledged research level work. I was willing to work on some indigenous cultural activities but I did not have a good idea. Dr. Rapacha advised me to work on *Ghãtu*, and he also offered me to read books on semiotics which turned to be alluring enough to draw my attention. This helped me understand the symbolic meanings of *Ghãtu* performance and gave me a dim picture about my area of study. I read some books written by Jagman Gurung, Dharma Raj Thapa, Keshar Jang Baral Magar and Amar Bahadur Gurung in the earlier phase. During this study period, I am immensely supported by Dr. Lal Rapacha, a linguist, who encouraged me to take the subject of symbolic interpretation of images and symbols of this cultural activity. This helped me sketch the idea of my study area.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction

This dissertation interprets the images and symbols in *Ghãtu* performance and the interpretation unfolds the underlying meanings of *Ghãtu* performance. For instance, a trident entangled in the headgear symbolizes Shiva. It implies that King Pashramu, the protagonist of *Ghãtu*, had some versatile qualities of Lord Shiva. The bamboo pole is symbolic of king's heavenward journey. The images and symbols are obscure and ambiguous. Such obscurities and ambiguities are reduced and some clarity is improved by symbolic interpretation. The locus of this research is to uncover the underlying meanings of the objects and events in *Ghãtu* performance, and to show the relationship between performers and audience.

The study analyses the *Ghãtu* performance as a part of folk drama, performativity and semiotic presentation. *Ghãtu* is a cultural activity and it is under cultural studies or multicultural studies. Basically, *Ghãtu* performance is observed as a carnival and as a source of entertainment and healing by six indigenous groups and Khasa-kshetri in mid and western Nepal. It has myth, history and some facts. So, *Ghãtu* is the amalgamation of myth, history and contemporaneity.

Ghãtu is a performance on the narratives of the King Pashramu and his consort. The king dies in a war while defending the country and his queen self-immolates herself on her husband's funeral pyre. The performing queens perform this enactment. The song is the queen's lament. The study focuses on this statement.

Ghãtu performance has very close universalities in its performance level. To this effect, fieldwork carried out in Lamjung, Tanahu, Nuwakot and Dhading are the major concerns of the study. This study focuses on symbolic interpretations with the insight from socio-cultural anthropological perspectives and performance theory. This study analyses that

the performers and audience are connected with the kinesthetic impact. This dissertation is an exploration of the performative aspect of *Ghãtu*, it employs the theories of performance, semiotics and folk drama. Foster argues that the kinesthetic impact links the audiences and performers. Sound and sight of the performers attract the audience and a kind of relationship is established between them.

The study compares and contrasts with other Nepali folk dramas of somehow similar nature. *Ghãtu* has also been compared with a canonical text, *Ceremony*, and with a popular festival, *Chhaith* in terms of faith healing process. Trance mode of *Ghãtu* and trance-fire dance in Sri Lanka has also been compared.

This dissertation is the outcome of verbal and visual observation along with a few written texts of theories and some books and articles. The methods of study are to analyze the visual CDs of *Ghãtu*, observing the live performances, unstructured interviews and library research. There are seven chapters in the study. First chapter introduces how the project proceeds, second chapter deals with review of literature and third chapter projects the theoretical tools. Fourth chapter discusses the descriptive part of the text in which the detail story of *Ghãtu* has been mentioned. Fifth chapter attempts to decode the narrative songs of the *Ghãtu* significantly. Sixth chapter interprets the selected images and symbols in *Ghãtu* and seventh chapter concludes the project with some findings, suggestions, lacunae and lines for further research. There are only two *Ghãtu* texts of Gurung and Khasa-kshetri presented.

The Statement of Problem

What is *Ghãtu* and what images and symbols are used in its performance?
Why are *Ghãtu* images and symbols obscure and ambiguous? How to reduce the obscurity and ambiguity? *Ghãtu* has been described by several writers but not from this angle.
Similarly, *Ghãtu* has not been interpreted from the perspectives of performance studies and

folk drama. The writers have not analysed in a deeper way about how *Ghãtu* is related to performance and folk drama.

Research Questions

In order to have this research facilitated and to address three basic questions, the researcher has framed the research questions: How do images and symbols suggest multiple meanings? Why do the dancers dream when they are transformed into the trance state? How are performers and audiences related? How is *Ghãtu* related to performance studies and folk drama? Why and how does *Ghãtu* performance affect the viewers?

Objectives

The objective of the study is to analyse *Ghãtu* from the perspectives or theoretical tools of performance, semiotics and folk drama besides symbolic interpretation of images and objects. As the primary objective of the study is to interpret the *Ghãtu* songs, major images, symbols, tools to establish *Ghãtu* as the folk-performative drama. It demands the theoretical framework that allows studying its symbolic, semiotic, and performative aspects. This study employs the theory of performance developed by Richard Schechner, theory of semiotics developed by Umberto Eco, C. S. Pierce and theory of folk drama by Chudamani Bandhu and Motilal Parajuli. The images of *Ghãtu* embody underlying meanings and these meanings are unfolded through semiotic interpretation which enhances the *Ghãtu* culture. The study symbolically interprets the dresses, cloaks and ornaments, tools and objects that are used in the performance. The meaning comes from within the imagery through symbolic interpretation rather than from the simple description. The sceptre, for instance, symbolizes the rule. The study focuses on symbolic interpretation and performativity of *Ghãtu*.

Methodology

As a methodology of the study, this research employs the qualitative method. The selected images and symbols in *Ghãtu* have been analyzed and interpreted. Original data

like photos and interviews are placed in the appendices. With the collection of data from four *Ghãtu* villages, available theoretical books have been used. The study uses the theoretical perspectives of semiotics, performance and folk drama. The text is anthropologically presented as “anthropological standpoint is to see the interplay of objective reality with subjective knowledge and experience giving Culture the central role” (Appendix A.7: 299).

Umberto Eco helps interpret the symbols and signs from semiotic perspective and Richard Schechner help deal with the cultural performance from performance perspective. Clifford Geertz helps understand the “significant relationship between (group) cultural achievement” (Geertz 65). Similarly, Chudamani Bandhu helps understand *Ghãtu* as folk drama that lies under the folklore genre.

Delimitation

Among four performances the researcher observed, only two of them have been analysed. Among index, icon and symbol as Peirce discusses, only symbols are interpreted along with the images. Among war, history, myths, music, the study focuses only semiotic interpretation. Among several aspects of performance, the relationship of performers and audiences has been highlighted, and *Ghãtu* has been analyzed as a cultural performance and a folk drama.

Findings

Ghãtu is a cultural activity and a mysterious performance. There are several names of royal couples in several *Ghãtu* villages. Neither the indigenous groups nor any Khasa-kshetri observe *Ghãtu* in eastern Nepal because of European cultural infiltration and the internal colonialism. The indigenous groups observe the national festivals there. *Ghãtu*’s song suggests queen’s lament. The war image of *Ghãtu* suggests the man’s war mongering nature. The local variation is because of location.

Ghāṭu is analysed as a folk drama that a folk drama is narrative, enactment, dialogic, musical, and inexpressive construct kept alive by country people through oral tradition” (Neupane 2). *Ghāṭu* has this characteristic. Kinaesthetic impact of *Ghāṭu* relates performers and audience. The airwave links the performers and audiences. For instance, we pucker when we see someone tasting a lemon. *Ghāṭu* is about an amazing experience that the former dancers go through when they happen to be present in the place of performance.

Symbolic interpretation enhances the clarity which results from the symbolic interpretation of images in *Ghāṭu* performance. Convincing explanations can be located for all research questions as mentioned above. *Ghāṭu* is a cross-culture as Nepali King Pashramu marries an Indian girl, Yemphawati. Bhadu Gurung is supposed to be the pioneer of *Ghāṭu*. Dancers’ dream represents everyman’s dream. The scholarship of *Ghāṭu* is not sufficient.

Moreover, there are a number of other areas of language and linguistics, music, myths, history, war, bravery, heroism, and so. The current study deals only with the symbolic interpretation and *Ghāṭu* has been analysed as a cultural performance and as a folk drama. This study is carried out to reduce the obscurity and highlight the clarity of some images and symbols. The researcher collects the data from four *Ghāṭu* villages and he analyses them with the theoretical tools of performance, semiotics and folk drama.

Any cultural activity is responsible in the person’s brought up according to Geertz. Why *Ghāṭu* is observed, is, because the practitioners re-enact trauma. *Ghāṭu* is an oral history observed in the memory of a legendary royal couple’s tragedy. *Ghāṭu*, therefore, has had a deeper significance of relieving six ethnic groups and Khasa-kshetri from the trauma that is rooted both historically and psychologically. Observing this *Ghāṭu* annually by them, as Dashain festival, means re-enactment of trauma to relieve. The *Ghāṭu*, a ritualistic-

shamanistic performance, itself poses a problem to a researcher for it is obscure and ambiguous.

Conclusion

The study focuses on the evolution of *Ghãtu* performance as there were only descriptive writings which were found to be ambiguous. After the symbolic interpretation of images, the ambiguity is reduced and clarity is gained. From the analysis of performativity, relation between performers and audiences has been located. And as *Ghãtu* has myths, dialogues, enactments, storyline, music and dance which confirms that it is a folk drama. The theme of *Ghãtu* is Sati Practice, the self-immolation, which was in practice until the time of Chandra Shamsheer, in Nepal (M. Shrish Magar 57). *Ghãtu* is a traditional dance that a simple practice is not sufficient.

With the introduction in first chapter, the study deals with the literal and critical readings of *Ghãtu* in second chapter. Theoretical tools have been borrowed from Eco, Peirce, Schechner, Auslander, Davis, Geertz, and Bandhu and Parajuli. And they have been applied in third chapter, whereas there is main text of *Ghãtu* in fourth chapter. Fifth chapter interprets the narrative songs and sixth chapter the images and symbols. The study analyses the interconnection between performers and audiences, and it concerns itself with how productive and relatively positive audience's feedback is. *Ghãtu* has the goal of healing and entertainment. The entire performance in turn, makes the audiences go into a kind of trance. Singer, dancer and audience thus are interconnected as a trinity that they are interdependent.

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CHAPTER I

GHĀTU: A CULTURAL DANCE BASED ON A MYTHIC NARRATIVE SONG

*Ghātu*¹ is a performing art as it is both a dance and a folk drama. Through performance and dramaturgy, *Ghātu* enacts shamanic cultural beliefs with a combination of dance and songs. It is a slow moving trance-like dance based on narrative songs. This cultural activity is commonly practised by ethnic groups such as Gurungs, Magars, Tamangs, Duras, Darais, Barams and one Aryal *kshetri* community in central and mid-western parts of Nepal. Since these ethnic groups predominantly perform *Ghātu*, it can be termed as a tribal festival, and it is popular among these groups. They observe it for entertainment, faith healing, good harvest and protection from evil spirits.

Ghātu reflects shamanism—an animistic belief system—and animism—a belief that nature has a soul—as “[t]he shaman treats some diseases [. . .] as well as helps the clan members to overcome their various difficulties and problems” (Stutley 2) and “animism also exists in areas where shamanism is unknown” (4). The followers of *Ghātu* believe that it has a soul and it understands peoples’ demands and requests (Appendix A.1: 290²). *Sati* symbolizes chastity and *Ghātu* symbolizes the inevitability of death, and the life cycle of humankind through several forms of enactments and objects. Basically, *Ghātu*—a legendary narrative as it is popular among limited groups—is a folk drama performance acted out around a tragic story of a legendary King Pashramu who is slain in the battlefield and of his Queen Yemphawati who immolates in her husband’s funeral pyre. The 35 dancers enact this royal couple, in a trance-like mode slowly because the rhythm of the songs is slow. The slow motion of rhythm suggests queen’s confused state of mind, her dilemma.

¹ *Ghātu* is most frequently used term in the study. See Appendices A.1. viii. & A. 2. ix.

² Page Nos of appendices, and all numerals are page Nos (290-322) of this dissertation.

The dance is queen's enactment of her bereaved condition. The *Ghātu* dancer who plays the role of the queen moves back and forth. This movement suggests queen's inner pain. The time of *Ghātu* performance—the spring—heralds a new season. The place where *Ghātu* is performed is usually the village depicting geographical beauty. *Ghātu* characters symbolize common humans. The king is a symbol of a patriotic figure and the queen of a submissive Hindu woman. *Ghātu* as a folk drama presents multicultural indigenous imagery. *Khasa-Kshetri Ghātu* dancers wear just the cloth straps as a turban on their heads, whereas the Gurung *Ghātu* dancers wear special headgear. The entire performance is symbolically presented by choosing two to nine pre-pubertal girls of the ethnic group for the dance performance. The dancers' number varies from village to village. The pre-pubertal age denotes the age of the queen. This is how the *Ghātu* performance is symbolically presented.

Ghātu is crucial for cultural heritage but it stands at crossroads of cultural confluence where alien forces (cultural traits) are showing their presence. To bring forward indigenous traits is the only way out to establish the old cultural grandeur. This work focuses on some of the live *Ghātu* practices from diverse regions of central and mid-western parts of Nepal and attempts to unfold the underlying meanings of props used in the performance and symbolic significance of *Ghātu*.

Ghātu possesses images of life, death, war, love, cross-culture, and pastoral life. They are all very significant in semantic levels that range from local to universal. *Ghātu* is a cultural activity locally performed, but it has a universal significance as it deals with the theme of tragic death. The immolation of a widow woman after her husband's death, as a *sati* practice, indicates the burning issues of women's domination in the Third-World countries like Nepal and India. The prevalence of *Sati* practice suggests the inhumane practice by manipulating the women.

In particular, the study focuses on the performative aspect of *Ghãtu* and its symbolic interpretation. Since *Ghãtu* is an ethnic-specific performance, the first chapter begins with its origin, history, form and nature. It also discusses types, local variations and cultural diversity, cultural geography, and purpose. The chapter ends with a discussion of the statement of problem, objectives, research questions, methods of study, followed by the deliberation of the implied symbolic significance of *Ghãtu*.

Origin of *Ghãtu*

Lamjung district is supposed to be the origin of *Ghãtu* although there are different views according to *Ghãtu* participants. The local people in Lamjung believe that the origin of *Ghãtu* is related with Lohasur, at the border of Lumjung and Gorkha where King Pasramu was slain there. Rainaskot village in the same district is also supposed to be the origin of *Ghãtu* (Appendix A.1: 290), whereas Indra Bahadur Gurung claims that Bhalampur at Bhalayokharka of the same district is the origin of *Ghãtu* (Appendix. A.7: 304). Min Shrish Magar writes that “the origin of *Ghãtu* is in *Deuchuli* region of Nawalparasi district” (*Shodhmala* 51). But Dura, Darai, Tamang, Tharu, Aryal *Kshetri* do not seem to have clear idea about its origin as researcher observes. The subject of the origin of *Ghãtu* is still controversial. However, *Ghãtu* has been introduced as Gurung *Ghãtu*, Magar *Ghãtu*, Tamang *Ghãtu*, Darai *Ghãtu*, Dura *Ghãtu*, Aryal *Ghãtu*, Tharu *Ghãtu* and Kumal *Ghãtu* although the last two are no more in practice now. The study unfolds the implicit meanings of appurtenances used in the performance. The major portion of discussion is based on Gurung *Ghãtu* of Nalma because this *Ghãtu* is much older, detail and informative than the rest.

Etymologically, *Ghãtu* is termed on the basis of certain myth stories. Only a few of them support the interpretation. According to a myth of Gurung language (Appendix A.1: 290), *Ghã-* means “wound” and *-tu* or *tubã* means “sew” or “cure.”

Doing *Ghãtu* dance timely means healing Sati's broken heart. The term, *Ghãtu*, seems to mean healing or curing the wound. *Ghãtu* also refers to the depth of the *Ghãti* (throat) from where sound comes. *Ghãtu* songs produce fricative glottal sound with rhythmic beats. *Ghãtu* thus is a performance meant for healing the wound representing the painful lyrical expression corresponding with bodily movement.

About another meaning of *Ghãtu*, Min Shrish Magar presents, "*Ghã/Ghãṅ* means "great" or "long" *tu* or *tuṅ* means "up to." *Gha* also denotes a "place" like Langha, Lingha, and Rimgha. "*Ghãtu*" term is thus formed of *Ghã+tu/Ghãṅ+tu/Ghã+tuṅ*" to mean a great place (Present ... 59). In addition, Bishnu Singjali argues, "*Ghãtu* seems to have derived from *Ghot*, *Ghãto* and later "*Ghãtu*" because this historical opera is performed to extend the condolence in memory of *Ghãtu*'s protagonists, the royal couple. The meaning of *Ghot* is "condolence" in Magar language." (4-5). Similarly, Min Shrish Magar observes, "the term *Sati Ghãtu* seems to have formed of 'Sot' and 'Ghat.' *Sot* means "revive" and *Ghat* means "hurt" in Magar language, because [. . .] the king, who was badly wounded in the battle, was revived and this festival is celebrated on the happiness of king's relief" (Present ... 6). *Ghãtu* is thus termed with a mythological context, as there are several myths about how this term is coined. "As myths center on supernatural beings, set in otherworldly places [. . .], so legends bring mythical qualities to characters" (Hillman 77). The mythical presentation is however controversial. The mythico-cultural base about the origin of *Ghãtu* symbolizes the controversial nature of man that there are several subjective opinions (Appendices A.1.viii:310 & A.2.ix: 311). There is also a myth that derives the meaning of *Ghãtu* from *Ghãdo*, a small log that is hung on animals' neck meant to prevent them from walking fast so as to prevent them from destroying crops. *Ghãdo* also denotes the harness bell from which the term *Ghãtu* is coined.

History of *Ghãtu*

Along with the mythical narratives, the historical anecdotes are equally important to know about *Ghãtu*. In an interview with the researcher, Chandra Bahadur Gurung narrates one interesting anecdote about *Ghãtu*'s history (Appendix A.3 viii: 297). Gurung started observing two kinds of festivals: *Ûdhauli* and *Ûbhauli*. *Ghãtu* that is observed as *Ûdhauli* festival, and *Shreekrishna Charitra*, character of Lord Krishna, is marked as *Ûbhauli* one. *Ûdhauli* means the descending move of cattle's herd from snow-belt downward the plain to save them from severe cold and *Ûbhauli* means ascending move of the same to be safe from sweltering hot in Tarai belt [...].

There are limited *Ghãtu* practitioners but they do not have so long history. Jagman Gurung adds that Gurung started this performing art by the fourteenth century or so. He further makes it clear that *Ghãtu* has been transformed from other cultures. He also claims that there was no any *Ghãtu* performance before Kulmandan Shah (Appendix A.5: 300). How did *Ghãtu* culture transmit or transform to the indigenous groups, and why is the language of *Ghãtu* in the Magars different from that of the Gurungs? Was there no *Ghãtu* before Kulmandan Shah's time? It strongly seems to suggest the probability of *Ghãtu*'s existence prior to king Kulmandan Shah in Nepal. There are confusions about this site although there are some similarities. The Magars of Baglung claim that they have been observing *Ghãtu* for three hundred years (Pun Magar 37).

Jagman Gurung claims that indigenous groups have been performing *Ghãtu* for about more than five hundred years or so, or more specifically from the time of King Kulmandan Shah, the first king of Shah Dynasty in Nepal but there is no any strong historical record to prove this claim. Chandra Bahadur Gurung now shares his idea that this performing art has had a longer history (Appendix A.3: 297).

The *Ghãtu* practitioners do not know the exact date since when this cultural performance began. But the Gurungs perform this cultural dance in Dulegauda of Tanahu and Thalajung of Gorkha. Chappadada, Bhujung, Pasgau, Ghalegaun, Rainaskot of Lamjung and Chandibhanjyang of Chitwan. The Magars do it in Ramche of Syangja, Vasodha and Dholimara of Palpa (Chidi Magar 31), Deurali, Naram, Dhobdi, Hussekot, Arkhala and Devchuli of Nawalparasi (Pulami Magar 18). Similarly, they do it in Pandavkhani of Baglung, Khairenitar and Dubung of Tanahu (Thapa Magar 27). The Duras observe *Ghãtu* in Kuncha of Lamjung, the Darai does it in Salyantar of Dhading and the Tamangs do it in Baikuntha of Makawanpur, and Torke of Dhading. In addition, *Khasa-Kshetris* observe *Ghãtu* in Vidur municipality, Majhitar of Nuwakot with different procedures and methods.

Apart from this, “Kumal, Majhi, Baram and some Darji and Bishwakarma also observe it respectively” around the same regions (Appendix B.3: 317). Baram observe *Ghãtu* in Thumi village, Gorkha (Ale Magar 34). This suggests the range of *Ghãtu* is wide and it has its wider implications. The theme is almost the same among these indigenous and non-indigenous groups.

The theme of *Ghãtu* is Sati Practice, the immolation, which was in practice until the time of Chandra Shamsher, the Rana prime minister in Nepal (M. Shrish Magar 57). Sati practice seems to have come from India (Orr 112), whereas Gurungs are believed to have come from north. “Gurungs have originated definitely from Tibet and they are of Tibeto-Burman descent” (Regmi 71). The examination of their language reveals that the Gurungs arrived from the north. The Gurung language is linguistically classified as a variant of Chinese and Tibetan group of languages. Moreover, the physical characteristics of the Gurungs—the short stature, upturned eyes, flat noses, and general mongoloid features—also indicate that they migrated

from the north. Mythological stories among the Gurungs have it to say that many thousands of years ago, the ancestors of Gurungs (or Magar) lived in the high mountains of western China. They practised *Ghãtu* as an acculturation. Myths and legends have the record of the memories of the long course of their migration over forested mountain ridges. There are some myths and legends associated with *Ghãtu*. “Most stories about heroes are called *epics* or *legends* rather than myths, but the difference between them is not always clear” (Dansi 147). The following legend is popular among the Gurungs.

As the legend has it, a parrot, as a messenger, flies to the queen to let her know of the king’s death. The queen refuses to believe the parrot. Then the king’s blood-stained horse runs to the queen; she does not believe the horse too. After that, when the minister approaches her with the blood-stained crown of the king, she takes it in her hand and invokes to the sun to tell her the truth. As she feels a tremble in her body, she comes to realize that her lord has been killed (Appendix A.2: 291). When she knows the truth, she decides to self-immolate herself in the pyre where her husband’s corpse lies because in Hinduism, Haboush argues that a woman’s foremost loyalty lies with her husband (81). Queen Yemphawati jumps into the pyre’s fire, and her relatives start lamenting, thereby signalling the end of the story. This fabulous projection suggests that bird messenger is popular among several cultures.

Whatever the legend or myth is there, chanting must affect the dancers. The beginning of *Ghãtu* is an incantation to summon the god. As there is a belief that “begins with the love of God and includes hope and sometimes even faith” (Shuger 121) but the practitioners have a trust on *Ghãtu*. When the gurus start singing, it gradually creates a trance-like atmosphere and initiates the queen (dancers) into a sub-conscious state. It happens when *Ghãtu* guru sends all the dancers into a trance by

hypnotizing them with the power of chanting. The music and song reverberate in the air, which ultimately captures the self of the performing girls as Mithila Sharma (Appendix B.8: 320) experiences. This is what *Ghãtu* aura does. *Ghãtu* aura—spirited mind, divine light, perception level but not actual—means a power that is beyond the dancers' perception. Sharma experiences that music has a power that how it possesses the dancer is beyond expression.

However, this festival is influenced by the cultural and religious practices of other groups such as the Aryan culture. This can be proved by the fact that the *sati* practice, which is the central theme of *Ghãtu*, was practised in *Khasa-Kshetri* community or Arya people during Lichhabi dynasty in Nepal, by 500 B. C. (M. Shrish Magar 56). Jaya Raj Acharya presents almost similar view (Appendix B.13: 322).

Nature of *Ghãtu*

By nature, *Ghãtu* is a typical traditional trance dance that a simple practice is not sufficient to meet its requirements. The *Ghãtu* dance is classical in nature even if it is traditional in real. The movements of dance are too slow. It is a kind of meditative trance dance that takes place in slow beats. The nature of dance is peculiar because it is based on supernatural beliefs rather than the facts.

In the second session, gurus ask the dancers to sit on the mat made up of the bamboo strips in a row, and again the guru starts chanting. The second session is performed outside the house. It makes the dancers quiver gradually. The mouths and eyes of dancers are shut up automatically and they get up to dance. Then they do the dance in a trance mode with the enactments of different gestures in slow movements. This activity suggests the shaman practice as such is still in existence.

Ghãtu is full of surprises that the dancers' eyes remain closed for twenty hours or so, that is in the *Sati* part. The dancers' eyes do not open even if other people try to

open by force. When the dancers are transported to *Deurali*-ridge, and the cremation performance is over, all the dancers are asked to sit in a row before the gurus. *Deurali* is a bit away from a performance spot. The gurus start singing the reverse songs; the dancers splash water on the closed eyes non-stop for more than two hours. In Baglung, even the audience or dance masters also go into a trance (Thapa Magar 28). This sensitivity certainly characterizes the world.

Types of *Ghãtu*

Ghãtu differs from one indigenous group to the next. In the Gurungs, there are three types of *Ghãtu*—*Bahramasé*, *Kusundā* and *Sati*. *Bahramasé* means “throughout the year,” *Kusundā* means “nomadic man” and *Sati* means “immolation.” *Ghãtu* is also considered as a narrative song, another vital part of *Ghãtu* (an unwritten epic) divided into three types: *Chamké*, *yalala* and *dhilé*. *Dhilé* means “slow beat” and *Chamké* means “fast beat,” whereas *Yalala* is in-between “neither fast beat nor slow one” (Appendix A.5: 300). *Bahramasé Ghãtu* is performed any time without restriction, as any age group of dancers can perform the dance; *Kusundā Ghãtu* and *Sati Ghãtu* are performed with strict rules and methods. Rukman Gurung claims that there are mainly two types of *Ghãtu* (Appendix A.1: 290): *Sati Ghãtu* and *Bahramāsé Ghãtu*. But *Kusundā Ghãtu* is also considered as another type although it is the sub-part of *Sati Ghãtu*. *Sati Ghãtu* indicates only the serious mode, *Kusundā Ghãtu* indicates the serious and non-serious mode but *Bahramāsé Ghãtu* indicates only non-serious mode. This suggests that a man needs freedom as well as the strict rule. *Ghãtu* as a dance and as a song reflects the multifaceted characteristics of this cultural activity.

Unlike *Bahramāsé*, *Kusundā Ghãtu* is performed with the enactments of begging and slaying of the deer. *Kusundā* is a kind of tribe that lives only in the forests rather than in the villages. This suggests the forest life. The forest is a symbol of freedom. So *Ghãtu* has the episodes of both village life and forest life. Hence the

forest symbolizes the utopian world. And *Bahramāsé Ghātu*, in which “the king wins the war and gets back home happily” (R. Gurung 25), is performed throughout the year which has neither been beginning nor ending. It does not require all the rules and methods to be followed strictly. The dancing girls must not be pre-pubertal that any women can participate in the dance. It is performed on the occasions of the birth of a first baby son in any family in the village, and in the arrivals of the family heads and the young boys from abroad. There are enactments of hunting, fishing and farming. Most people consider *Ghātu* just as a dance but it can also be treated as the song, a narrative song.

However, *Sati Ghātu* is performed in a slow motion only by clapping the hands, too appropriate for a tragic theme. The rest two represent the happy and hence the dance is naturally faster, to signify romance. Therefore, the performance is full of cultural images: elegiac songs, duets, symbolic objects of ethnic items, and the folk audience. Furthermore, other necessary wooden items like horse, pigeon, dog, bow and arrow, the weapons and equipment of the King Pashramu symbolize the cultural images as well. These entire things stand for certain purposes that they symbolize the daily lives and the simplicity.

Cultural Geography of *Ghātu*

Ghātu deals with contemporary issues but its cultural geography is contracting. It is practised only in mid-western and central Nepal. Only limited practitioners observe *Ghātu* in limited places. It is not in practice even in Nalma village since 2008. So is the reality in Dura *Danda* of a same district. This festival is disappearing from several Magar and Gurung villages. Several *Ghātu* villages have been *Ghātuless* these days although its cultural geography very wide. As *Ghātu* is

celebrated by subaltern, indigenous groups and even by the ruling class *Khasa-kshetri* in Nepal.

Ghãtu has been categorized as Gurung *Ghãtu*, Magar *Ghãtu*, Tamang *Ghãtu*, Dura *Ghãtu*, Darai *Ghãtu*, Aryal *Kshetri Ghãtu*, Baram *Ghãtu*, Kumal *Ghãtu*, and Tharu *Ghãtu*. It has also been categorized as Nalma *Ghãtu*, Rainaskot *Ghãtu* and so. The villagers perform *Ghãtu* as a ritual because “ritual is a highly repetitive form of performative behaviour which leads to an ‘accumulation’ of identity,” (Yarrow 42). It is observed annually in its fixed date as it is a repetitive form of performative behaviour but it varies village to village.

Local Variation and Cultural Diversity in *Ghãtu*

Variations of *Ghãtu* exist in starting time, place, purpose, methods, and paraphernalia: use of tools and equipment, objects, headgears, dresses, cloaks and ornaments, and types of *Ghãtu*. There is also a variation in the number of dancers, involvement of male and female gurus, names of king and queen, time and duration of performance, animal sacrifice, use of musical instruments, verses of the song, narratives, storyline, and language and theme. The headgear, for instance, is called *birpatta* or *birkot* or *birpat* or *birbat* in *Ghãtu* language. The variation comprises inter and intra-differences.

The crown image and symbolic pyre of Nalma *Ghãtu* differ from Rainaskot *Ghãtu*, Salyantar *Ghãtu*, Kuncha *Ghãtu*, Nuwakot *Ghãtu*. Although the main storyline is almost the same, the researcher has detected a lot of variations in make and look of the tools and equipment, appurtenances, ways and methods of this cultural activity. The Darai *Ghãtu* dancers wear black dresses, for instance, whereas Nuwakot *Ghãtu* dancers wear red dresses.

Most Gurungs begin *Ghãtu* on the occasion of *Shreepanchami*, the half crescent of the moon, a Nepali festival that falls by the end of January, but the Gurung of Syangja begin it on *Fagu Purnima* that falls by first March [. . .]. The Gurung of Lamjung begin it on *Shreepanchami*, (M. Shrish Magar 49); the Darai begins it on the Mother's Day that falls by 21 April; the Magar on *Baishakhe Purnima* that falls by 6 May but Magars from Ramche do it by worshipping the *Younut*³ god from *Shreepanchami* onward (3), and *Khasa-Kshetri* on *Panchami* that falls by 26 April. Padam Shrish Magar states, "Tharu begins it on the occasion of *Chaitra Purnima*" (24) that falls by 6 April. *Ghãtu* performance is much time consuming job. The practitioners begin it in different days and dates in accordance with their own calendars. Why do they do it in different dates? This suggests the cultural diversity.

The methods of *Ghãtu* performance vary from village to village, one ethnic group to another. According to method based on Gurung's performances of Nalma *Ghãtu*, the organizers select the dancing girls only of puberty stage for the performance. While selecting the dancers, age is considered as a matter of concern in several villages but there is not any age bar in Ramche village. There is the variation in selecting the king. In Nalma, the dancer who is possessed by the aura at first is given the role of a king but in Makwanpur, Tanahu, the youngest girl is given the role of a king. The dancers themselves expose as a king and queen while they are possessed by the *Ghãtu* aura in Ramche village of Magar (Appendix B.8: 320). This selection system of king symbolizes the variation in rules and regulations that differ from village to village.

With this variation, age variation is presented. The dancers are from small girls of four or five to age-old women (Appendix A.4: 299). *Ghãtu* is established in any house at midnight changing all the used clothes of the dancers (Appendix A. 3: 297),

³ *Younat* is a kind of festival that is observed by *Shreepanchami* (Singjali para. 9th). See Appendix B.8. iv: 320.

whereas Bernard Pignède refers the girls of “12 to 14” (466). The age variation symbolizes the variation in methods.

When the organizers fulfil the requirements, like preparing the tools and objects that are made out of wood, asking the permission with the guardians and parents of the dancing girls, and managing all the necessary equipment for the performance, the gurus ask the selected girls to sit on the banana leaves. It is performed at midnight on *Shreepanchami* in a new set of ethnic dresses after the girls have taken bath and manicured their nails. Appurtenances of the dancers also differ from village to village. Now gurus follow all the methods strictly to invoke the *Ghãtu* aura. This shows that methods and rules as such are most important things.

The gurus recite this starting phrases of song “*Lipa ho re bhaiya, . . .*” rhythmically but this phrase of song also differs from village to village. By reciting this version of the song repeatedly, the gurus invoke *Ghãtu* aura. In this part, they call upon all the gods from four directions. And although the gurus smear the *Ghãtu* stage for the dancers well before the dancing girls are placed there, the dancers enact smearing with the rhythm of songs. Then the dancers enact wearing the ethnic dresses with the rhythm.

The methods of smearing *Ghãtu* stage in the performance of all the villages are not similar. Appurtenances also differ from village to village but most tradition bearers claim that they have not changed their methods. All of them claim that they are where their ancestors were; they are doing what their ancestors used to do; they are performing *Ghãtu* how their ancestors started doing (Appendix A.2: 291). But their ways and methods of performance are totally different although the storyline is almost similar to but it is twisted in Aryal *Kshetri*. For instance, the king dies in war after his son Balkrishna is born and he is two and half years old, according to the

storyline of Gurung, but the king dies before his son is born in *Khasa-Kshetri* stories. This local variation indicates that *Ghãtu* has a cultural spectrum and cultural diversity. *Ghãtu* is thus a singular but its presentation is plural, and this variation symbolizes the variation in human knowledge.

Even among the Gurungs, methods of *Ghãtu* performance vary from village to village. So happens in the Magars. The difference is also in terms of rhythm and some verses of a song. For instance, Nalma village performs *Kusundã Ghãtu*, whereas Rainaskot village of the same district performs only *Sati Ghãtu*. This variation is because of types of *Ghãtu* but there is difference even in the performance of *Sati Ghãtu* if location varies. With the variation of rhythm, there is a variation in gurus. The gurus are all male in Nalma and Rainaskot, whereas they are female in Dulegauda of Tanahu, Baikuntha of Makawanpur, Chandibhanjyang of Chitwan and Ramche of Syangja. This variation indicates that both male and female are equally capable.

Another variation is in name and number of king and queen. There are one King Pashramu and one Queen Yemphawati in the Gurungs although the number of queens varies. In Chhappa dada, Lamjung, there are six queens and one king. In Nalma, there are two queens and one king; there is one king and six or seven queens in Dulegauda, Tanahu. Only one dancing girl plays the roles of both king and queen in Rainaskot Lamjung. Among the Magars, there are four kings and four queens. The kings are named as Ritubarna, Nareshor, Kailas and Deva, and queens are as Satyawati, Viddhyawati, Yemphawati and Resvishwar (Baral Magar 103). But Min Shris Magar points out one more royal couple as King Himchuli and Queen Mahamai. He also mentions the name of King Parshuram in *Sati* episode (50). Plural number of queens reflects the polygamy system.

In Chandibhanjyang village, king's name is Ram and his consort is Mayawati (Karmacharya 3rd para.). But in Ramche, the royal couples are "Kailas-Bidhyawati, Daive-Rekhiswar and Himchuli-Mahamai (M. Shrish Magar 6). In *Khasa-Kshetri*, king is called *Jaisinghé* but his consort is anonymous. The Darais do not have any names for the royal couple (Appendix B.4.iv: 317). They simply call a king and queens.

With this, time duration of performance and animal sacrifice also vary. While the Gurungs perform *Ghãtu* for one week or hit more, Magar and Darai perform it for three days and Aryal and Tamang do it for only two days. So, there is the variation in terms of starting dates for several performances of *Ghãtu* which is also one of the major characteristics of *Ghãtu*. Animal sacrifice is common methods in all the *Ghãtu* villages but Aryal *Kshetri* offer pig to the *Ghãtu* god. Magar offers many hens, cocks and chickens to the *Ghãtu* gods at the end of performance, and they sacrifice pig for pork in the party that is managed after the performance is over. Except in Lamjung, double ended drums are not played in Nuwakot, Dhading, Rainaskot, Syangja and Tanahu. This variation suggests that human world is full of such parities and disparities.

Not only the time duration and animal sacrifice, tune of songs or rhythm, but also the wordings different from one village to the next. This is known as the language variation. In *Ghãtu*, narratives, language and theme are from old Nepali, Awadi, Maithili and Khasa-Brahman. This suggests how the diverse linguistic groups live together into one society and how a society is formed of several ethnic groups and caste groups as there are heterogeneous constituents in it. This makes this cultural performance typical because of language and theme, and methods and styles. This typicality is the unique presentation of this cultural activity. The language variation

thus indicates that indigenous groups seem to have adopted this *Ghãtu* culture from *Khasa-Brahmin* for they did not have other sources to entertain and pastime. Almost all the villages end this performance on *Chandipurnima* that falls by May despite their variation in beginning time. Overall performance time is winter to spring. In all the villages, there is a storyline of a legendary king and a queen. The storyline slightly varies but the overall theme is almost similar. This similarity shows the similarity among all the human beings. The local variation shows how wide the horizon of this cultural activity is.

Purpose of *Ghãtu* Performance

Every cultural activity has a purpose and significance. Prem Kumar Khattri marks that certain caste groups observe certain cultural activities as per needs and benefits (Appendix A.7: 304). Why people observe this tribal festival is because it benefits them according to cultural anthropological perspectives. Those who observe *Ghãtu* culture have the purpose of healing some diseases and to ward off the evil spirits as well as to protect from them. Culture as such is the reflection of any human society for their total way of life as Clifford Geertz (4) claims. All the cultural practices, for instance, are like highly reactive molecules. As every molecule is the powerful unit of a chemical compound, every cultural phenomenon is crucial atom held together in a cultural bond. Kluckhohn forwards the views that every way of thinking and belief system of a person depends on his/her culture s/he grows up in (qtd. in Geertz 4). The purpose of cultural activity depends on its significance.

According to a local belief, performing *Ghãtu* avoids the chances of misfortunes like unnatural deaths and natural disasters. If it is done properly as the continuum of tradition and ritual, the deposed souls become happy and they help protect the entire village from natural calamities and evil spirits. *Ghãtu* is performed in the memory of

the royal couples, a legendary king and his consort. The dead souls of the royal couples are considered as the ferocious gods. The villagers expect “to receive a blessing from the deities [. . .] such as sufficient rain for their crops” (Shepherd 259).

This is because almost all the *Ghãtu* practitioners are mostly uneducated or with minimal education. *Ghãtu* is also considered a source of learning in many areas such as singing, dancing, romance, gambling, farming, hunting, and warring.

The reasons why people perform cultural activities differ from place to place are because the practitioners have varied knowledge and skills. For example, when the devotees of Isaki Amman observe rituals like *Kodai* or *Pongal* or *Thiruvizha*, they make vows. “The vows are commonly for good health, relief from debt, for prosperity, for good agricultural yields, to be blessed with child, protected from evil spirits” (John 207). The villagers believe that the deposed souls of the king and the queen are supposed to go on hovering. This hovering is supposed to be harmful to those people who are their relatives. Then, in an interview, Rukman Gurung claims, “*Ghãtu* is necessary to solace royal couple’s souls. If not, their deposed souls become unhappy and they cause harm to the villagers” (Appendix A.1: 290). The villagers attend the performance with the purpose of healing of all kinds of diseases in Chandibhanjyang, Chitwan. This suggests that treatment process through shaman practice is still in existence. Healing through *Ghãtu* is like shamanic method. “There are shamanic methods of healing that closely parallel contemporary behaviour therapy, hypnosis, family therapy, milieu therapy, psychodrama” (Walter and Fridman 210).

Symbolic Significance of *Ghãtu*

Basically, significance of *Ghãtu* is cultural as well as historical, social, anthropological, religious and political, but the project focuses on the symbolic

significance. The interpretation of images in *Ghāṭu* symbolically helps unfold the underlying meanings and harness them. Unfolding the underlying meanings enhances and promotes *Ghāṭu* culture. People observe this cultural activity for some benefits although it is observed as culture for culture's sake. This cultural performance has the history of bravery as King Pashramu never surrendered before his enemies. His baby son, Balkrishna, would not have survived if his family members, the society, had not looked after him after the death of his parents. Balkrishna is looked after by his relatives.

Balkrishna's mother leaves him behind alone because she has been *Sati*. *Sati* means a wife whose husband is dead just before some minutes and his dead body is not yet transported to the crematorium. Now his wife has to sacrifice her life after her husband's death. This is what *sati* practice is. According to Hindu belief system, a wife has to give too high respect to her husband. Ultimately, this *sati* practice reflects the woman domination. Every Hindu woman should be ideal and submissive is nothing more than the male created discourse. The issue of woman violence in Asian countries is still going on. This suggests that women are still facing several forms of *sati* even if *sati* practice is no more in practice. *Ghāṭu* projects such relevant issues and disseminates the message that the husband should also give a respect to his wife.

With this general interpretation, symbolic interpretation has the importance in semantic levels. The work attempts to critically broaden the horizon of *Ghāṭu* culture because there are mostly anthropological and descriptive books on it but not critical. Critical writing can explore the reality more authentically than the general writing because criticism has the mixed-up taste. *Ghāṭu* dancers wear a peculiar headgear which is really a matter of attraction for a person who views this performance for the first time. The headgear is not meant simply the headdress which the viewer may

acknowledge, but it is a symbol of king and power. The dancers enact a legendary king and his consort. The headgear is similar to crown which symbolizes monarchism. All the appurtenances symbolize the cultural backgrounds as well as the dress up, past and present life styles and cultural identity of those people who observe this tribal festival.

There are some books and articles on *Ghãtu* that disseminate the general information. Generally, the writers describe the time, place, ways and methods of *Ghãtu* but they do not interpret what the colour of dresses symbolizes. The dancers dance in a



Fig. 1 The dancers in a special pose

peculiar way. When one views the dance performance, s/he sees as if the trees sway left and right when the storm blows them. The dancers sway their hands raising up and down as shown in the figure 1 (photo)⁴ in a similar manner. Tragic death of King Pashramu is the storm to the queen or queens. This tragedy moves them. This posture suggests the critical condition of queen. Not only are the songs responsible to disseminate the messages to the audience, but also are the nonverbal presentations of gestural means of communication.

The scholars, researchers and writers have their books, journals, articles on *Ghãtu* published. They have contributed a lot to disseminate *Ghãtu* information but they do not seem to have attempted to explain the symbolic pyre analytically. Only the descriptive writings, which may not serve the depth of meaning, are not sufficient to address multiple meanings. The descriptive books on *Ghãtu* do not serve the

⁴ Most of the photos are shot by the researcher (figure 5 photo is shot by Rupendra Karmacharya, and figures 2, 21, 22, 23, 28 are shot by Damodar Neupane) in his field visits.

underlying meanings of the text. They serve the historical and anthropological information and so. The study claims that interpretation of *Ghãtu* from semiotic perspectives, for instance, song is the lament of the queen, makes the understanding of people clearer. Bernard Pignède, Jagman Gurung, Keshar Jung Baral Magar, Min Shrish Magar, Padam Shrish Magar, Amar Bahadur Gurung, Ram Bahadur Gurung, Chandra Mani Gurung, Murari Prasad Regmi, as well as some other writers have studied *Ghãtu* only from cultural anthropological perspectives.

How important the performance is depends on its impact. The impact of performance is accounted as the measuring rod of performance level. For this, whether the performance moves the audience or not is a matter of concern. To have the positive impact, the performance should attract the audiences. Under the performance studies, a kinesthetic presentation plays a vital role in any performance. Kinesthetic presentation means how performers and audiences are linked. The feedback of audience is considered as the most important factor in all performances. The very feedback is an impact of performance. Sense of the body's movement in any performances is considered as one of the most important factors. It is about the notion of internal bodily sensation as an unseen power of the dancer to perform the dances. A kind of unseen link is established between the performer and the audience while performance occurs. This link is known as the kinesthetic impact in performance studies. So does happen in *Ghãtu*.

The study takes relevant issues associated with the cultural performance into consideration for critical analysis to look into origin, process and purpose as the research administration techniques. And to administer the data, both the fieldwork and library work have been simultaneously performed. Some visual cassettes and audio cassettes have also been analysed according to the focus of the study. The researcher

observes live performances as they are the intended materials for analysis. The study focuses on semiotic interpretation of the text.

In spite of several challenges, *Ghãtu* culture is in existence in a few villages. The villages have stopped observing *Ghãtu* year by year in various pretensions one after another. There are five or more ethnic groups and one caste group observing this tribal festival in central and mid-western Nepal. The practitioners begin *Ghãtu* performance in different dates and days according to their own calendars. Except some similarities in a storyline, methods of performance are not similar. Mostly *Ghãtu* is supposed to have observed in memory of royal couple and to solace their desperate souls. It is to be a kind of a death ritual. But it is observed with the purpose of entertainments and healing.

Most of the indigenous cultures of Nepal have been displaced because of cultural infiltration and internal colonialism in spite of *Ghãtu*'s cultural values. The new generation enjoys western cultures as it is known as cultural infiltration, and the minority groups have to follow dominant culture. It is a trend in third-world countries, and it can be considered as internal colonialism.

The Gurungs are observing this performing art for about five hundred years or so, and "Magar started observing this festival since by the fifteenth century, but this is not an authentic claim" (Appendix B.3: 317). At present, there are six ethnic groups and only one caste group observing *Ghãtu*. They perform *Ghãtu* in different ways. This is known as the variation. Variation is natural because of different performers and their knowledge and skills. The variation is within the Gurungs and the Magars not only from Gurungs to Magars or so. Mainly, the methods vary from village to village. This variation is in location because location matters almost everything.

The villagers still claim that they are directly benefitted from this cultural activity. Sapana Gurung from Tanahu (see page 259 of this dissertation) claims that her heart problem has been dramatically minimized after she has participated in the dance although it has not been fully cured. Every village does not claim such direct impact of *Ghãtu* performance but most of the local people claim that there are several indirect and unseen benefits like timely rainfall and healing of some fatal diseases. *Ghãtu* has some symbolic significance that there is cultural semiotics.

The Statement of Problem

What is *Ghãtu* and what images and symbols are used in its performance? Why are *Ghãtu* images and symbols obscure and ambiguous? How to reduce the obscurity and ambiguity? Several writers have described *Ghãtu* but not from this angle. Similarly, *Ghãtu* has not been interpreted from the perspectives of performance studies and folk drama. The writers have not analysed in a deeper way about how *Ghãtu* is related to performance and folk drama.

Objectives of the Study

As the primary objective of the study is to analyse major symbols, images, tools in *Ghãtu* to establish *Ghãtu* as the folk-performative drama, it demands the theoretical framework that allows studying its symbolic, semiotic, and performative aspects. This study employs the theory of performance developed by Richard Schechner, theory of semiotics developed by Umberto Eco, Charles S. Peirce and theory of folk drama by Chudamani Bandhu and Motilal Parajuli. The images of *Ghãtu* embody underlying meanings and these meanings are unfolded through semiotic interpretation which enhances the *Ghãtu* culture.

There are two specific objectives of the study. One objective is to symbolically interpret the dresses, cloaks and ornaments, tools and objects that are

used in the performance. The authentic meaning is most likely to come from within the imagery through symbolic interpretation rather than from the simple description. Headgear is considered just as a headdress when it is simply described. But it generates power in a performance that *Ghãtu* dancers internalize the existence of royal couple in them. Headgear as a mask has a link with performance studies. But Danesi considers that masks are expressive devices and it is disappearing in modern theatre that make-up and facial expression has taken over from masks (166).

Second objective of the study is to analyse this text with the theoretical tools of semiotics, performativity and folk drama. For this, the project interprets the selected images in *Ghãtu*. The analysis of the text from performance studies point of view is a major concern. Symbolic interpretation of images of the text through theoretical tools of performance studies can widen *Ghãtu*'s horizon. The trident, for instance, in the king's headgear, symbolizes the Lord Shiva. And performance perspective analyses performativity of *Ghãtu* performance. The study focuses on symbolic interpretation and performativity of *Ghãtu*.

The research shows that there has only been some superficial study in the field of *Ghãtu*. The lack of visual records and publication is another problem. The available books, booklets, articles flow meagre information. They are not perennial evidences and therefore the study needs permanent recording from diverse information of *Ghãtu* so as to make it uniform based on field study by which the real information is disseminated. This study attempts to be a platform of *Ghãtu* information. It also attempts to answer of where, why, how, when the performance is practised.

However, the general objectives of the research are to explore that red colour symbolizes the rebellious nature of indigenous groups and *Khasa-Kshetri* and white colour symbolizes the cleanliness for instance, whereas the meanings cannot be

limited within this interpretation (see page 251-52). To make the images and symbols in *Ghãtu* speak is the major concern of the argument. To read the rebellious nature in red colour and to see the figure of king in the crown image is to interpret the images.

While making the images speak interpretation is a must. Analysis of the cultural semiotics of indigenous groups may harness the Nepali cultural scenario in a sense. The project attempts to address the overall information of *Ghãtu*, and be a critical text of symbolic interpretation. This work is a general survey and mapping of *Ghãtu* culture in Nepal and focuses on that this tribal festival represents the grammar and codes of ideology of those people who perform this cultural activity. The indigenous people and Aryal *Kshetri* have the brave nature like that of the King Pashramu who fought in the battle bravely even if other kings vanquished him. *Ghãtu* is a kind of cultural performance and is related to performance studies. It is a performing art and it is studied under the umbrella term of performance studies.

The study locates the local variation in terms of performance and their ways and methods. There is a list of remarkable images of the performance for the symbolic interpretation. With this interpretative analysis, the study locates some confusions of *Ghãtu* and attempts to clarify them. The local variation creates a kind of confusion about *Ghãtu*. The difference between Magar and Gurung is inter-difference and the difference within the Guurungs is intra-difference. This suggests that *Ghãtu* is a fusion of several confusions which creates an illusion and there is a beauty in illusion.

There is confusion about the belonging even if this is not the major concern of the study. Most writers write that Gurung performs *Ghãtu* and other writers write that Magar performs *Ghãtu*. And another writer writes that Aryal performs *Ghãtu*. Who does exactly perform the *Ghãtu*? Is *Ghãtu* as a common national festival as Dashain and Tihar? Or, does only a particular ethnic group perform it? If a person reads about

Ghãtu at a same time, s/he may get confused about the real followers. The research shows that there are limited *Ghãtu* practitioners. This study attempts to be a *Ghãtu* cultural hub as a *Ghãtu* icon in case of *Ghãtu* information. The *Ghãtu* culture determines the identity of indigenous people and Aryal *Kshetri*. One impact of *Ghãtu* in those people is bravery. The practitioners of this performing art are characterized by arrogant nature like that of a protagonist, King Pashramu, of *Ghãtu*.

Moreover, *Ghãtu* is a source of oral heritage, music, dance and folk drama. Asia Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (APCCU) claims that there are a number of human truths in “the oral heritage, music, dance, folklore and traditional handicraft skills” (15). The dresses and ornaments, cloaks and jewellery, headgear, the constituents of headgear, like parched grains, flowers, cloth straps, and so suggest the past life. APCCU further clarifies that “the languages, literature, music, dance, games, mythology, rituals, customs, handicrafts, architecture and other arts” (110) as such are much too suggestive in making meaning. Similarly, time, place, theme, storyline, characters, colours, language, activities, enactments, slow motion dance and slow rhythm song are all symbolically presented.

Research Questions

In order to have this research facilitated, the researcher has framed a research questions: How do images and symbols suggest multiple meanings? Why do the dancers dream when they are transformed into the trance state? How are performers and audiences related? How is *Ghãtu* related to performance studies and folk drama? Why and how does *Ghãtu* performance affect the viewers?

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This research aims at making the symbolic interpretation of the images, symbols and signs in the *Ghãtu* performance. The study uses the theoretical tools of

semiotics, performance and folk drama. As the theoretical framework of the study, the researcher uses unstructured interviews, personal observation and library research. The researcher have analysed the relation between literature and anthropology along with the interpretation. The text is anthropologically presented as “anthropological standpoint is to see the interplay of objective reality with subjective knowledge and experience giving Culture the central role. The more energy man puts into his labour, the refined culture would be the outcome” (Appendix A.7: 304).

Umberto Eco helps interpret the symbols and signs from semiotic perspective and Richard Schechner help deal with the cultural performance from performance perspective. Clifford Geertz helps understand the “significant relationship between (group) cultural achievement and innate mental capacity in the present, and to affirm such a relationship in the past” (Geertz 65). Similarly, Chudamani Bandhu helps understand *Ghãtu* as folk drama.

Theoretically, *Ghãtu* folk drama is a cultural performance. Schechner argues that performance is based on make-believe aspect and it is illusory (XVIII). In addition, the anthropological standpoint of this study highlights interrelationships between the human beings based on the *Ghãtu* performance. Imagery deals with the images; semiotic perspective interprets the functions of signs and symbols, and the performance perspective concerns with performing arts and with the space and time of this site. Place of *Ghãtu* is located in the cultural domain of performing arts. And this performance has the truths of human behaviours and activities.

In understanding the local and universal implications of indigenous cultural performances, there are numerous ways to unravel the known and unknown facts which might pose several confusions in regard of *Ghãtu* and other performances. The researcher attempts to address the questions. Why do the narratives, ways and

methods of *Ghãtu* vary significantly from one place to another? The ways and methods vary because of location. The study also focuses on the anthropological standpoint and the identity of indigenous groups in relation to this cultural milieu.

In this research, the study interprets the wooden hen as the hunting age and *Ghãtu* is a simple cultural performance which is under the performance studies. The concern of this study is to locate where *Ghãtu* lies in the Fan figure 2 of Richard Schechner. Moreover, how much symbols are meaningful in anthropology has also been analysed. In addition to the discussion of images, the study has “a concern for signs and symbols” (Corrigan 4) of *Ghãtu* site and their interpretation occupies a major part of the discussion. The writers, who have worked on *Ghãtu*, have been a primary source for the researcher to carry farther.

However, although there are descriptive details of the text, this project highlights from symbolic perspectives. As the hero of *Ghãtu* dies young because of his arrogant nature. This image reflects the human nature. Meaning is generated through several enactments and objects that “[t]here is a great possibility of meaning in images” (Singh 8). For instance, the sceptre is a symbol of sovereignty, imperial authority and a sign of the ruling system, indicative of the king. But in Lamjung, toy elephant made of wood is also the image of king (Appendix A.3: 297), whereas a lion is the image of king in Dhading (Appendix B.4: 317). The objects and appurtenances in *Ghãtu* thus suggest layers of meanings.

There is a human world in *Ghãtu* that there is romance and tragedy of royal couple, history of bravery, primitive life style, war arts, and a life cycle. These details are possible through critical writings. Almost there are not critical works on *Ghãtu* except Chandramani Gurung’s criticism, just an essay, regarding the language. Chandramani Gurung critiques this tribal festival that the language used in

performance is not Gurung. He raises the question about its belonging (9), in which song symbolizes the lament of the queen rather than simply a song. With this, the study relates this cultural activity to the performance studies and it is analysed through folk drama and performance perspectives.

Ghãtu performance is the cultural confluence of harmonious relation of those people who practise this cultural activity. Tools and equipment suggest the past handicrafts and past-life styles, and the slow dance movement symbolizes bereaved condition of the queen. The bow and arrow symbolize the hunting age. Breaking of bows at the end of performance to dispose them in the *Deurali* symbolizes the entry to agricultural life from hunting age. Therefore, every tool, object, cloaks and ornaments of the dancers symbolize some truths.

The study focuses on how the images related with *Ghãtu* performance move from local to universal, and how the study of images leads towards symbolism which ultimately has universal implications. Local imagery of the performance always has wider implications which can be studied as archetypes which are universal. Local is universal in the sense that an incident, a story may move towards cosmic significations. The stick image is both local and universal to indicate the sceptre, “as bamboo, mango tree, palm tree—a short plant from which alcoholic juice is produced—and paddy rice stand as the symbols of progress, prosperity and success” (Bhandari 164). This is not everywhere in every community.

To locate the similarities and differences and the authentic information, the researcher observes live performances. The variation of ways and methods symbolize that variety is characterized by this tribal festival. Variety lies in language and theme, too. There is not a single language in *Ghãtu*. Chandra Bahadur Gurung claims that there are twenty seven languages in *Ghãtu* (Appendix A.3: 397). The words are

borrowed from diverse linguistic groups. Both language and theme of *Ghãtu* do not belong to any indigenous groups. Almost all the words are borrowed from other caste groups. This suggests the cross culture reference. The entire performance is based on a song and is filled with images. These images bring out multiple meanings (symbols), as the “symbols are determined to be culturally sensitive as a result of a structured assessment process” (Moriarty and Rohe 119). The study, therefore, focuses on this statement.

There are images, symbols and other signs, time and space, theme, characters, songs, dances and objects, which signify different meanings, and they are interpreted and analysed for the same. The interpretation differs from one village to the next and one country to the next. For instance, “[t]he north direction is supposed to be a bad omen as it is the symbol of death in Urau community” (Bhandari 165), but it is something else or not the same in another community or country.

Although symbolic meanings do not pinpoint the hundred percent truths, they tell more than the general description. Moriarty observes, “One might speculate, however, that the symbolic meanings of these message elements are more ambiguous and less predictable than the iconic elements and could be seen as more interesting” (253). The headgear and dresses, cloaks and ornaments are the message elements which are more ambiguous and less predictable in *Ghãtu*.

The concept of time and space can be seen in the performance when the patriotic figure and the submissive state are depicted during a particular performance. This is known as a condition of trance which has universal appeal and that can be understood when juxtaposed with the European gypsy dancers’ performance. *Ghãtu* performance has a very close universal implication in its performance level that can be studied with the images and symbols that O’donnell observes, “a representation can

also be a symbol, something that stands for something else. Understanding of symbols requires learning the connections between symbols and what they stand for” (528).

The fight image is extracted from Nalma *Ghãtu*. The descriptive writing explains the way why and how long the dancers fight but it does not interpret what this fight symbolizes. The fight symbolizes war instinct of a man. Similarly, the image of a scepter, which is used in *Ghãtu* as a tool, stands for a rule. The gyrating movements of the dancers in *Kusundā* episode indicate the image of life cycle. *Ghãtu* represents a multicultural make of Nepali society.

Every culture possesses specific cultural tropes which help identify the specific nuances of cultures and the practices. *Ghãtu* as a cultural performance of the ethnic group unveils unlimited cultural modes of those who perform *Ghãtu*. There are different modes of cultural activities, social behaviours, and literary practices in this local cultural practice. A number of research scholars and theorists have come up to discuss and highlight varieties of studies in this enthusiastic and enjoyable field of studies.

The study concerns with the verbal and visual observation along with a few written texts of theories published by the Nepali and foreign writers. One major concern of the discussion is to analyse this tribal festival as a folk drama. The folk drama theory analyses how *Ghãtu* falls under a folklore genre. Anthropological perspective of this study highlights interrelationships between the human beings. The study also focuses on how *Ghãtu* is related to performance studies.

As a method of study, this research employs the qualitative method. It uses published sources such as general books, theoretical books, journals and articles. The primary data like researcher’s observation, live interviews, visual clips, photos are included in the discussion. The researcher gathers the information from four villages.

As he analyses the data with the theoretical tools of performance, semiotics, (symbolic interpretation) and folk drama perspectives.

To interpret the selected images from a symbolic perspective is the main methodology of the study, which introduces a contemporary reading of this tribal festival and its unquenchable quest ultimately leading to underlying meanings and its significances. Then it has defined key terms used in the dissertation followed by a short symbolic interpretation of *Ghãtu* within the text by footnoting and bracketing them. The cultural theoretical tools have provided the fulcrum to the study.

One major discussion part of the study is *Ghãtu* folk drama theory that is related to Nepali folk drama. Under this theory, the elements, characteristics, types, ways and methods of *Ghãtu* are discussed. And this tribal festival is compared with some other folk dramas of nearly similar nature and characteristics.

With close textual reading of literature, empirical and observatory research of social science concerns the primary data collection. The study focuses on the literary interpretation of verses of narrative songs. The study is symbol and image-centred and the analysis is concerned with relevant interpretation. The preliminary phase of the study is based on collection of primary data. Selection and gradation of the data is the first method and analysis of the data follows as the second main method of the study. As part of the primary research, the study uses the interviews of the *Ghãtu* participants. To obtain the authentic data, the researcher conducts the personal talks with those individuals who have the knowledge of *Ghãtu*.

The project covers four villages of Lamjung, Tanahu, Dhading and Nuwakot. The sample population for this study includes the practitioners, *Ghãtu* gurus, former dancers, tradition bearers, and the scholars who know *Ghãtu* performance. The researcher also collects the information from Baikuntha village of Makwanpur district

where Tamang observes *Ghãtu*, Chandibhanjyang of Chitwan where Gurung does it, and Kunchha of Lamjung where Dura does it. The researcher conducts the interviews, group discussion with the participants and records the audio and video records of performances.

To acquire the information, the researcher contacts the participants personally. And of the instrumentation for data collection, the researcher uses the movie camera, camera and audio recorder as the necessary instruments. He also collects the video clips from persons and institutes that they have been recorded by the professional camera person. He views available visuals and video clips of this performance and collects from resource persons, institutes and organizations.

The fieldworks—carried out in Lamjung, Nuwakot, Tanahu and Dhading—are the main literature of the study. The narrative songs of *Ghãtu* differ from village to village. Among them, the narrative songs, which Dharma Raj Thapa writes in *Gandakika Shuseli*, and partly from Nalma *Ghãtu*, books of Pignède, Baral Magar have been decoded. The researcher too collects the narrative songs from the library. The researcher collects the information from live performances of Lamjung, Tanahu, Dhading and Nuwakot *Ghãtus* in the discussion to foster the general information.

The study analyses verses of a song of other villages intermittently in the discussion. The researcher reviews some theoretical books of semiotics and performance theory as well as the books on performance studies and anthropology to interpret the text. The inclusion of particular field studies can enrich Nepalese folk cultural studies and it leaves a vacuum which ultimately leads to incompleteness in the totality of National literary studies.

And *Ghãtu* is a theatrical performance and cultural specificity associated between and among the Tamangs, the Gurungs, the Magars, the Duras, the Darais, the

Barams and the *Khasa-Kshetris*. A study of this nature helps not only to preserve *Ghãtu* cultures but also to build an intact cultural fabric by prevailing it up to the reach of all the interested ethnic people, the young scholars and the university students. The work concerns to unfold the implicit meanings of gears, postures and gestures of the dancers as well as tools and objects used in the performance.

Literary analysis analyses text and it is done deriving theories from other disciplines, such as psychology, anthropology, sociology, even ethology. Despite the apparent incongruity of this study of a dance performance of the indigenous groups and a specific Kshetri community with English Studies, the latter is undergoing a tremendous change today. English Studies incorporates at once language, literature, and culture. As Rob Pope observes:

The overall trend is still clearly towards a multicultural and cross-disciplinary construction of the subject. This is manifest in attention to previously marginal or excluded genres such as life-writing (auto/biography), travel writing, [. . .] and deeper engagement with post-colonial and women's writing, literatures in English (plural) and, latterly, gay writing. (5)

The scope of English studies is thus very broad and it covers several fields of studies.

The study analyses the symbolism in *Ghãtu* both from the local and universal implication view point. Images and their symbols have the origin in the local. The headgear just as a headgear is local, but a headgear is a crown and crown is a king. It is universal. The denotative meaning of headgear is a turban and its connotative meaning is power. The *Ghãtu* images, however, have wider cosmic ramification because such images and symbolism have their origin in mythical narratives (*Ghãtu* songs) which are extended through performance. In understanding the local and

universal implications of such indigenous cultural performances, there are numerous ways to unravel the known and unknown facts which might pose several confusions regarding *Ghãtu* and other performances.

The researcher collects the data from email interviews with *Ghãtu* participants. He watches the video cassettes of *Ghãtu* performance and observes the live performances. So, researcher's live experiences also form a major body of discussion. The study is the preliminary phase of documentation of symbolic interpretation. The study concerns the performance theory to see how this local has the universal implications so as to show the link of *Ghãtu* with the performance studies. To embody the study, the data have been collected from resourceful persons and places. The recorded *Ghãtu* CDs and DVDs are other important sources.

The sample area of the research is library and fieldwork of a sizable bulk that caters the content's standard and size precisely. The data are analysed both from descriptive and symbolic point of view to locate the intended meanings. In the appendices, the interviews and *Ghãtu* songs have been attached. Among the theoretical tools, the folk drama theory analyses the text from literary perspectives; performance theory analyses performing art from performance perspective and semiotic theory analyses signs and symbols of *Ghãtu* text from semiotic perspective.

There are seven chapters of the dissertation. First chapter introduces the project; second chapter reviews the literature; third chapter deals with theoretical perspectives; fourth chapter projects the main text of *Ghãtu*; fifth chapter focuses on songs analysis and decoding the significance; sixth chapter interprets the images and symbols of the text, and seventh chapter concludes *Ghãtu* as a folk cultural performance and its aesthetic contours.

CHAPTER II

LITERAL AND CRITICAL READINGS OF *GHĀTU*

Ghātu performance possesses images, symbols and signs which signify human world and society at large. This signification is realized when these images, symbols and signs are symbolically interpreted. The tools and objects used in this performance suggest knowledge of handicrafts used in the past. The headgear of dancers represents the crown, the power structure, but it has been described just as a headdress of *Ghātu* dancers in descriptive writing. Appurtenances are considered as the tools and objects in such writing on *Ghātu* but the bow and arrow symbolize the hunting age. The current research focuses on the theoretical tools as symbolic interpretation of the images of *Ghātu* from semiotic perspective. Then it analyses the performativity of *Ghātu* in relation to performance studies from performance perspectives. It also analyses *Ghātu* dance as a folk drama performance. For this, related books, journals, articles, visuals, video clips have been reviewed because the scholarship of *Ghātu* is not sufficient for the detail information. There has not been a research on *Ghātu* regarding symbolic interpretation yet.

There are a few works on *Ghātu* and a few scholars on this site. The researcher collects the available books on *Ghātu*, and he observes live performances in four villages. He video records and interviews the available participants like performers and some audiences. The research is thus a fieldwork-based research as well as the library. The researcher studies the available theoretical and general books.

Analysis from Performance Perspectives

There are some writers on performance studies and some are on anthropology. Some writers, who are mostly Nepali and a few foreign writers, have published a few books on *Ghātu*. Richard Schechner is the pioneer of performance studies. Philip

Auslander has also contributed much in this area of studies. Ralph Yarrow and Tracy C. Davies have contributed a lot more.

Ghãtu dance is a dance performance and it is placed under performance studies. Schechner's *Performance Theory* is the key theoretical tool of all kinds of performances because it gives the directions of religious, cultural and sports performances. *Ghãtu* is a cultural performance and Schechner's fan figure helps the present study to locate where *Ghãtu* lies. To analyse this text through performance theory means to establish the link between local and global cultures. As the *Ghãtu* dancers dance in a trance mode that it is because of power of *Ghãtu* aura, which is known as spiritual power, according to shamanistic approach, performance theory makes it clear that there is spiritual power by which the performers perform. According to performance theory, "To be in trance is not to be out of control or unconscious" (Schechner 197) but it partly applies in *Ghãtu*. The *Ghãtu* dancers go into a trance and they are fully in unconscious state, especially, in *Kusundã* episode. So are they in *Sati* part. In this sense, *Ghãtu* is beyond the performance theory.

Ralph Yarrow's *Sacred Theatre* forwards the view of importance of mask in a performance. Like Schechner, Yarrow argues, "Certain features of the use of masks in performance also seem likely to contribute, for example, in affecting breathing patterns, reducing the field of vision, and producing a sensation of disjunction or dissociation between the performer and the entity signalled by the mask" (162). Wearing a mask makes the performers adventurous and it builds up their confidence to perform better. Either the mask makes the performers confident or it encourages them, the dancers dance better wearing the masks. Schechner has the view:

The dancing is a performance, but of a special kind. It is thought that when a man wears a mask he is "animated by the spirits which are

derived from the myths.” Each hevehe has a name because each is a spirit. The spirit moves only when a man is in the mask. Conversely, a man dances well only when he is moved by the spirit. Two autonomous, symbiotic existences support each other. (40)

But while performing the *Ghãtu*, the dancers do not wear the mask except colouring by the artists who play the role of King *Kãjuli* and Queen *Kãjuli* (scaly persons), the dancers wear the turbans. This *Kãjuli* couple’s performance is known as *Gharti* dance episode of *Ghãtu* performance, and it provokes the laughter in the audiences by the artists colouring their faces. In Salyantar and Nuwakot, the dancing girls wear only the cloth straps on their heads. In these cultural performances, the *Ghãtu* aura governs the dancers better than the mask. The presence of spirit in a mask makes a man’s dance well (Schechner 40). The dancers and spirit symbiotically exist and they support each other while performing. The shaman trance dance *Ghãtu* has the entertainment purpose and entertainment itself is a healing process. Or some may say that *Ghãtu* performance symbolizes a healing process. Richard Schechner observes:

Performance doesn’t originate in ritual any more than it originates in entertainment. It originates in the binary system efficacy—entertainment which includes the sub-set ritual—theatre. From the beginning, logically as well as historically, both terms of the binary are required. At any historical moment there is movement from one pole toward the other as the efficacy—entertainment braid tightens and loosens. This oscillation is continuous—performance is always in an active state.

The whole binary continuum efficacy/ritual—entertainment/theater is what I call “performance.” Performance

originates in impulses to make things happen and to entertain; to get results and to fool around; to collect meanings and to pass the time; [. . .]. These polar tendencies are present in all performances. (156-157)

Ghātu is a performance on the narratives of the King Pashramu. The entire performance is based on a song and is filled with a number of images. These images, which bring out multiple meanings (symbols) when analysed and interpreted, are the tools and objects used in the performance. For instance, the headgear represents the power structure, and the long bamboo pole, at the top of which the symbolic crown is hung over when the performance is over, represents the ladder to the heaven.

Tracy C. Davis has edited a book entitled, *Performance Studies*. The main focus of Davis's idea is of the kinesthetic performance. There are three kinds of kinesthesia: kinesthesia as interiorization, orientation and simulation. For this, Susan Leigh Foster's essay deals with this kinesthetic impact. This is the technical aspect of the performance studies. Kinesthetic impact applies in *Ghātu*. The term kinesthesia, deriving from the Greek *kine* means the "movement" and *aesthesia* means the "sensation" (47). Foster points out that the viewer is moved when he witness either the dance performance or song performance. Because of sound and sight, the performer and viewer are bridged during the performance period. The audience responds the performance both positively and negatively that depends on the performance. He starts sensing the activities of the dancers if he is affected positively. Kinesthetic performance thus performs not only the performers but it also performs the audiences that they are tied up.

The dancer's dance influences the audience that the emotion passes from one body to another. He means to say that it is a natural process in any kind of performance that takes place before the audience. This process is known as a

contagious behaviour. For instance, one cannot stay without yawning if he sees others yawn nor can he keep idle if he sees other body laughing even if it is not pollution and disease.

Philip Auslander presents a performance studies aspect in his essay entitled, “Live and technologically mediated performance.” Auslander forwards a view that performance studies deals with the elements such as anthropology, sociology and folklore (107). *Ghãtu* also comprises these elements. This shows that *Ghãtu* is a part of performance studies and it is a cultural performance.

Symbolic Interpretation from Semiotic Perspective

Daniel Chandler is a good critic of semiotics. Chandler’s idea helps understand the meanings of some symbols and signs of *Ghãtu*. Carl Jung, John Corrigan and Northrop Frye contribute much in terms of disseminating the information about symbolic significance. Kedarnath Singh and Laxman Prasad Gautam disseminate the information about the functions, effects and types of images.

Daniel Chandler’s book entitled, *Semiotics: The Basics* presents the models of the sign, signs and things, analysing structures, challenging the literal codes, textual interactions and limitations and strengths. There are several visual signs like dresses and ornaments in *Ghãtu* that “semiotics is about ‘visual signs’” (Chandler 1). As this tribal festival has several images like objects, as the wooden appurtenances that “signs take the forms of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects” (Chandler 2). Major concern of the study is the symbolic interpretation of selected images, symbols and signs. The bamboo sign can be considered as a ladder to ascend to the heaven that it is an interpretation in the context of *Ghãtu* performance but it does not give the same meanings in all the fields.

John Corrigan's *Religion and Emotion* contributes with the idea of sign and symbols. The research has "a concern for signs and symbols" (Corrigan 4) which embodies underlying meanings. Semiotic interpretation helps them unfold the meanings. Corrigan further argues, "Emotional performance in religious ritual *symbolically* manifests intersections of morality, aesthetics, cognition, and memory in ways that disclose lived social orders and cultural presuppositions" (16), as it is relevant to the present study.

Carl Jung and other scholars have jointly published a book entitled, *Man and his Symbols*. It comprises five parts: first part is led by Jung, "Approaching the unconscious," second part by Henderson, third part by Franz, fourth part by Jaffe, and fifth part by Jacobi. Henderson argues, "It has helped to break down the arbitrary distinction between primitive man, to whom symbols seem a natural part of everyday life, and modern man, for whom symbols are apparently meaningless and irrelevant" (106). The elderly people analyse the *Ghãtu* as the source of learning and they find the natural part of everyday life in it, whereas for the youths, *Ghãtu* as such is apparently meaningless and irrelevant because they do not understand many things about its importance. They think that it is just time wasting boring activity.

The dancers in *Ghãtu* enact the hunting with a bow and arrow which suggests hunting age because perhaps agriculture was not in human knowledge. According to Greek mythology, Artemis is supposed to be the goddess of hunt and she "was armed with a bow and a quiver of arrows made by the smith god, HEPHAESTUS" (16-17). The dancing girls in *Ghãtu* give the image of Artemis as it is the universal implication in such local ritual.

Ghãtu, despite its ethnic particularity, is thus able to take on the nature of a cultural sign of a victor-victim generality to present itself as a never ending process.

Sticking to its particularity, one can interpret it as such. However, one is also not in the case of seeing an anniversary of the defeat and death of a Gurung prince as Pignède inferred (328) that pose a relevant concern. Rather it reflects the source of inspiration that enables one to see in it a universal cultural phenomenon. The particularity of the universality is also informed by the death of Pashramu, whose death is conveyed by a pigeon, a messenger, to the queen. The presence of such messengers informs a mythologization that enables such incident to take on a universal quality again.

Kedarnath Singh's book, *Imagery in Modern Hindi Poem* consists six chapters. He has presented the development of image theory, definition of image, process of image formation, evolution of images, shadow image, and development of image in shadowy poem respectively. He defines that "symbol is formed from the development of an image as every symbol is an image in its fundamental form" (Singh 28). Singh argues, "Man is a symbol of creative power," in which the word, 'man' is secondary thing and 'creative power' is the main. Or a symbol itself is of less important but what it indicates is very important. He clarifies that a symbol is satiric, whereas an image is symptomatic. Image is synthesized to the nature (28-29). The way how Singh has differentiated the image from symbol is relevant in the discussion of the study as he forwards the view of one English critic that number one only indicates one but not two or four. He means to say that symbol represents the limited idea or tone. For instance, the headgear in *Ghāṭu* does not represent other than the king and power.

Laxman Prasad Gautam's book, *Analysis of Images in Contemporary Nepali Poem* is a critical theory for this project. The images and symbols of *Ghāṭu* site are related to this critical writing. Gautam has categorized the book in four parts. First

part is about general introduction of image; second part is comparison between image and other elements, sign, myth, metaphor, simile; third part is a detail (28 types and 5 sub-types) of image and fourth part is the conclusion and references. His book helps the researcher much in terms of categorizing the images. He has mentioned thirty three images in this book. Among them, cultural image, historical image, metaphoric image, dream image, mythological image are contextual in the analysis of images of *Ghātu*. As the study focuses on cultural aspects, the cultural image, which has been discussed by Gautam, is relevant. Gautam claims that Nepal is full of such cultural activities, “All the cultural activities are great and lovely to the Nepalese. Local festivals, belief, rites and rituals, religion, music, dance, folk music are our identity. Contemporary Nepali poets use all these cultural activities as imagery awareness” (198). He presents the following stanza of poem composed by Kshetrapratap Adhikari and interprets them:

My country is,

Country of double-ended drums and its music in *Rodhighar*¹

Country of *Maaruni*², and her love story and black eye-shade

Every morning brings a festival here / every evening sings *Malsiri*³
song

My history which has been carved in the tambourine/ makes or spreads

Love everywhere as *Chudka*⁴

My country is the country of hills, across the wells and platforms/

Country with the full tune of *laalumi* and *relimai*⁵ songs

My culture, which is dissolved with *Ghātu*, casted the shadow as a

flower of *Fraxinus floribunda*, a kind of tall tree. [Translation mine⁵]

⁵ All the *Ghātu* songs in Nepali written in Roman in the discussion are translated by the researcher.

(Notes: 1. theatre hall, 2. male dancer in disguise of female, 3. Hymn, sung in *Dashain* festival 4. A kind of theatre dance, 5. Local folksongs)

Now he interprets the lines of the poem:

A lively picture of Nepali original folk culture has been sketched and Nepal is introduced on the basis of these factors that there has been a feeling of the nation expressed through these means. *Rodhighar*, music of double ended drums, *malsiri*, tambourine, *chudka*, *lalumai* and *relimai*, cello, *Ghãtu* are the cultural images of Nepali folk music and dance. Similarly, public water taps or wells, public platforms, festivals are the integral parts of Nepali culture. To express the feeling of culture and love of the nation, these words of this stanza of the poem are used here as the cultural images. (198-99)

Gautam's analysis of images in contemporary Nepali poems is contributory to the researcher. The present study concerns the images and symbols of *Ghãtu* performance. Gautam's study is too specific to the study of images. This piece of writing is helpful in terms of such interpretative research works.

Northrop Frye is another powerful critic and a popular writer. His *Anatomy of Criticism* comprises four essays and his third essay, "Theory of Myths" is relevant to this research as there is a symbolic interpretation of colours. The words or phrases of the songs and several images of this site are symbolic because there are a number of insights regarding the discussion of symbols and signs.

Analysis from Historical and Anthropological Perspective

Although several scholars, who are Nepalese and a very few foreign writers, have worked on *Ghãtu*, they are anthropological descriptive pragmatic writings. Prem Khattry's *Sanskriti ra Anubhutika Ayamharu* (Extensions of Culture and Experience)

is the collection of his papers and essays. His essay, entitled “Preserving intangible cultural heritage” is contextual and relevant to the present study as one of its aims is also for preserving the intangible cultural heritage. Khattry claims that different caste groups observe different cultural activities as per needs and benefits they have (Appendix A.7: 304). Those who observe *Ghãtu* have their own interest and there is their identity in it. “Nepalese culture cannot be defined in terms of one monolithic system of beliefs and practices” (Khattry 120). There are a number of cultural streams and strands that all of them cannot be covered by one particular term. *Ghãtu* is just one cultural strand as there are thousands of cultural practices in Nepal. Moreover, Khattry argues, “various ethnic, cultural, and social strands and streams with their distinct cultural identities and ethos constitute the existing Nepali social and cultural fabric [. . .] pluralism is the character of Nepali culture” (121).

Other writers and scholars as Clifford Geertz, Bernard Pignède, Kathleen N. Daly, Tracy Pinchman, Dharma Raj Thapa, Jagman Gurung, Keshar Jung Baral Magar, Narayan Gurung, NaruThapa, Min Shrish Magar, Padam Shrish Magar, Amar Bahadur Gurung, and Ram Bahadur Gurung disseminate a lot of information about historical and anthropological background, nature, themes, and myths of *Ghãtu* culture.

Whatever the cultural activity people observe, according to their either interests or imposition, they do it for certain benefits. The indigenous groups are observing *Ghãtu* not as their own cultural activity. It has been adopted from *Khasa-Brahmin* according to language and theme. Whether *Ghãtu* is adopted or assimilated or transformed from *Khasa-Brahmin*, five indigenous groups have been observing this

cultural activity. However, culture is the reflection of any human society for their total way of life. Clifford Geertz mentions Kluckhohn's views:

Clyde Kluckhohn defines culture as (1) "the total way of life of a people"; (2) "the social legacy the individual acquires from his group"; (3) "a way of thinking, feeling, and believing"; "an abstraction from behavior"; (5) a theory on the part of the anthropologist about the way in which a group of people in fact behave; (6) a "storehouse of pooled learning"; (7) "a set of standardized orientations to recurrent problems"; (8) "learned behavior"; (9) a mechanism for the normative regulation of behavior; (10) "a set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to other men"; (11): a precipitate of history"; and turning, perhaps in desperation, to similes, as a map, as a sieve, and as a matrix. (qtd. in Geertz 4-5)

Kluckhohn thus claims that culture is the total way of life of a people in totality that reflects the recognition of the people and it determines their identity. They acquire their social legacy from their group and they are bound to think, feel and believe accordingly. A person's behaviour is mattered by his group that he cannot avoid it. And culture is the storehouse of pooled learning of everything and way of adjusting to the external environment and with other societies. Likewise, there is a cultural attachment of those groups who are observing *Ghāṭu*. According to its theme and rhythm, the behaviours of these groups are affected.

Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* forwards the idea that analysing the images means guessing at meanings and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses rather than discovering the meaning. He envisions that "[c]ultural analysis is (or should be) guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses,

and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses, not discovering the Continent of Meaning and mapping out its bodiless landscape” (20). As all the objects used in *Ghāṭu* symbolize something but how the cry of dancers symbolizes the cry of newly born baby because of severe pain is just a better guess. The cultural activities are related to myths and myths are the guesses rather than based on facts.

Kathleen N. Daly’s *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z* presents a number of mythical tales that have been generated by man to prove the wonders. The myths are about how the earth, sun, moon and human beings are created. Mythological aspect is a part of discussion in this research because *Ghāṭu* is based on certain myths. One of the reasons why some indigenous groups and one *Khasa-Kshetri* community perform *Ghāṭu* is maybe because, “[f]rom earliest times, humans have had a need to explain the origins and wonders of the world [. . .] in every culture on Earth, made up stories about these phenomena and invented gods and supernatural beings” (Daly vii) as *Ghāṭu* has.

When the man did not know about the creation in the world that was beyond his understanding, he began to speculate. Although not all the stories are based on facts, they are convincing. There are a number of wonders like how mountains and oceans were made. Who made these first? When early humans did not find the logical answer, they began to create the myths. Later, they began to make up stories inventing gods and supernatural beings to provide comfort and instruction (Daly vii). Similarly, this is why and how various other cultural practices like *Ghāṭu* have existed in Nepali cultural domain.

Bernard Pignède is a French writer who came to Nepal and did a very important research work on Gurung for his doctorate in 1958. His findings about *Ghāṭu*, are very informative and useful to the researcher. He has not discussed this site

in much detail that it is the sub-chapter in his dissertation. So he does not describe about how this performance is observed but he presents the major events of *Ghãtu*. One *Ghãtu* guru, Chandra Bahadur Gurung explains that *Ghãtu* is established in any house at midnight changing all the used clothes of the dancers who can be of four to five years of age, whereas he refers the girls of “12 to 14” (466). In addition, Pignède points out about what methods and ways of this trance dance are like. He highlights the dance styles of dancers flickering the second finger and third finger against each other, and touching the ground by their hands time to time during the performance.

Tracy Pintchman’s *Women’s Lives, Women’s Rituals in the Hindu Tradition* presents most religious lives, especially of the women’s lives, from Tamilnadu in South Indian scenario. *Ghãtu* is also based woman’s life that Queen Yemphawati falls in a great tragedy as she commits immolation.

This *sati* practice was in practice in Nepal until the time of Chandra Shamher Rana but he abolished this *sati* practice in 1920. The protagonist of *Ghãtu*, Queen Yemphawati, immolates in her husband’s funeral pyre because of *sati* practice. Pintchman contributes the present research additional information about *sati*.

Dharma Raj Thapa has collected the folk songs from Gandaki region of western Nepal in detail. His book, *Gandakikã Suseli*, contributes to the Nepali literature as well as it is much relevant to this present study. He has described every detail of the *Ghãtu* dance. Although he has pragmatically presented the *Ghãtu* text, piles of information have been there for the basic knowledge about this site. Among several collections, the description of Gurung’s *Ghãtu* dance contributes current research.

Thapa’s “Gurung’s *Ghãtu* dance” is relevant as he disseminates the information of how, when, where, who and why the Gurungs observe *Ghãtu*. He

clarifies that the storyline of *Ghãtu* is pathetic and heart rendering because of King Pashramu's death in the battlefield of Parbat. Thapa observes that the headgear, which is prepared from parched grain, is the sign of goddesses: Deuchuli, Barchuli and Himchuli (cliffs). This gives the insight to the researcher that nature of this research is similar. He presents the methods of performance as the dancing girls must be possessed by the *Ghãtu* aura. It is a test. But in some villages, no dancing girls are possessed by the *Ghãtu* god so that there is no chance of performance. Thapa argues:

First, the girls should be possessed by *Ghãtu* aura immediately after the gurus start chanting; second, they must be possessed by it when gurus pronounce, "speak up Ram," and third the girls must be possessed by the *Ghãtu* when girls' heads are tied with a kind of religious calendar that is called *beliapato* in *Ghãtu* language. If the selected girls are not possessed even by implementing all three methods, there is no truth in the world. (21)

Thapa further explains about the commencement of the ritual that the *Ghãtu* gurus select the two appropriate girls for a dance, whereas he presents three dancing girls in the picture. Thapa makes clear that the dancing girls who are possessed by the *Ghãtu* aura or not but the selected ones must dance for three years or so. He also narrates that the performance is suspended that year if no girls are possessed by the *Ghãtu* aura. But he does not say anything about the consequences such as the villagers suffered much from a kind of plague in Majhitar of Nuwakot when they stopped observing *Ghãtu*. But since when they started performing this cultural activity, they claim that their problem is sorted out. From that time onward, *Ghãtu* is being observed there. (Appendix B.1.iii: 315). What happens if some girls are possessed by the *Ghãtu* aura and some are not? It has happened in Nalma village, Lamjung in 2008. Three dancing

girls were selected for the dance but only two were possessed by the *Ghãtu* aura, and the girl, who was not possessed by the *Ghãtu*, was also allowed to participate in the dance for the quorum. However, Thapa urges that this “*Sati Ghãtu* is a main subject of the study and investigation of traditional musical science of human being” (25).

Jagman Gurung (Appendix A.5: 300), who clarifies that *Ghãtu* has been transformed from other culture and the indigenous people have adopted it, has written several books and articles on *Ghãtu*. *Cultural Heritage of Gandaki Region* is his recent work and his book *Gurung Community and Culture* contributes a great deal of information on indigenous cultural activities and to the current research. According to Gurung, *Ghãtu* is in practice in Nepal from the time of Kulmandan Shah for over five hundred years or so but there are confusions about the history and its adaptation or transformation.

Keshar Jung Baral Magar’s book, *Magar Culture of Palpa, Tanahu and Syangja* helps to draw a demarcation line between Magar *Ghãtu* and other *Ghãtus* performed by other indigenous groups and *Khasa-Kshetri*. He presents the ways and methods of this cultural activity the Magars do. He presents several myths about this cultural performance. This myth shows how *Ghãtu* is shaman practice oriented. He presents a different myth of *Ghãtu* (Appendix B.12: 322).

Apart from this, Baral Magar claims that Newars, Tharus and Limbus also observe *Ghãtu*. He refuses some scholars’ claim that “*Ghãtu* dance is done only by the Gurungs.” He further clarifies, “*Ghãtu* is mentioned in *The Mundhum*, the scripture of Limbu, but it is no more in practice at present” [Translation mine] (97-8). He also provides the evidence of Kali Bhakta Panta for the evidence that the Newar king stopped the tradition of *Ghãtu* performance in 1765, which is written in the very old hand-written hymnal in Newar dialects. He claims that the book is in the

adoration, psalm hermitage in Kathmandu at Paknajol, Nepal (98). This proves that *Ghãtu* represents the blends of multi-ethnic groups. Like the Gurungs, the Magars have *Rãchya (Sati) Ghãtu*, *Bahramasé Ghãtu* and *Marãchya (Kusundã) Ghãtu*.

The involvement of multi-ethnic group suggests that the horizon of *Ghãtu* is wide, “[t]here are some other ethno-groups like Magar, Newar, Limbu and Tharu who observe *Ghãtu* in their own ways” (97-8). It indicates that there are certain similarities and differences at each ethno-indigenous group which has the dynamic relation to non-indigenous groups and the cultural dimensions.

Naru Thapa and Narayan Gurung have contributed in disseminating the *Ghãtu* information. Former has worked as film director of this cultural activity. Gurung has written several articles and participated in several workshop seminars and talk programmes of *Ghãtu* and other indigenous cultural activities. Thapa has worked on *Ghãtu* that he has directed to make the documentary film in 2011.

Min Shris Magar’s *Present Condition and Challenges of Folksong Dance* disseminates historical information of *Ghãtu* and about how *Sati* practice came into existence and how it was ended by Chandra Shamsheer Rana. He describes the popular dances and folk dramas like *Maaruni*, *Sorathi*, *Charitra*, *Singar*, *Kaurah*, *Ghãtu*, and in his book. Shrish Magar argues, “At present, this tribal festival is being observed in subaltern groups in Pandavkhani, Baglung and in Barse of Gulmi even though it is limited among Gurungs and Magars” (48-9). He presents four royal couples. They are Rhitubarna, Kailash, Nareswar, Devai, and Himchuli, and queen’s names are Satyawati, Vidyawati, Yembawati, Rekhiswar, and Mahamai. There are four queens of King Pashramu: Saruma, Maiya, Sita and Amvawati in the *Sati Ghãtu* of Pandavkhani.

After the marriage of the royal couple, Balkrishna is born. The neighboring kings are envious to Balkrishna's birth and they get ready to wage war against Pashramu. To defend his country, "King Pashramu fights against fourteen kings" (Shris Magar, Min 52) but he is slain in the battle and his consort immolates according to *sati* practice. About this awkward *sati* practice, there is a saying that "[t]he widow women who immolate can have a chance of sexual intercourse with their husbands for 30,000 years in the heaven as it was the sentence spoken by Lord Krishna" (Shris Magar, Min 56). "In 1705, King Yogendra Malla of Patan died at the age of 38, and his 33 queens immolated in his funeral pyre. Janga Bahadur had made a rule to control the *sati* practice in 1854, but Chandra Shamsar abolished it in 1920 January 28, for-ever" from Nepal (M. Shrish Magar 57).

Padam Shris Magar's *Ghãtu Dance: Nepal's Folk Culture* presents the indigenous groups like the Gurungs, Newars, Tharus, Goraus, Darais and Barams as the *Ghãtu* practitioners. He has explained the historical background of indigenous language, religion and culture and how *Ghãtu* culture became popular among the Magars. He says, "Bhadu Gurung, the resident of 14 streams Khanigau (Chatkyunasa) is supposed to be the composer of *Ghãtu*" (P. Shrish Magar 7). He presents:

Yeshobrahma Shah gets married to his widow sister-in-law, Vasantawati. Pratap Singh Shah is born of her after three months of marriage and he is considered as King Pashramu. He was made a king of a state called Yulung (Ilum) that is located toward east from Dordi River and west from Chepe River. King Pashramu gets married with the princess Yemmawati, a daughter of Sen King of Makawanpur. Queen Yemmawati bears him a baby son, the prince named Balkrishna. After three years of his birth, King Drabya Shah of east

Gorkha, King Narpati Shah of Bhirpustun, Narhari Shah of west Lamjung and other kings of south Rishing Ghiring attacked over the King Pashramu of Yulung Pond sudden of all with mutual force and they killed him. After the death of King, Queen Yemmawati self-immolated leaving her baby son behind in charge of his maternal uncle, Ramkrishna. (15-16)

Shris Magar shares Indra Bahadur Gurung's knowledge, to clarify about how *Ghãtu* started. He argues that King Pashramu was the son of Kalu Shah according to Gurung. Pratap Shah is Pashramu but there is not any strong supportive evidence against it. Pashramu is supposed to have been killed in the battlefield of Bhalampur at the frontier of Gorkha and Lamjung on *Chandipurnima*, full moon, which falls by April last. So this festival is observed at this time.

The additional information Shris Magar presents is about Pashramu's son, Balkrishna who is supposed to have got married to a princess (Basantawi) of Nawalpur. After marriage, the new couple gambles to predict about their future life but they do not see Balkrishna's chance of becoming the king of the nation. Then Balkrishna decides to become the king of forest (25). Therefore, the nomadic men like *Kusunda*, *Raute* and *Chepang*, who claim that they are the successors of royal family, are known as the generation of Balkrishna (27). This tragic *Ghãtu* (ballet) is supposed to have composed in memoir of late royal couple. There is not much difference in the songs but one remarkable difference of the verse is:

Basi ma nacha vayali, basi ma nacha vayali, vayali nachailaré

Haré! basi ma nacha vayali, basi ma nacha vayali² vayali nachailaré

Haré! Vayaliko antarai ma² yaisa yaisa Pataki jhapaki lagau

Uthi nacha vayali, uthi nacha vayali² vayali nachailaré.

Haré! Uthi nacha vayali, uthi nacha vayali² vayali nachailaré. (51)

Dance in sitting position eh dancing girl,

Dance in sitting position eh dancing girl.

Dance in sitting position eh dancing girl,

Dance in sitting position eh dancing girl

Get up to dance eh dancing girl, dance by standing eh dancing girl

Get up to dance eh dancing girl, dance by standing eh dancing girl

Shris Magar interviews some *Ghãtu* participants, as Shivnarayan Chautariya, who narrated him about “*Ghãtu* dance and history of Gorat (Tharu)” when he interviewed him in 2011. Similarly, Ras Bahadur Gurung narrated him about “*Sati Ghãtu* in Gurung” of Kaski, in 2010, Yam Bahadur Rana Magar “*Ghãtu* dance in Magar” in 2010, Laxminarayan Guruva (Gurau) “*Ghãto (Ghãtu)* dance in Tharu” in 2010, Kewal sing Sunari Magar “*Ghãtu* dance in Magar, Nawalparasi in 2010, and Til Bahadur Thada Magar, “*Ghãtu* dance of Magar around Devchuli Area” in 2010, Rudrapur, Nawalparasi.

Amar Bahadur Gurung’s *Gurungko Sanskriti* (the Gurung culture), is relevant to the present study. Fourth and fifth parts of this book are about language, priesthood, and cultural activities like *Ghãtu* dance. As the major focus of the researcher is on *Ghãtu*, Mr Gurung presents the requirements of it and how it begins. He narrates, “*Ghãtu* dance is one of the famous dances, that is, very popular among the Gurungs. It is about the historical subject matters of a legendary King Pashramu and his queen Ambawati” (A. B. Gurung 121).

However, there is one criticism on *Ghãtu* regarding the language. It is Chandramani Gurung from Lamjung who critiques this tribal festival that the language used in *Ghãtu* is not in Gurung (9). He raises the question about its

belonging but there is not a criticism on symbolic interpretation of *Ghāṭu*. His issue is relevant that, at least, it is a criticism. He disagrees that *Ghāṭu* belongs to Gurung although many Gurung scholars claim that this tribal festival does belong to Gurungs. He claims that there is no any word of Gurung language nor is the theme. *Sati* practice was no more in practice among the Gurungs. He argues:

There is a song that Pashramu's son Balkrishna is flowed in the Jamuna River. Is there any such river between Lamjung and Gorkha? If we seek the history of Shah Kings of Lamjung and Gorkha, we find the history that Kalu Shah had established the kingdom in 1406. There is a history that Ram Shah established Shah Kingdom in Gorkha in 1491. And if the hero of *Ghāṭu*, King Pashramu, is Shah, why has he not been considered as Shah, as Kalu Shah and Ram Shah have been addressed? Similarly, Gurung says that Pashramu is also called Puri. He raises the question if there was any Puri king between Gorkha and Lamjung? (Gurung 9)

Similarly, there are other evidences by means of which Gurung claims that *Ghāṭu* does not belong to Gurungs. As the words, which are used in *Ghāṭu*, are of Tharus, Indo-European but not of the Gurung. Mr Gurung argues ahead:

The artists are Gurung, Magar and Dura but there is not a single word of these indigenous groups. It is supposed to be a culture of very old Hindu according to religious point of view. The widows started abandoning their bangles and red threads from their hair on their husbands' pyre after the *sati* practice was improved. (10)

Gurung presents his logic that other indigenous groups, who have been practicing this tribal festival, do not claim that it belongs to them. Gurung protests because of

language but “[l]anguage, timing and relationship to role are all vital factors in performance, but their use, understanding and impact depend on the condition of consciousness of both performers and audience” (Malekin 55).

Ram Bahadur Gurung, another *Ghãtu* participant, says that there is not a strong supportive evidence to claim that this tribal festival started from this particular date in history. In the lack of historical record, the writers are compelled to mention some sayings or hearsays. Gurung adds the public hearsay that *Ghãtu* started from around the meeting place of Gandaki as well as Madi and Seti Rivers in around sixteenth century. This claim is against Jagman Gurung’s claim around fourteenth century. He mentions the verses of the *Ghãtu* song:

Ha . Ha . hiwaichuli ye devata, varaichulidevata, aawaila

Ha . Ha . dharaipanijaiye, kuwaipanijaiye, pachaila ha

Ha . . a. re Sita .. Rani sukhiya. . .ha, Sita. . Rani sukhiya ha, pugaila

Ha . re . .suhayo re bhaiya, suhayo re bhaiya ha

Ya . . buna ye sunaikeshaduhuwaila ha

Ha . ha. tha. ha.. nairoobahasi, pahadairobahasi. . .

So ho vaila ha³ (Gurung 24)

Oh Himchuli god, oh Varchuli god, please come on

Use tap water and water from the well to clean

Oh be happy queen Sita, oh be happy queen Sita, approaching soon

Suited well oh brother, suited well oh brother

Wash your golden hair and weave well

Wherever you go it suits well

The verse varies from one place to another even in Gurung. The song differs from one village to another. Gurung further says that Himchuli is supposed to be

Mahadev, Varchuli is Parvati and Deuchuli is Vishnu that all of them are invoked as gods in the time of *Ghãtu* performance. Gurung shares his knowledge with the researcher that villagers do not perform *Ghãtu* in the year of main guru's death as a respect or the performance is suspended that year.

He says that dancers' dreams are meaningful. The time of that year will be very auspicious if the dancers see very bright shadow and the year will be inauspicious if they see the dark image in the gashes. Sometimes, the dancers see the bad sign of the particular person but it is not informed to his/her family because they worry about it. The family is indirectly informed about inauspicious sign so that they attempt to avoid it by warding off the evils offering either the hens or he-goats or following some religious practices like reading some verses of similar kind of books. The *Ghãtu* village believes, "If the dancing girls see a particular person of that *Ghãtu* village in the pond of blood in the gash, s/he is supposed to die that year or he will surely fall serious sick" (Gurung 26).

Analysis from Folk Drama Perspective

Chudamani Bandhu disseminates the theoretical understanding of folk drama performance and Pradip Jaman: Shrestha presents a folk drama. Chandramani Gurung critiques the *Ghãtu* performance from language perspective. Chudamani Bandhu's *Nepali Lok Sahitya* (Nepali Folklore), as the folk drama, is relevant in terms of folk drama theory to the present study because *Ghãtu* is also a folk drama. In addition, Kusumakar Neupane's *Dashavatar Balan Loknatak* (Ten Times Incarnation *Balan* Folk Drama) is relevant to the present study. Neupane's *Dashavatar Balan Loknatak* helps the researcher understand the nature of subject. *Ghãtu* and *Dashavatar Balan Loknatak* are similar in many respects. Both of these folk dramas are enactment oriented dance performances.

Neupane interprets the folk dramas like *Gopichan*, *Ghãtu*, *Gaijatra*, *Shyamachakewa*, *Jatjatin*, *Maghanel* and *Medariya Dance*. Mostly the indigenous people perform these folk dramas. However, the indigenous people can be considered as the aborigines of Nepal that “Aborigines are a unique race because they are utterly possessed by the Dreaming. The Dreaming means more to them than political or social issues because it is the only unsullied possession to them” (Cowan 4).

Dreaming is there in *Ghãtu* practitioners. Most *Ghãtu* practitioners are not well aware of political or social issues as Cowan claims. *Ghãtu* is really a living tradition and a prism in which or through which one can see various human realities as “it encompasses an entire society or entire population group” (Eriksen 38). *Ghãtu* exposes the life cycle from birth to death and from death to rebirth. Starting of *Ghãtu* is birth of dancers; performance of dancers is life; enactment of royal couple’s cremation is death and eye opening performance is rebirth.

Pradip Jaman: Shrestha’s, *Nilbarahi Gana Dance* presents the ways and methods of such historical dance. There are five major parts of the discussion and there are three other parts in which he has forwarded the persons who are involved in the dance. This dance is relevant to the present study in the sense of enactment and performed for almost similar purpose of making the gods happy or like that. To do the *Nilbarahi* dance means to make the *Nilbarahi* goddess happy so that “the wishes will be fulfilled and there will be the protection to the villagers from the evil spirits” (10).

Diana Taylor in his essay, “Performance and intangible cultural heritage” expresses the view that human bodies are the site that performs cultural activities. He says, “[d]ances, rituals, songs, and other types of performance that require human bodies, energy, virtuosity” (94). But these requirements are lacking in the villages that cause such cultural heritages disappear. He expresses some reasons of disappearing

the cultural heritages from the existence such as *Ghãtu*. He says that most of the young people go abroad for employments and there are a few people in the village to continue such cultural practices. There are other reasons as the people who are in minority have to follow the mainstream cultural activities for their adjustment and survival. Taylor makes it clear that the groups, which are in minority, have to know colonial language for communication. “Native languages, for example, are disappearing at an alarming rate because speakers need to know colonial languages in order to survive, few countries offer education in Native languages, speakers endure discrimination if they speak their language” (101). So is the condition of *Ghãtu* in its disappearance trend from several villages.

Although this is not a major concern of the study, the ultimate goal is this as well. Like the disappearance of native languages, many such cultural activities like *Ghãtu*, *Sorathi*, *Kaura* and *Charitra* are disappearing at an alarming rate because those people who are in minority need to follow colonial cultural practices. This is known as internal colonialism. Taylor clarifies that there is a trend of migration in many villages to city area. This process also gears to disappear the cultural practices.

These writers and scholars, both foreigners and Nepalis contribute much to base the current research. All these literatures are significant for the present study both from theoretical and pragmatic perspectives. The upcoming chapter deals with the theoretical perspectives of the study to interpret the text. Geertz says that there is a total way of life of a people in the cultures. Richard Schechner, Philip Auslander, Ralph Yarrow, and Tracy C. Davis are the theorists. The ideas of Schechner, Yarrow and Auslander are relevant from performance perspectives. Eco’s idea is semiotic, whereas Carl Jung and other scholars are important in symbols. Davis’s idea is of the kinesthetic performance, and the ideas of Kedarnath Singh and Laxman Prasad

Gautam are of imagery. Chudamani Bandhu's idea is of folk drama theory. Pignède and Geertz forward the ideas of anthropological perspectives, and the contributions of Ammar Bahadur Gurung, Dharama Raj Thapa, Jagman Gurung, Chandramani Gurung, Keshar Jung Barral Magar, Naru Thapa, Min Shrish, Padam Shris, Pradip Jaman: Shrestha, Prem Kumar Khattry, Diana Taylor, Edward Tylor, Kathleen N. Daly are significant.

The scholarship of *Ghāṭu* is relatively is not sufficient but some of these foreign and Nepali writers, who have worked on this cultural activity, help the present research much. These writers and scholars from performance, semiotics, folk drama, and anthropological perspectives have contributed a lot to this present research. The study thus focuses on performance, semiotics and folk drama perspectives. The study thus focuses on performance, semiotics and folk drama perspectives.

CHAPTER III

GHĀTU FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF PERFORMANCE, SEMIOTICS AND
FOLK DRAMA

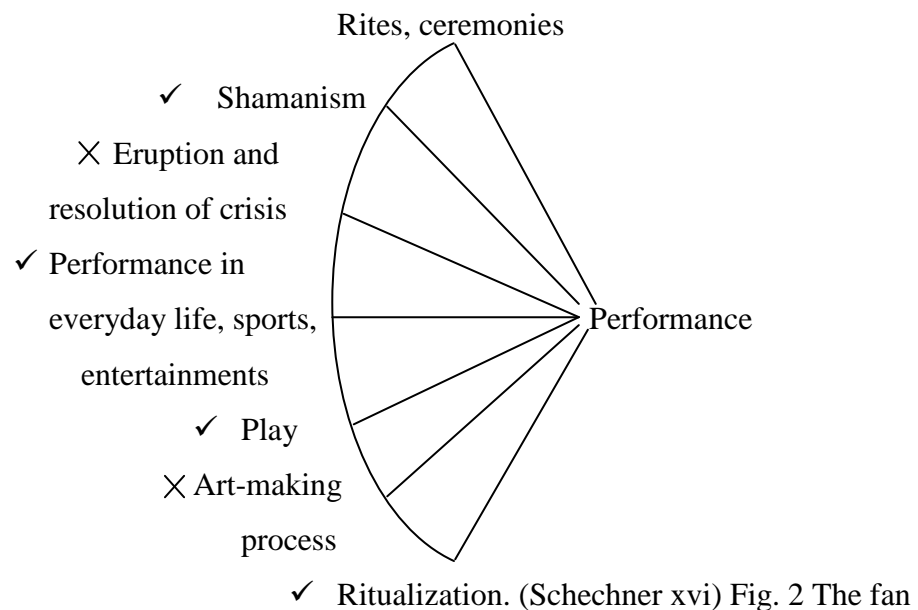
Ghātu culture reflects shamanism in the sense that the dancers must be possessed by the *Ghātu* aura to perform the dance. There are about six ethnic groups and one caste group to perform this tribal festival in Nepal. Lamjung is supposed to be the origin of *Ghātu*. It can be considered both as a dance and as a narrative song. The practitioners perform *Ghātu* for certain purposes of betterment of anything in the village. There are some intra- and inter-differences of this tribal festival.

The current research analyses *Ghātu* from the perspectives of performance, semiotics and folk drama as well as anthropology. There is a link between this cultural activity and performance studies that *Ghātu* is a part of performance studies. *Ghātu* is a performing art, and it is interpreted as an illusion from performance perspective. *Ghātu*'s symbolic meanings are interpreted through semiotic perspective, and it is categorized as a folk drama from folk drama perspective. Moreover, the human relations through *Ghātu* have been analysed from anthropological perspective.

Theoretically, *Ghātu* is a performing art if perceived through performance theory and functions of signs and symbols are interpreted through a semiotic perspective. Imagery deals with the meaning and structure of images in a particular text, whereas folk drama theory interprets texts, including folk drama, by grounding them in folk culture of a given society. There are hundreds of folk dramas in Nepal but they are different even if some similarities are identified in some points. This shows that there is a kind of uniformity within such varieties.

Performance perspective is a major tool to interpret the cultural texts, and performance studies is a discipline under which *Ghātu* is considered as a cultural

performance. Richard Schechner's *Performance Theory* is the major theoretical foundation stone for the present study, is a pioneer of performance studies. Schechner presents the theoretical aspects of the cultural performance by using fan figure and web figure. According to the 'fan figure,' there are seven categories, and in the 'web figure,' there are nine categories (Schechner xvi). Only the fan figures have been presented here as the representative of Schechner's principle to analyse the *Ghãtu* performance. The following figure shows where *Ghãtu* lies within the overall framework:



In terms of the 'fan figure,' *Ghãtu* can be located in relation to sub-sections such as rites, ceremony, shamanism, performance in everyday life, sports, entertainments, play and ritualization. Especially so because *Ghãtu* is the continuation of shamanism and animism. In terms of the 'web figure,' *Ghãtu* is related to historic and prehistoric shamanism and rites, as well as performance in everyday life. *Ghãtu* lies in relation to points ticked in the figure described above according to the fan figure, as it is a rite or ceremony conveying celebration in a sense. *Ghãtu* symbolizes the shamanism that it is based on supernatural power. This cultural performance can also be considered a

performance of everyday life; a kind of sport or a source of entertainments. It can also be considered as a play as well as a cultural ritual.

From the perspectives of performance, the study analyses the interconnection between performers and audiences, and concerns itself with how productive and relatively positive audience's feedback is. As every cultural performance has its own goal, *Ghātu* has the goal of healing and entertainment. The performative aspects and practical grounds of performance have also been studied. Schechner argues, "The performance is a set of exchanges between the performers and the action. And of course among all the performers and between them and the audience" (54). Such an exchange applies in *Ghātu* as the gurus, choir groups, dancers relate the story of royal couples, and they share it with the audience. Schechner observes:

The whole binary continuum efficacy/ritual—entertainment/theater is what I call "performance." Performance originates in impulses to make things happen and to entertain; to get results and to fool around; to collect meanings and to pass the time; to be transformed into another and to celebrate being oneself; to disappear and to show off; to bring into a special place a transcendent Other who exists then-and now and later-and-now; to be in a trance and to be conscious; to focus on a select group sharing a secret language and to broadcast to the largest possible audience of strangers; to play in order to satisfy a felt obligation and to play only under an Equity contract for cash. These oppositions, and others generated by them, comprise performance. (Schechner 156-57)

Main focus of such cultural performances is to entertain the audiences.

The concern of performance perspective is the make-believe of performances and the entire network of more “truthful” and more “real” meanings of the texts as well as to analyse the impact of performance upon the audience. Although the audience cannot believe entirely the storyline of performance, the participants claim that when they watch the show, they are compelled to believe about what the performers are performing because “[p]erformances are make-believe, in play, for fun [. . .] performances are *lilas*—sports, play—and *maya*” (Schechner XVIII). *Ghāṭu* is not a play but like a play which is acted out for fun just as the carnivals. The Sanskrit, *lilas* means the “fate” or “human world,” and *maya* means the “love” because of which Yemphawati self-immolates. To be widow in her young age is her fate and she immolates in her lord’s pyre because of *maya* is her action. The enactments are so lively that audiences have to believe whatever the performers enact because logic is irrelevant in such shaman traditions. After all, *Ghāṭu* performance is a kind of worshipping of the nature as it relates to the animism. To observe the *Ghāṭu* means to worship of disparate souls—parts of nature—of royal couple.

While interpreting the images of *Ghāṭu* to study symbolization through performances of this text, the ideas of Richard Schechner and Philip Auslander—the pioneers of performance theory and performance studies—can function as important critical device. Schechner argues, “[p]erformance is an illusion of an illusion” (XIX). Most activities of *Ghāṭu* are not based on scientific experiments but are based on make-belief as also in the shaman tradition. No *Ghāṭu* spectators may believe what they see in the performance at first observation. They fall into confusion and illusory when they visualize the performance.

Most activities of the dancers are unbelievable, mysterious and full of surprises. “*Ghāṭu Nach* [. . .] is performed not only for fun and entertainment, but also

for the charm and mysticism that are associated with this unique cultural show” (Karmacharya 1). Neither can the audiences directly protest nor show disbelief nor can they believe it without questions. They cannot believe their eyes and they just stare at the performance without any response. At last the audiences are compelled to trust the performativity of this *Ghãtu* folk drama. They cannot present rational logic against it, but they have to believe it. That is why Schechner says that performance is an illusion of an illusion. *Ghãtu* does not force the audience to believe but it makes them realize that it is not untrue; this is what makes *Ghãtu* unique.

It is because the dancers perform in a trance mode. Schechner argues, “[t]o be in trance is not to be out of control or unconscious” (197). Schechner’s observation is based on the performance of Balinese horse dance but in *Ghãtu*, the dancers, especially, in *Kusundã* and Sati episodes, are out of control and unconscious when they are in trance mode. Some dancers enact abnormally. The dancers say that they do not know what makes them perform that way. In this sense, *Ghãtu* is beyond the scope of performance perspectives.

Philip Auslander states, “[p]erformance studies is rooted in the fields of theatre studies, anthropology, sociology, folklore, [. . .] whether those events be aesthetic performances, cultural performances, rituals, or everyday behavior” (107). There is an integral relation of the performance studies with anthropology, sociology, folklore, speech, and oral interpretation. All the live events of such cultural performances are the major points of reference. *Ghãtu* can also be considered in the similar manner in the sense that it is also a live event, a cultural performance as well as an aesthetic performance.

Ralph Yarrow argues, “Certain features of the use of masks in performance also seem likely to contribute, for example, in affecting breathing patterns, reducing

the field of vision, and producing a sensation of disjunction or dissociation between the performer and the entity signalled by the mask” (162). Wearing of a mask makes the performers confident and adventurous to perform better. The *lakhe* dance of Newar community in Nepal is an example. However, the case in *Ghãtu* is slightly different. The dancers are not concerned with the power of headgear or other cloaks; it is *Ghãtu* aura which is beyond the mask that animates dancers’ performance with a mysterious change.

While performing the *Ghãtu*, the dancers do not wear the mask. The artists, who play the role of nomadic couples—King *Kãjuli* and Queen *Kãjuli*—paint their faces, but the dancers wear the headgears instead of masks. The artists are not specially chosen as the dancers. The male artists play the roles of both the king and the queen in *Gharti* dance episode of *Ghãtu* performance when the role of these nomadic couples takes place. In Salyantar, Dhading and in Majhitar, Nuwakot, the dancing girls wear only the cloth straps on their heads while they perform the dance. In this cultural performance, the unseen power governs the dancers better than the turbans they wear. After all, *Ghãtu* aura is considered to emanate from spiritual power.

Spiritual power means supernatural power that makes the performance mysterious and curious. An effective performance establishes a good relation between performer and audience. This theory of performance poses the idea that the dance performance as such is fully governed by some unseen power that is beyond human understanding. In *Ghãtu*, the performers go into trance as soon as the gurus chant the phrases of the song. What happens to them when they listen to the songs? The researcher inquired the dancers individually about their trance states in Lamjung, Tanahu, Dhading and Nuwakot. In replies, they say they do not know what makes

them perform that way. But according to performance theory, it is the spirit that governs the dancers to perform well, something that the dancers cannot express or explain what makes them enact that ways because “[a] man dances well only when he is moved by the spirit. Two autonomous, symbiotic existences support each other” (Schechner 40). How the spirit moves the dancers and what drives them is beyond their understanding. Both the dancers and the spirit are autonomous and symbiotic existences that support each other. A kind of unseen link is established within these multidimensional phenomena. The performers enter the spiritual world from the physical world and the spiritual power possesses them. This process represents the connection between a man and the spirit.

How does the spiritual power motivate the performers in *Ghātu* so effectively that they forget their personalities? It is not only the spiritual power that motivates the dancers so effectively it is also the music which helps motivate them. The dancers start enacting the royal couples rather than believing that they are mere actors. Keats’s term “negative capability” seems to be relevance while applied to *Ghātu*. According to this principle of “negative capability,” one negates his personality a literary or performative piece and starts behaving like a king if he is playing the role of a king. The dancers in *Ghātu* too, negate their personalities and start behaving like that of a person whose role they are playing. Both the singers and dancers display an impersonal stance and maintain the aesthetic distance. The performers obviously impersonate and objectify their subjective. The beauty of text is internalized by the performers, and they are attached to the story of the text. It is under these conditions that they enter a trance-like state. This trance mode makes the dancers forget their personalities because the performers are good actors and role models. This is about how the dancer performs such peculiar activities.

Both the *Ghãtu* performers and audiences are obsessed when performance begins. The dancers forget their personalities during the performance more than audiences do. Hypnotic power of music attracts both the dancers and viewers. The dancing girls are productive and positive in the sense that they enact the actions of royal couples as the singers sing with the rhythm of music. They forget their presence and they think that they themselves are the major characters of the *Ghãtu* performance. One may ask how the performers get possessed by the *Ghãtu* aura. It is because “something happens to them psychologically and physiologically during a performance” (Schechner 46). What is that something? This something is the spiritual power. Most cultural performances, which have the power to attract the audiences, are characterized by such unbelievable activities. The spiritual power governs such activities and practices.

Most participants say that *Ghãtu* is a cultural performance of formal sorts which has several established and prescribed patterns of observance. The researcher has experienced first-hand that both the dancers and singers are very careful about these prescribed patterns while the performance is going on. The dancers are under the control of dance masters, the singers and the whole performances depend on the way the singers perform. The way the dance masters sing with melodious voice makes the dancers go into a trance, and the entire performance in turn, makes the audiences go into a kind of trance. Singer, dancer and audience thus are interconnected as a trinity that they are interdependent. From this perspective, the audiences can also be considered as the silent performers in *Ghãtu*. They visualize and start enacting the actions of dancers unknowingly. To show the link between singers, dancers and audience is thus extremely relevant while studying *Ghãtu*.

From different prospective, the text can also be analysed from anthropological stand point. Thomas Hylland Eriksen says, “Anthropology represents certain fundamental insights concerning the human condition [. . .] to see human life from below and from the inside” (3). This can be depicted from *Ghãtu*, too. Anthropology is concerned with the human condition and studies human life from all aspects while dealing with cultural activities as elements of a complex performance. The underlying meaning of any cultural activity is not easy to grasp because “[s]ocial and cultural performance is infinitely more complex and subtle than the non-verbal communication of animals. Its messages are through both verbal and non-verbal media” (Turner 16). The crown image symbolizes the king and songs—the words—symbolize the queen’s lamentations. Sounds and movements of animals in different situations serve different purposes of non-verbal communication. The gestures and images of *Ghãtu* performance are also considered as non-verbal forms of such non-verbal communication and are very complex and subtle.

In spite of our complex cultural performance, “[w]e are shaped by our culture. Our body language, our understanding of gesture, and our physical relationship to the world are formed by the culture we grow up in” (Deagon). It means the cultural activities profoundly shape our lives. The anthropological stand point exposes how the society is shaped, as well as how symbolic interpretations can yield the underlying cultural meanings. The significance of cultural performances is interpreted in detail as “images contain many layers of meaning” (Deagon) just as shown by the red blouse of dancers in *Ghãtu* that symbolizes beauty.

The joint performance of both the dance masters and the dancers target the audiences. Comprehension of the audiences is obviously more important than the comprehension of the performers although both of them are equally important for the

relatively positive and re-creative output of the performance. What also must be taken into account is that audiences are from various social backgrounds. Kershaw Baz writes, “A postdoctoral researcher worked with four types of “memory group”:
 randomly chosen audience members; local community residents invited to see the show; heritage professionals from the ship and city museums; student performers from circus school and university” (31). The audience of *Ghātu*, just as audiences of other cultural performances, can be from different backgrounds and different levels of understanding who observe the show from their own perspectives. The audiences of *Ghātu* are also with different levels of understanding. Performance theory concerns how the audiences perceive the performance.

The audience interprets the *Ghātu* performance in a way they comprehend. Every individual in the audience may have different responses concerning the performance but they come to an agreement in a certain point when they interpret the show. The understanding of audiences is highly prioritized because they give the performance differing meanings when the show is over. Some write books and some make the documentaries on it. Once their products go to the market, they cannot be put back into their previous forms, just as the cooked food cannot be turned back into its raw form. Therefore, audience’s response is very important. Schechner opines:

Cooking is something that is done to raw stuff to change it into food and perhaps, to purify it. All cooked food was once raw; all raw food is cookable. Some fruits and vegetables are “food” raw or cooked, but most meats need to be cooked before they are considered to be food. The process of cooking is irreversible. There is no way for raw food to “come after” cooked food. So it is with art and life. Art is cooked and life is raw. Making art is process of transforming raw experience into

palatable forms. This transformation is mimetic, a representation.

Such, at any rate, is the heart of the mimetic theory. (30)

The books and documentaries are considered to be irreversible transformations. Once they are publicized, they cannot be put back. The public internalizes what they comprehend from books and documentaries. Performance is thus the raw stuff and its publicity through print and electronic media is the cooked food. Just as all raw food is cookable, all the performances such as *Ghãtu* are documentable and writable.

While a number of social and cultural performances are in practice in the world, they do not resemble each other. However, they have certain meeting points and structural similarities. As Turner argues, “[t]here are various types of social performance and genres of cultural performance, and each has its own style, goals, entelechy, rhetoric, developmental pattern and characteristic roles” (13). Various cultural performances have their specific norms and standards as well as a developmental pattern and characteristic roles. The same is true regarding *Ghãtu* performance where there is a unique developmental pattern and characteristic roles signifying the historical memory of indigenous and non-indigenous groups.

Moreover, the study also deals with the anthropological stand point. For anthropologist, specific event is important but for the critics of performance studies, specific actions or enactments of the performers are important. The anthropologists are concerned with the specific events that unfold as the diachronic developments and are tied to the established structures in the society. As different from this, performance studies deals with the specific actions or performances that happen within specific time and space frames. It is because “[. . .] culture consists of socially established structures of meaning” (Geertz 12-13). How audience is moved by the performance is because of kinesthetic sensation.

Kinesthetic Impact of *Ghātu* Performance

Ghātu is a cultural activity related to performance studies. As the ritual has a variety of arts in their independent formation and it is a complex compositional form that it is revealed through the process of performance, and the term, “ritual” often denies or obscures the significance for analysis of the many different forms that they are actualized (Kapferer 191). In any kind of performance possessed condition plays a vital role. This captive condition of the dancers is called kinesthetic impact in performance studies.

The body movements of the dancing girls in *Ghātu* that affect the spectators visibly are known as a kinesthetic impact of the performance. The Greek term ‘kinesthesia,’ derived from *kine* (movement) and *aesthesis* (sensation), refers to the body’s movement. The kinesthetic impact is the effect that is produced in the spectators while witnessing the performance. Dancer’s body movements make the spectators imitate similar movements when they observe the performance. The dancers in *Ghātu* enact various activities signifying both themes, including the local to universal. Tragedy of Pashramu as representing the general is the tragedy of human beings all over the world. This elegiac theme, related to this tragic story, is an external factor that moves the spectators resulting in a kinesthetic impact (sensing of body).

The movements of the dancers create visible impact of the performance on the spectators who happen to mimic the enactments of dancer. Sight, sound and senses play a vital role in creating such impacts to move the viewers. *Ghātu* dance is a classical dance that moves the audience in an effective way because it is a traditional dance, tempting the audience to mime the performers due to “necessity and probability, universality and typicality” (Habib 125).

Such an impact is noticed when the observers get possessed and obsessed. They are tranced just as the performers, and some of them unwillingly nod their heads in the beat of rhythm. In this sense, the observers can be considered as silent performers to the dance. They also perform the dancer's enactments either by dancing or singing together with the *Ghãtu* gurus and dancing girls. June McDaniel observes,

During the dramatic performance, the emotions represented by the actor are experienced by the observer, who is simultaneously a participant. As the trained observer is aware of the subtlety and interplay of emotion, he or she becomes involved in what might be called "performance art." (265)

The observers experience the emotions represented by the actor during the dramatic performance like *Ghãtu*. There might be two categories of people included in the performance: trained and untrained. The response of trained observers differs from untrained ones. The performance art of the dancers can be considered as that of higher level than that of the viewers, however, display a "performance art" of their own. The *Ghãtu* artists entertain the audiences through humorous enactments, and audience feels sorry when they enact the tragic situation. The performance thus affects the audiences while the show is on. The participants happen to mime the songs and dances of *Ghãtu* when they observe the performance. This process is known as inner mimicry, the kinesthetic impact.

All the body movements, postures and gestures of the dancers are conveying the messages to the audiences. The audiences receive the messages through sights and a kind of unseen power links the performers and the audiences. It is because of a contagious behaviour according to performance perspective the audience gets moved by such trance-like activities of the performers. The audiences begin to sympathize

over the dancers while they cannot come out to normal position after they have gone into a trance in *Ghātu* performance. Also in other performances, the audiences behave according to the performers. The audiences sing while the performers are singing, the audiences weep while the performers are weeping, and they laugh while the performers are laughing. The audiences imitate the actions of the performers:

Thus movement is contagious—through the conduit of sight—because spectators’ brains mirror the actions in their bodies, which in turn rehearse what is seen even if muscles are immobile. Seeing, in effect, is doing. (Davis 3)

Whenever the performance is acted out, the spectators’ brains mirror the actions in their bodies, they rehearse what they see though they do not move their muscles. Some audiences start moving their hands, whereas others start dancing in their seats if they are part of the dance performance greatly. The audiences are influenced by the performance in such a way that they get excited so much. The spectators see the performance and they imitate the activities performed by the actors, as if it is some kind of neurological duet between the dancers and viewers in *Ghātu*. This is how a kinesthetic impact yields performers and audience to render into one form.

There are two parties—dance masters and dancers in *Ghātu*. Also, it is more psychological than physical. The dance performance is physical but its impact is psychological. The dancers dance not only because of their physical energy but also because of some unseen power that governs them. For instance, kinesthetic impact during cricket game and *Ghātu* performance can be compared in a sense because cricket players are highly tranced while playing the match. The players do not care what happens to their body parts and are similarly possessed by the spirit of the game being played. Unlike in cricket game, where mostly the skill of the players matters, in

Ghãtu, the aura matters as an effecting such possession, even if the dance skill cannot be ignored.

Unlike cricket games, which are for competition, *Ghãtu* dance is for the cultural performance. In cricket, certain corporeal elements like “the sensations of [...] bones, muscles, ligaments, tendons, and joints” function very effectively (46). While such elements play that role in *Ghãtu*, something other elements—*Ghãtu* aura—play the vital role in addition to these elements. Tragic theme of royal couple, reverberating song, music of double ended drums, and peculiar headgears, make the dancers perform *Ghãtu* dance effectively. This impact is not limited to the performers only, but also affects the audience like a contagious behaviour. The dancers seem to perform the dance effectively by wearing the turban, even if it is not exactly the same, just as the motorcyclist drives the motorcycle wearing a helmet more effectively than without wearing such an accessory.

In *Ghãtu*, kinesthesia, which is called as the sixth sense, is interiorized in a way in which the dancing girls perform the dance as also in the way in which the viewer obviously gets moved when he watches the show. Body’s movements in *Ghãtu* are different from body’s movements in other cultural performances such as Shiva Tamang writes, *Kattik Gananritya*, one of the shaman dances, observed by Newar people in Nepal. They are also different from the body movements that come into play other sports and games. The dance movements of *Ghãtu* are much slower than usually they are in other performances, and for this reason *Ghãtu* is categorized as a classical dance.

Both the movements of body of the dancers and sounds of songs, which are expressive and dramatic, have the great impact on spectators. The dancer’s body’s movements are inspired by the melodious sounds of *Ghãtu* songs. Both the theme and

sounds are equally responsible to make the audiences feel sensation. How the spectators evaluate performance is major concern. The words of *Ghãtu* songs may not be as important as the body's movements in the dance performances. The dance movements and gestures give the audience more messages than the songs do. However, the way in which sounds and tunes of the songs affect the attendant is crucial. Themes and meanings of words cannot be ignored. *Ghãtu* is a dance event and the audiences do not generally understand the wordings of songs because of buzz sound of the singers while singing but they understand the underlying meanings through the body language of the dancers. This is the response of the audiences. The trinity of stimulation, response and feedback of audiences is obviously considered as the focus of all *Ghãtu* performances.

The sense comes to the dancers from bones, muscles, ligaments, tendons and joints. Only then does the performance become effective. The audiences in *Ghãtu* also sense the similar effects. Performers' body language—the dancers' movements—moves the audiences. The rate or level of sensation is much higher in *Ghãtu* performance than compared to other forms of general dance performances. The audience gets moved from this slow dance movement in *Ghãtu* as they look really beautiful and tempt and attract the observers. Basically, body language is highly prioritized in all types of performances. The audiences rehearse the actions of the performers as, “[w]hat the mirror neurons indicate is the mutuality of sensing and physical action. Whether or not we feel afraid as we watch someone walk along the edge of a precipice, we may well move our arms and legs” (55).

Effect of this performance on the viewers is not as instantaneous as is observed in football or cricket games but it lasts longer than that of other performances. In looking sporting performances, we move our arms and legs so as to

displace our body's weight to the side of safety when we watch someone walk along the edge of a precipice no doubt because it is very sensitive. The sensing and physical action of such game may not have as long effect on the viewer as of *Ghãtu* performance has.

In *Ghãtu* performance, the dancers' movement's effect on viewers is contagious. The viewer silently enacts what the dancers enact. The viewer cannot control this inner mimicry when performance commences. If the actions of the dancers are no more imitated by the audiences, the performance may not be effective. But *Ghãtu* performance is so moving that there is no chance of escaping from it. The audience inertly imitates the actions of the dancers just as when a yawning person who makes another one do the same action as yawning takes place as also described by John Martin in 1930 (46). Similar things happen in other areas of everyday life; for instance, we pucker when we see someone tasting a lemon; we yawn when we see someone yawning, we smile when we see someone smiling. The yawning unknowingly passes to another person as contagion that one cannot avoid it. Performing of *Ghãtu* might be similar to what happens when we see someone tasting a lemon. Not only the trained observers, but also the untrained observers get moved when they observe this tribal festival closely. In this context, *Ghãtu* performance affects the attendants in the similar manner. Foster observes:

Martin argues that the viewer, on witnessing the dancing body, is inspired to feel equivalent kinesthetic sensations. This process, which he calls "inner mimicry," is grounded in a fundamental physical reactivity to all events: we pucker when we witness someone tasting a lemon, and when they yawn or cry we feel similar impulses. (48)

The viewer is inspired to feel equivalent kinesthetic sensations of the body's movements just as the dancers in *Ghātu*. As a result, all the audiences get moved by the events of the ritual. One cannot laugh when s/he sees someone crying, and one cannot cry when s/he witnesses someone laughing. Nor can s/he remain untouched by the behaviors and activities of a dancer while *Ghātu* dance performance is going on. In the *Sati* episode, for instance, all the attendants start sobbing when the *Satirani* is about to immolate. *Satirani* here means the Queen Yemphawati. The audiences do not get moved a similar way while witnessing every episode of this ritual. The kinesthetic impact varies from episode to episode even though it works in all the episodes. Why and how does performance affect the viewers? What matters the bodily sensing? It seems that a kind of airwave plays a vital role between performers and viewers of *Ghātu*. Another factor maybe is that relating to sound and sight. Melodious sound of music and songs also matter the kinesthetic impact of the viewers. Sight of the body's movements moves the audiences more than the sounds do.

Performance studies analyses kinesthetic impact as the function of nerves system in the body of the viewer. What is being performed is reflected to the viewer, and he starts mimicking or imitating the actions of the performers. This process can be understood as the mirror neurons which are located in several parts of human body. Apart from eyes and mind of the viewer that perceive the performance, there are inner mimics in human body. This matters the perception of onlookers as:

Strong evidence in support of Berthoz's argument that perception simulates action has been provided with the discovery of mirror neurons, located in several areas of the cortex. These neurons fire when the subject performs an action, and they also fire when the subject sees the action being performed. Thus as we watch someone

moving, motor circuits in the brain are activated that do not necessarily result in visible movement. (54)

By the end of *Ghāṭu* performance, especially in the *Sati* episode, the audiences get moved very badly because of the way the dancing girls enact the tragic theme. The neurons of the audiences fire when the dancers perform the immolating actions, and they also fire when audiences see the action being performed. In the same way, the motor circuits in the brain of audiences in *Ghāṭu* are obviously activated as soon as they watch the show but it is not necessary that other people should see it in visible movement.

As Davis observes in S. L. Foster's explanation that Foster explains how neurological perception of action results in an "inner mimicry" of what is seen. Thus, movement is contagious—through the conduit of sight—because spectators' brains mirror the actions in their bodies, which in turn lead them to mime what is seen even if muscles are immobile. Seeing, in effect, is doing (Davis 3). Seeing the performance by the viewers is being done that it is out of their control.

The spectators silently start imitating what the dancers are doing in the performance. The muscles of the spectators are physically seen immobile but they are mobile, moving. Some over-emoted spectators even get up and dance with the dancers on the stage. Or some people lose their control, and start singing that is overheard in the concert halls, whereas some, who are able to control their excitements, do not sing. But they are not untouched by the singing on the stage; they also sing the song with the singer, but they do this inwardly, and covertly, and dance if dance is going on. Their heads may start nodding to the musical beat of a song; some sing, some hums, and some do not, but most of the people in the audience imitate what they see and hear.

Ghātu spectators thus get moved when not only they witness the entertaining episodes involving make-up and paddy rice-planting, but *Sati* part and *Kusundā* part of *Ghātu* sensitize the viewer very effectively. In the *Sati* part, Queen Yemphawati gets ready to immolate and this moves the audience. In *Kusundā* part, the dancers cannot come out from the trance-mode for a long time. This also moves the audience gravely. In the *Sati* episode, the spectators may think that Queen Yemphawati's situation is their own so that some of them start even sobbing. The spectators forget their personality while watching the performance. Likewise, the trance mode of the dancers inspires their own mood, and when they see that dancers are not coming out of their trance, it makes them fearful that they forever might not recover their consciousness at all.

The performers and audiences never converse but the effect of the performance is realized in the viewers as they unknowingly imitate the actions of performers. The relationship between dancer and viewer is established in this way that they are interconnected because “the dancer's body becomes a vessel for the dance's message and the viewer receives that message by being moved by it [. . .] the dancer's body emits actions to a viewing body that actively seeks out their message” (53). Also as in the cultural dance performances, the dancer's body emits the specific cultural message to the viewing body that seeks out their message and transmits it to the spectators.

The question as to why and how the performance impresses the audience is highly prioritized in the performance studies. Body language is interpreted in to argue that underlying meanings of any cultural performances depend on the enactments and gestural languages of the performers. As Schechner says, “[. . .] people were learning about “body language” and a whole range of expressive behaviour outside of spoken

or written words. In Asia, I saw dancing and music that was both expressive and dramatic” (X). Body language tells the audience whole range of expressive behaviour outside of spoken or written words because *Ghãtu* dancers’ gestures and body movements are both expressive and dramatic. Music has only the sound and dance has only the movement.

Both the movements of body and sounds of songs, which are expressive and dramatic, impact on the spectators. How the spectators evaluate performance is major concern of performance studies. What the word tells in a song may not be important, but what the body movement tells is very important in the dance performances. The dance movements and gestures give the audience more messages than the songs do in the performances. *Ghãtu* is a dance event and the audiences do not generally understand the wordings of songs because the singers do not pronounce the words clearly but they understand the body language of the dancers. In relation to dance events, Susan Leigh Foster argues:

What do you feel, physically, when you watch another body performing? How and why do you respond to the motions of another body? What do you sense? How does your physical experience of what you are seeing help you understand what you are watching? Focusing the inquiry with these questions, I seek to emphasize the sensations of our bones, muscles, ligaments, tendons, and joints. The sensory experience provided by these corporeal elements, often referred to as the kinesthetic sense, has been largely ignored in theories of performance, yet for those of us in dance studies, it remains a predominant aspect of aesthetic experience. (46)

Performance studies also try to answer the questions as, “How do the audiences feel physically when they watch another body performing? How and why do they respond to the motions of another body? What do they sense? How does their physical experience of what they are seeing help them understand what they are watching? Foster tries to answer these questions as he emphasizes the sensations of our bones, muscles, ligaments, tendons, joints, which are called corporeal elements, as they referred to in the kinesthetic sense. Kinesthesia means the movement and sensation of a body. The audiences get sensationalized when they watch the show. They get stimulated as soon as they watch the performances. The trinity of stimulation, response and feedback of audiences is obviously considered as the main focus of all performance. Body language is highly prioritized in the performances.

Foster further mentions the statement of Condillac that “both the viscera and the muscles and joints contribute to this bodily sensing” (47) of the spectators while attending the performance. The onlookers imitate the actions of the dancers in *Ghāṭu* performance “[b]ecause of the inherent contagion of bodily movement, [. . .] the dancer is able to convey through movement the most intangible emotional experience” (49) to those who watch the show of *Ghāṭu*. This is known as the kinesthetic empathy.

Along with the movements of muscles and joints, the internal organs also go on functioning simultaneously. This process is known as the bodily sensing. The viewers start tapping their legs on the floor and hands on the arms of chairs unknowingly when they watch another body performing, and start humming when they listen to another person singing. One puckers when he witnesses someone tasting a lemon as it is known as contagious behaviour. There are both afferent and efferent neural systems in such a performing art that “the afferent processed incoming stimuli

and the efferent conveyed the command for bodily movements” (50). The two-way traffic system of a nerves system in which afferent signifies the nerves that carry impulses from the body toward the brain or spinal cord, and efferent is meant the nerves that carry impulses away from the brain and spinal cord are brought into play during the performance. The dancers try their best to express their inner realities through their various gestures and enactments so that the audience comprehends exactly what they mean.

Moreover, the dual process of afferent and efferent nerve system is crucial in the context of dance performance. Schechner states:

For me there are “realities” at all levels of the human endeavor: biological -- evolutionary, cultural -- social, individual. These overlap and interplay. To assert a connection between the ethological, the anthropological, and the aesthetic is not to deny local and individual variation and uniqueness.” (XII)

The viewers perceive *Ghāṭu* from their own perspectives that their perceptions depend on the level of understanding about its impact as “perception is the act of extracting information from the environment. A highly active project, perception requires participation from both afferent and efferent systems” (Foster 50). While most dancers dance with the aim of attracting the audiences, the *Ghāṭusaris* perform their dances not with this aim. They perform some of the dance episodes both in a subconscious and in unconscious states. In other words, *Ghāṭu* is not concerned about attracting the spectators. Foster opines, “Kinesthetic information, identified now as a subset of proprioception, comes from muscle and joint receptors and also the vestibular organs of the inner ear” (50). The idea that muscle and joint receptors are responsible to produce kinesthetic information that applies in *Ghāṭu*. The muscle and

joint receptors of the dancing girls work while dancing. How the dancers perform is bodily disposition which impacts the audiences. The performance may not be effective if the senses of the dancers and audiences are not integrated.

In addition, Foster observes, “Gibson identifies this integrative processing of external and internal stimuli as the perceptual system. He further argues that kinesthesia plays a central role in integrating all the senses” (51). As the perceptual system is known as the integrative processing of external and internal stimuli of the performers, it works in *Ghātu* performance, too. The theme, music, dancer’s body’s movements, gestures might be considered as the external stimuli, whereas kinesthetic empathy provokes mimicry that can be considered as the internal stimulus. Because “dance is intrinsically connected to the emotions, making its meaning felt by staging a progression of feelings, [. . .]. What a dance offers its viewers is the opportunity to perceive bodies in motion” (52). Corrigan argues, “Emotional performance in religious ritual symbolically manifests intersections of morality, aesthetics, cognition, and memory in ways that disclose lived social orders and cultural presuppositions” (16).

These factors, which are discussed, are all unseen but they are responsible in making dance performance effective, and attract the observers. The audiences perceive the *Ghātu* dance in a way they understand as “perception is a simulation of action [. . .] each individual may perceive the world quite differently, based on the kinds of cultural and gendered differences from which the *habitus* is formed” (53). If the audiences are new, they may not be able to understand this *Ghātu* performance but if the audiences are familiar with the performance, they can understand the theme of this performance.

Ghãtu performance is very complex in terms of singing and dancing. All the people cannot entertain this tribal festival because of its complexity. General audience may not be able to cope up with *Ghãtu* dance because of its complex presentation as “humans, Berthoz argues, undergo a far more complex perceptual process. They do not necessarily perceive all events in the same way” (54). How people perceive the dance depends on their level of understanding as well as their cultural and social background. This is how the general audiences perceive this ritual dance to the way in which regular participants of *Ghãtu* experience it. Foster opines, “Pleasure or fear or interest all influence the tiny motions of the eye, known as saccades, through which visual perception occurs” (54). Exactly not pleasure but fear of “what happens to the dancers now onward?” matters the audiences when all the dancers have gone into totally a trance mode, especially, in *Kusundã* episode of *Ghãtu* performance.

Some audiences experience pleasure regarding the dance styles and its melody, whereas other experiences fear or interest while they watch the show. While performing the *Ghãtu* dance, some audience may perceive pleasure as they relate to laughter scenes, but others may perceive fear if they visualize the dangerous situation of the characters. For example, a kind of pathetic condition of the dancers is created while playing the role *Kusundã* in *Kusundã* episode. And some may find interest in the performance if the enactments tell something interesting as in marriage episode of this *Ghãtu* performance. The entire cultural as well as physical environment shapes the thoughts, attitudes and behaviours of the viewers. How one perceives the world depends on his level of understanding because “[t]he long-standing features of our cultural as well as physical environment inform the way we perceive the world” (54).

While the performance commences, it affects the viewers either lightly or deeply, but no one who observes *Ghãtu* can remain untouched. The onlookers of

Ghātu get influenced once they watch the show. This ritual is more sensitive and sentimental than other general cultural performances. A kind of bridging takes place between performers and viewers. This matters the perception of onlookers. Most audiences respond to the performance in a way they are affected. The only difference is that the performers on stage are well skilled, whereas the offstage performers, who are known as the attendants, are of mixed skills. These are the characteristics of any performance.

Like in the reader-response criticism, the responses of audience members of other cultural performances rather than that of *Ghātu*, as local community residents, heritage professionals and students vary. They never resemble but they meet in certain point of likes and dislikes. The audience is also a kind of reader who watches the show and responds to the performance either positively or negatively. Not all members of the audiences have the similar views toward the performance when they observe. It depends on their understanding levels, interests and their cultural practices.

This process of response of the audiences is considered as the kinesthetic simulation, as “the kinesthetic simulation of others’ actions establishes an empathetic connection among all humans who recognize in those actions an equivalent intention and goal” (55). Empathetic connection also signifies the indirect connection between the *Ghātu* performers and its viewers. The audiences experience their own bodily movements when they observe the performance. A kind of interaction takes place there in them but is not seen physically in all the audiences. Foster analyses, “this crucial interaction between performer and viewer we can cultivate a more conscious registering of the kinesthetic impact that movement exercises. Perhaps such awareness, enhanced by a few dance classes, can enable us more purposefully to feel how bodies move as they do and why” (57).

The viewers become aware of how other bodies move and why because of the function of kinesthetic simulation. Kinesthetic simulation enables the viewers to feel how dancers' bodies move as they perform the dance gestures. The kinesthetic impact is thus a crucial element of cultural performance and it can be considered as the bridge that brings together performers and viewers. This practical aspect is one perspective of this performing art. There are other perspectives from which *Ghātu* is analysed.

Four Perspectives of *Ghātu* from Performance Perspectives

Ghātu, being part of an oral based tribal culture, can be analysed from the perspectives of four kinds of perspectives: anthropological, sociological, psychological and historical. Schechner argues, "Wholeness, process and organic growth, concreteness, and religious transcendental experience are fundamental to many oral-based tribal cultures [. . .]. A try at explaining actuals involves a survey of anthropological, sociological, psychological and historical materials" (32). From the anthropological perspective, this tribal festival projects the interrelationship between human beings within specific historical and social settings. For example, Queen Yemphawati does not want to survive any more after her lord's death. Love for her lord is motivated by the sense of deep feeling. In this sense, *Ghātu* represents a socially established system like *sati* practice which was objected at a certain point in history. Queen is psychologically scared that her life is no more secured after her lord's death. She prepares to immolate herself for her safety.

The historical material informing this ritual is another important aspect. *Ghātu* is the historical record of the indigenous groups as well as a particular *Khasa-Kshetri* community. Warring of King Pashramu represents historical material that shows how war was a necessary evil in the past. *Ghātu* also provides insights concerning Nepal's

politics in the past. This tribal festival presents details relating to Nepal's history before the King Prithvi Narayan Shah when Nepal was divided into various small states and ruled by different kings. The legendary King Pashramu is supposed to be a historical king, Pratap Shah, son of Kalu Shah, and the king of Lamjung. There were other kings from Sataukot/Gahraukot who killed Pashramu. The king died in the battlefield defending his country represents the discourse of bravery that was valorized in Nepal's history. Bravery is what Nepal's glorious history and it is a kind of historically created system. Geertz opines that "historically created systems of meaning in terms of which we give form, order, point, and direction to our lives" (52).

The historical material in *Ghãtu* represents a small part history of Nepal. Dharma Raj Thapa sentimentally presents the idea that "[i]t is a life-live historical event of brave Nepali and it is turbaned with life-death dominant literature-music and adored in artistic background" (23). *Ghãtu* is the historical record of some indigenous groups and one *Khasa- Kshetri* community. One can read the history of bravery of a warrior in this performance. King Pashramu is supposed to be the son of Kalu Shah. Although King Pashramu is a legendary king rather than a historical king, Padam Shrish Magar writes that Pratap Shah is actually King Pashramu. He says, "As Yeshobrahma Shah got married with his elder brother, Kalu Shah's widow wife, Basantawoti. The widow wife was pregnant and Pratap Shah was born of her after three months of their marriage. And this very Pratap Shah is King Pashramu who got married with the daughter of Sen Lineage Magar King from Makawanpur" (15). However, Chandra Bahadur Gurung (Appendix A.3: 397) says that Pashramu's queen is a Rajput girl from India. Jagman Gurung (Appendix A.5: 300) also adds the same view that King Pashramu is no other than Pratap Shah. Other indigenous groups observe *Ghãtu* for similar historical reasons.

In addition, all four perspectives—anthropological, social, psychological and historical apply in *Ghãtu*. To interpret *Ghãtu* performance from anthropological stand point, one can see the integrated relationship between one human to another. Theoretically, performance is “one of the most basic ways to study human behaviour” (Beeman 86). This cultural performance shows about how people started socializing in primitive time. From anthropological stand point, *Ghãtu* functions as an important cultural performance as it has benefitted various indigenous and non-indigenous groups by bestowing good harvest and good health. According to Prem Kumar Khatri (Appendix A.7: 304), a culture develops when people feel its need in the village and practise different alternatives to try to fulfill that need. If their need is fulfilled by one observation of some kind of such ritual practice, then it becomes their habit over a period of time, and they repeat it as a way of fulfilling their need. *Ghãtu* has also developed as a ritual practice that has addressed people’s need of healing and entertainment for ages. The practitioners of this tribal festival believe that it has also warded off natural calamities like over flood and landslide (Appendix A.1: 290).

Any cultural performance exists in the societies according to people’s attitudes and behaviours, and they perform such cultural activities if they realize its necessity and it benefits for them. Khatri says that culture as such is established because of need of the people when they are in trouble. He gives an example by describing how the villagers shout for water, evoking the water god, Indra, by playing the musical band in the farming season. And when rainfall takes place after they perform such activities, they believe that god Indra heard their requests. Later, they repeat the same activities every time. This is how culture is established according to Khatri.

Whether the culture is local or universal does not matter but what matters is the way of continuity that is provided by ritual such as *Ghātu*. Geertz observes:

Clyde Kluckhohn defines culture as (1) “the total way of life of a people”; (2) “the social legacy the individual acquires from his group”; (3) “a way of thinking, feeling, and believing”; “an abstraction from behavior”; (5) a theory on the part of the anthropologist about the way in which a group of people in fact behave; (6) a “storehouse of pooled learning”; (7) “a set of standardized orientations to recurrent problems”; (8) “learned behavior”; (9) a mechanism for the normative regulation of behavior; (10) “a set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and two other men”; (11): a precipitate of history”; and turning, perhaps in desperation, to simile, as a map, as a sieve, and as a matrix. (4-5).

The total way of life depends upon the attitude and behaviour of a man who is crucial in his society. A person acquires person’s legacy from the legacy of the group in which he or she lives. What is the way of thinking of a person? How does a person behave? What does a person believe or disbelieve? How is a person adjusted in a society? Everything depends on the culture; human evolutions depend on culture. Culture affects a person’s thought, his attitudes and behaviours, his belief systems and modes of behaviours. The culture in any community is a pooled storehouse of moral and learning.

Also a sociological matter in *Ghātu* because the performance of this festival is socially accepted as a source of entertainment by the society at large. When Queen Yemphawati herself gets ready to immolate and her baby son, Balkrishna, is left behind in charge of his maternal uncles and grandmother, the audience gets moved.

This proves that society matters and a man cannot live without his society. Thus, *Ghãtu* plays the role of a catalyst that indicates to reunite broken-up relations not only between individuals but also among the communities. The villagers should work together to observe this festival. They must come to a compromising point and reach an understanding concerning the performance. *Ghãtu* is such a juncture where all the people are befriended even though they were enemies to each other in the past. From this perspective, this tribal festival promotes socialization between humans. This is a kind of carnival which gives the lesson of how to adjust in a society.

The psychological perspective of *Ghãtu* consists in the fact that all the dancers are affected psychologically. How the dancer is possessed by the *Ghãtu* aura is the psychological effect because of “psychological power of music and noise” (Eco, *Foucault’s Pendulum* 150). When the gurus start chanting and invoking the *Ghãtu* god, all the dancing girls start feeling a kind of possession. The possession is realized by the audience when dancers’ eyes get closed. From this point onwards, the dancers see from their “inner” eyes. One of the participants, Shiva Bhakta, shares his experience, thus with Steven M. Parish: “Even with your eyes closed, you can still see it. In the same way, I can see your face, your eyes, your nose—inside, with my eyes shut, I can see your features” (qtd. in Parish 153). This is how the god who dwells in dancer’s heart.

As the audience realizes that the look of dancing girls is changes slowly and gradually, they feel the presence of the god. They close their eyes and some start quivering when they are possessed by the *Ghãtu* aura. “This is the symptom of possession of *Ghãtu* god,” said Raju Gurung (Appendix A.2: 291). The beauty of *Ghãtu* is realized with the lively enactments of the dancers because of the

psychological effect. What is in the mind of a person who appears through dreams, and history and psychology are internally linked? Jung argues:

[W]hen we penetrate a little more deeply below the surface of the psyche, we come upon historical layers which are not just dead dust, but alive and continuously active in everyone-maybe to a degree that we cannot imagine in the present state of our knowledge [. . .]. As psychological phenomena they appear spontaneously in dreams.”

(“The Archetypes and . . .” 384-87)

What is recorded in human mind appears in dream as also suggested by Jung. He says that it is a psychological phenomenon that what is recorded in human appears spontaneously in dreams.

In addition to the historical material, there is psychological material. In *Ghātu*, dancers’ dream in *Kusundā* episode, for instance, is underlaid by psychological motif. This can be projected as one of the four perspectives of *Ghātu*. Sunkashi Gurung (Appendix A.15: 313), a former dancer, says that she sees the deceased gurus and other dead people of her village in her dream in a strange place and hermits in the small cottages in her trance mode in Kusunda episode. Cowan says, “You are now powerful because you have seen these dead people” (15). To see the dead people in the dream is considered to be powerful. Sunkashi Gurung is powerful because she has seen the dead people. Whatever the dreams the trance dancers see, such dreams are the outcome of repressed desires as “the visible pattern of conduct is a direct outcome of an underlying psychological reality” (Geertz 137). Sunkashi Gurung’s dream represents the general wish of indigenous people. Most of indigenous people’s history is unknown in the lack of preservation of such records. The dead people symbolize *Ghātu* practitioners’ history and origin as well as their ancestors. Psychologically, the

indigenous people are backward. They cannot have fulfilled their repressed desires of locating their historical facts. Most of the indigenous people do not know about their history and origin. It has been exposed through the dream.

The dancers see this dream in their trance mode in *Kusundā* episode. After the dancers come out of trance mode, they behave like the nomadic man *Kusundā*. The wild behaviours of the dancers symbolize the fact that inner instinct of man is still wild even although he is known as a civilized animal. *Ghāṭu* represents various human facts and it is a storehouse of various facts “to trace out the sociological links between cultural themes and political developments, rather than to move deductively from one to the other” (Geertz 314). Political developments of the past as projected in a simple ritual show that the heads of states were always crazy about expanding the borderlines of their states. This is all about how *Ghāṭu* is analysed from performance studies perspectives. The relationship between performers and viewers is crucial that both of them must be active while performance is going on. For this, kinesthetic impact, which connects these two parties, plays a vital role. The following section deals with the semiotic interpretation.

***Ghāṭu* from Semiotic Perspectives**

The essence of the current research is to interpret the images in *Ghāṭu*—based on a song—in a way that they symbolize. Semiotic interpretation is used as a theoretical tool to analyse the text in this dissertation. The study analyses the *Ghāṭu* site from the perspective of performance studies. This discussion introduces the *Ghāṭu* in terms of regions, area, population and oral text. Interpretation of the images and symbols in *Ghāṭu* is fulfilled by analysing the cultural semiotics of indigenous groups and Nepali cultural domain in relation to the performance of *Ghāṭu*.

The images in *Ghãtu* lead to meanings practised in different cultural settings and having their respective cultural significances. The descriptive writings on *Ghãtu* so far have not interpreted the depth of meanings and relative truths as expressed in the performance. When one interprets the images of *Ghãtu* performance from a symbolic perspective, it leads him/her to the possibility of relating the bits of information, in order to arrive at a more relative truth than he/she can do by focusing on the simple individual narratives. Sandra Moriarty observes, “In semiotic theory, a sign is anything that stands for something else—that is, a sign stands for an object or concept” (228). Similarly, Peirce argues, “A sign refers to something other than itself” (qtd. in Fiske 42). The sticks are used by the dancers in Ramche of Syangja and Nalma of Lamjung in *Ghãtu* performance. The stick stands for the scepter. Stick sign refers to something other than itself. Similarly, the trident, which is attached in headgear, symbolizes Lord Shiva as an object, and three peaks of trident symbolize perhaps Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh—considered as creator, protector and destroyer—according to Hindu concept. The dancing girl who plays the role of king wears the white headgear and the girl who plays the role of queen wears red headgear. White is the sign of power and red also symbolizes power enough of a lesser kind. This is a concept but kingship is the object. Or white is more powerful than red.

The white colour stands for dominant and energetic power, and the red for the weak, although it is not the final meaning, and dominated although this interpretation is not universal but “the difference between connotative and denotative meanings are also important points of analysis in semiotic theory” (Moriarty 230). Together, these colours represent the power dynamics of a patriarchal society. The dancing girls who play the roles of queens wear red headgears in several villages. The colour as such is interpreted from the semiotic perspectives.

Semiotics means the study of signs and symbols of all kinds, what they mean and how they relate to the things, or ideas they refer to. And symbolism, which is the main focus of the study as well as the term used in the title, means the use of symbols to invest things with a representative meaning or to represent something abstract by something concrete. What the *Ghãtu* dancers perform is concrete and what is interpreted about performance is abstract. Conrad Phillip Kottak says that “[a] symbol is something verbal or nonverbal, within a particular language or culture that comes to stand for something else” (43). Verbal here means the words that have been directly expressed, and nonverbal signifies the certain image or picture that has been indirectly expressed. Just as language or culture is also a good means of communication. “A symbol is something (like an object or an action) that represents, connotes, or calls to mind something else” (Peoples, James, and Garrick Bailey 32). The narrative songs representing the queen’s lament and music, appears in *Ghãtu* as a means of cultural communication.

In *Ghãtu*, there are signs like *Deurali*, which symbolizes pyre, and upright pointed headgear that indicates a strong confidence level of the Nepalese. The toy horse and toy elephant are the signs and symbols of royal family, and the toy deer is the sign of beauty of nature. Through the tools and equipment in *Ghãtu* that are highly symbolic, several cultural messages are conveyed. In modern age, new technology has enabled man to communicate a lot of messages through new technological means because of “our ability to communicate complex messages through symbolic language, and the transmission of new ideas and behaviours to new generations through social learning—that is, through learning the culture of previous generations” (Peoples, James and Garrick Bailey 9). Peoples and Bailey clarify that modern man has developed different technological prowess to communicate complex messages

through symbolic language and the new ideas and behaviours are transmitted to the new generations through new symbolic means (9). Traffic lights can be taken as a good example of technological prowess representing such new modern symbolism.

Symbolic language is considered as the most powerful means of communication which simple words cannot do. As shown in the picture (Figure 3), queen is weeping in the time immolation. What her facial expression signals is much more than what



Fig. 3 In the time of departure

words express. What a picture represents is symbolic meaning of nonverbal communication. Image, sounds and sight have more to say than words do. For instance, a fearful moment can be created by a loud sound of wild beasts using modern technology just as a visual image of ghost to create fear in audience. Such effects cannot be produced by simple use of words. The word “ghost” and image “ghost” have different effects. The image or sound of a ghost evokes a symbolic language by means of which different, and more effective impact is created. Similarly, one may not be afraid merely pronouncing the word “tiger,” but if a roar of a tiger is played through a powerful sound box, s/he who hears such sound is scared. Sound and sight are part of the symbolic languages and become more powerful in the presentation.

Culture is a means of communication through which certain messages are conveyed from old generations to new generations. In *Ghãtu* performance, dance styles, gestures, dance steps, dance movements, beats of music, dresses and ornaments of the dancers are all a means of non-verbal communication, a kind of sign language. “Even if the antiquity of ritual postures and gestures were to be demonstrated we would not thereby know why this peculiar mode of non-verbal communication should have persisted many thousands or even hundreds of thousands of years into the time

of language” (Rappaport 139). Such sign language communicates something else and in excess to what is communicated by the words. Dance styles communicate the then way of performance; gestures like flicking of middle finger and ring finger communicate the message of inner pains, just as dance steps, the slow and fast motions communicate contrasting meanings.

The images related with *Ghātu* performance move from local to universal, and how the study of images leads towards symbolism which ultimately has universal implications. Local imagery of the performance always has wider implications which can be studied from the perspective of universal archetypes which as Carl Jung calls “the racial memory.” Local is universal in the sense that an incident, a ritual, a story may move towards cosmic signification. The entire performance of *Ghātu* is based on a song, and is filled with the images—tools and objects, body movements of the dancers, their hand gestures and similar other gestures. These images bring out multiple meanings (symbols): trident represents the Lord Shiva, just as the slow body movement and swaying hand gesture from right to left and left to right flicking the forefinger with middle finger stand for pathos of the queen and her bereaved condition. Joseph L. Henderson argues that unlike for “primitive man, to whom symbols seem a natural part of everyday life, and modern man, for whom symbols are apparently meaningless and irrelevant” (106). For this reason, *Ghātu* expresses primitive culture in heavily loaded with symbolism. Irene Mittelberg observes, “The signifier is taken to resemble the signified, whether in terms of sound, shape, feel, taste, organization, or some other quality” (124). The word, trident is signifier and the concept, Lord Shiva, is signified.

Every gesture and posture of the performers signifies that evokes various cultural signifieds or meanings. Except gestures, activities and images, there are some

symbolic structures like the *Deurali* where all the appurtenances used in the performance are abandoned there. *Deurali* is the symbolic pyre for “the relationship between symbolic structures and collective behavior is at once the most conspicuous” (Geertz 251).

The hand gestures of frequent flickering of dancers’ fingers while dancing symbolize the Queen’s inner pains and her agony that they cannot be expressed through their mouths but through their gestures. When a person who is in bereaved condition and cannot speak a word, sometimes s/he flicks the fingers or behaves abnormally, representing an unconscious response. Similarly, one may get overexcited when s/he is guided by the high emotion of sorrow or happiness. Cornelia Müller argues:

There are four basic form features of gestures that carry a potential for symbolization: hand-shape, movement, orientation, and position (cf. Becker, 2004; Kendon, 2004; Müller, 1998, Müller, 2004a). Whether they carry information independently from each other or whether they are constructed as a holistic gestalt does not affect the fundamental methodological need to spell out precisely what form features of the hand are exploited for symbolization. (225)

The hand-shape of the *Ghātu* dancers is open and they flick their fingers while dancing. Slow motioned dance signifies the repressed pains of the queen. The tilting position of the dancers’ hands also indicates the bereaved condition. So is the orientation, the positioning and direction gestured by the dancers’ hand movements, all these four form features of the hand are used to represent the underlying meanings.

Geertz assumes that the culture should be read as one reads a text. The performance studies deals with the problem of imagery and metaphor, an approach

that brings it close to anthropology. John Emigh adds, “Performance studies both draws from and challenges anthropological assumptions. Geertz’s approach to “culture” as revealed in performed actions and his depiction of a “theatre state” have obvious appeal” (63). The performance studies draws some information from the anthropological assumptions while challenging simultaneously. Culture is revealed in performed actions that depict the meanings—language, religion, history and life styles, by interpreting the images and symbols of *Ghãtu* performance, such underlying layers of meaning. The current study thus contends that descriptive writings on *Ghãtu* are unable to reveal the deeper layers of symbolism and cultural meanings underlying the performative “text” of *Ghãtu*.

There are various terms used to signify the dance performers. *Ghãtusari* means the dancing girls who are called *Ghãtuli* in Kaski, *Ghãtu* in Dhading and *Ghãtseri* in Tanahu as the researcher observed *Ghãtu* performances from 2008 to 2013. The headword, *Ghãt* in Nepali denotes the “crematorium.” The term, *Ghãneri* means the village head and *Dãdi* means the individual episodes of the performance. Likewise, *Deurali* means the place where the hill is naturally a pedestrian from a pedestrian path is constructed in a gorge. Usually, *Deurali* is situated at the foothill and the last phase of the performance is conducted therein. *Mandap* is the place that is constructed for the ending phase of the performance in the Gurung *Ghãtu* villages but there is different meaning of *mandap* in the Magar *Ghãtu* villages. The Magars treat it as a worshipping spot as well as dancing space. The organizers smear the *mandap* with the cow dung to separate it from the mandatory world; that is, through such ritual it becomes a holy, spiritual space. All the tools, equipment and objects used in the performance are abandoned here in the *mandap* that is constructed at *Deurali*, according to the methods of the Gurungs. It is symbolic of the crematorium because symbolic pyre is also erected here. And *Deurali* is the place where

the performance ends. The villagers manage this place generally a little far away from the village. When eyes opening performance is over, the elderly women bind a sacred thread on the neck of the dancers and attendants pronouncing the term, *syai-syai*. It means got it or “eureka.” The term, *ahiri*, on the other hand, means “hound.” Other terms like *deuchuli*, *barchuli*, *himchuli*, *gangachuli*, are the names of deities or goddesses by the help of which the performance is supposed to continue.



Fig. 4 The queen is being transported to Deurali, photo by the researcher

Chādwa is “bed sheet” which is used in the forms of umbrellas to protect the dancing girls from the sun, as shown in the picture, while they are being transported to the *Deurali* from performance stage in the last phase (Appendix A.2: 291). The *chādwa* is prepared according to the number of dancing girls, and is erected by the four bamboo sticks as a tent for one dancer to shelter. All the dancers are sheltered by a separate *chādwa*. The dancer, who plays the role of king, is sheltered by the white *chādwa*.

The performance stage is called *Thattighar* or *tharku* (R. Gurung 25) which is a sacred house specially constructed only for the performance, as the stage or



Fig. 5 Karnal

auditorium though this system does not exist in every *Ghãtu* village. Other terms or the instruments used in performance, including *karnal*, *jhyali*, *sanahi*, *biviyu*, *ekpãté damah*, *narsingha* represent history and cultural background of the villages. *Karnal*, *biviyu* and *narsingha*, which are made of copper pipes, produce a very loud sound when blown from one small end as in a trumpet. They are big forms of a bugle. *Jhyali* means cymbal made of brass as it is played in drum set. *Ekpate damah*, and *tyamko* are made of animal skin and are played with the drum sticks. A bit bigger drumstick is used to play the *damah*. And *tyamko* is as big as the size of half pumpkin when it is cut into two pieces in the middle, and is played by using the small sticks about one foot long. Both *damah* and *tyamko* are made of copper and covered with the animal skin. *Madal* is the double ended drum played by hands.

Kusundã is nomadic man like *Raute* in Nepal similar to Eskimos in America. *Kãjuli* means dirty and musty coverings on the bodies, the royal couples, who were in the forest for some time, have not got a chance to take a bath for a long time and turned black; for this reason, they are called *Kãjuli* king and *Kãjuli* queen. *Bahramasé* means round of the year that the certain parts of *Ghãtu* are performed throughout the year to welcome the new comers like the tourists or some villagers who come back from abroad after a long time (Appendix A.5: 300). In addition, it is also performed on the occasion of birth of a baby son in the village. *Garras* are the choir groups who help the main singers for singing together. And *tikiya* is the small round spot placed in the centre of forehead especially, by females. Likewise, *besori* is the nose ring made of gold. *Lalai* means red colour; *baniya* means a trade man, and *bhaiya* means “brother.” All these key terms are crucial in the study.

Interpreting the imagery and symbols in *Ghãtu* and analysing them is the method followed in a current study. The images in the performance are listed out individually

and they are interpreted individually. The objects like bow and arrow evoke the image of hunting age as hunting was the part of life styles of ancient peoples. The toy animals used in the performance stand for multiple meanings. A lion, for example, is just a lion, a very powerful animal in a general sense but it is considered as a symbol of the king, just like a human being, in a symbolic sense. Meaning traverses in interpretive writing, whereas it is limited in descriptive writing. Therefore, “the king is often called a lion” (Frazer 257) in a metaphoric sense. The King is considered as energetic and haughty as the lion. Crown means a crown in a descriptive writing but it stands for a symbol of power in interpretive writing. The crown, for instance, signifies the continuation of power not only the king. The death of kings does not mean that the throne remains vacant, but only that the crown is handed down from one generation to the other. Crown in this respect has always had a metonymic relation with kingship and its continuity. The study also focuses on enhancement of such cultural activities and attempts to conserve them. “Signs point to something outside of themselves and they need an interpretive mind to unfold their meaning” (Mittelberg 123).

Interpretation of the gestures, body movements, dresses of the performers unfolds new meanings. Certain images are selected from the performances and are analysed to examine how they represent the major theme. Symbolization of the images is studied through performances within which images stand for multiple meanings. The entire repertoire of images symbolizes different activities of the human kind. For instance, the slow motioned dance signifies the bereaved condition of the queen that she has been badly shocked by her husband’s death. This makes her movements slow and her activities seem abnormal. And the slow rhythmic songs symbolize the queen’s lamentations. Similarly, the other gestures of the dancers symbolize the queen’s pathetic condition.

Through such *Ghãtu* performances, the audiences are targeted to make them realize and feel the importance and need of performance so that they entertain it, because “[i]n making memory public, performance transforms, even in cases of inconceivable trauma, making experience legible to others” (Davis 5). This tribal festival is practised not only as the continuation of cultural activities; but also in the memory of a great person like King Pashramu who was a legendary figure and a brave ancestor. But he was killed in his young age in an unwanted war. Such premature death of a great person signifies an inconceivable cultural and societal trauma.

The privileging of *Ghãtu* as a myth, moreover, is projected when it is made to tell its receptors the birth of Balkrishna as something to make the king’s enemies envious of his power. The king’s enemies seem to take Balkrishna’s birth as a threat to their privileged position and they plan to wage a war against Pashramu. This historical fact provides an insight into the nature of Gurung and other indigenous groups. It also enables them to have a universal insight of general envious nature of humans. King Pashramu, as a brave son of Gurung and the jingoist of Nepal, never did surrender before his enemies. His enthusiasm indicated that the king was guided with the arrogance. He waged war instead of compromise with the enemies. His victory was almost impossible because of their collective force. Other kings collectively planned to fight against King Pashramu but he did not understand what was going on against him. Such sentiment shows that all the rulers are obsessed with the sentiment of a war mongering, for whom doing or dying are the only alternatives in life. And as befitted his position, King Pashramu faced the death in war.

The goal of such cultural performances is to make public memory and to make the experience legible to others. Pashramu’s death can be taken as a great loss,

an inconceivable trauma. Making the experience legible to others means sharing the pains with others in the community by re-enacting the trauma or the anniversary day of a great person. From this perspective, *Ghãtu* re-enacts the trauma of six ethnic groups and one caste group, a cultural performance that relieves these groups from the trauma that is rooted both historically and psychologically. The *Ghãtu* practitioners thus relieve trauma linked to the narrative of the legendary King Pashramu the ancestral “king of the Gurungs” (Pignède 328).

The analysis of images in *Ghãtu* leads towards symbolism which ultimately has universal implications. This is to say that the local imagery of the performance has wider implications which can be studied in relation to universal archetypes. Local is universal in the sense that an incident, a ritual, a story may move towards cosmic signification. While the construction of the headgear and the crown image is a local matter, crown image representing the state head is present everywhere in the world, and has universal meaning.

One may interpret the songs of *Ghãtu* simply a song. Whether nightingale is singing or crying, who knows? It is human interpretation that nightingale is crying or singing. The phrases of song symbolize queen’s crying rather than her singing. Therefore, *Ghãtu* song can be considered as the dirge or elegy.

The *Ghãtu* site is purely local but its imagery is universal implications. In other words, local vernacular of the performance embodies various universal realities. This study, therefore, focuses on this nexus between the local and universal. Of the images, layers of meanings are located. The activities of the dancers are also informative. Performance perspective interprets the activities effectively.

The discussion interprets only the selected images. The image is abstract,

shapeless, colourless, whereas the symbol is clearer and meaning oriented:

The symbols of an image are directly expressive of meaning in a way that the symbols (words) of a passage are not. The literal structure of an image, on the other hand, directs our attention inward to the sense making of its spatial elements (such as angle, perspective, field of view) and the larger pictorial patterns they make. (Barbatsis 312)

A symbol, which has certain shape and size, is expressive of meaning, and an image directs our attention inward to the sense-making process although it is subjective rather than objective. Only the spoken words are not sufficient to communicate the message, facial expressions, hand gestures, body movements and other signs are also responsible to disseminate the messages of joy or sorrow. A speaker's message is conveyed not only through words, but also through his/her facial expressions, hand gestures, and other signs of animation that are equally responsible in creating cultural meanings. If a speaker speaks in a low voice, the second persons can guess his /her enthusiasm, sadness, joy or regret. On the other hand, if his/her voice is in normal pitch level, the message is understood in a different manner. Similarly, if the speaker pauses or stutters while speaking, it shows that s/he is nervous or something is wrong; and if s/he is silent, it may show that s/he is sad. And culture is so powerful that it teaches us that certain manners and styles should accompany certain kinds of speech (Kottak 87).

Apart from hand gestures and facial expressions like frowning of eyes and a smile, high sounding and low sounding speaking styles disseminate differing messages to the audience. If one is emoted by anger or happiness, his/her voice is in high pitch level, and if s/he is in normal mode, his/her voice is in normal pitch level. Between two speakers, if one speaker pauses while speaking, it disseminates a

different kind of messages to the third person. For example, if a person, who is speaking, suddenly pauses and keeps silent, this shows that either s/he is angry because of interference or ignorance of second party, or that s/he feels physically unwell. The audience knows this from symbolic language conveyed by speaker's pause. If the spoken words function as the direct symbols, elements such as pauses, gestures, signs and so on work of indirect symbols to convey the messages. A new symbolic language is more adequate for capturing life in its elusive aspects that are only instinctively perceivable (Burnham 57). Symbolic language as such is very powerful:

Outside cultural consultants are often hired to assist top level executives compose a mission statement that will epitomize their goals and act as a foundation stone for strategic planning. They are looking for that pinnacle, that symbolic language, that vision that will pull together all the elements of an organization into a cohesive, mobilized unit. (Cynthia 229)

In general, symbolic language is considered as the “heroic language,” comprising of “similitudes, comparisons, images, metaphors, and natural descriptions” (Habib 329).

Difference between Images and Symbols

There is difference between images and symbols in the sense that images are abstract but symbols are a bit concrete. Symbols are generated from the images. And “every image itself is considered as a symbol, whereas every symbol itself is not considered as an image” (Gautam 22). Symbols have certain shape, size and colour, whereas images do not convey clear picture and have to be interpreted to understand the meanings. The shape of headgear in *Ghāṭu*, for example, can be considered as a

symbol and its colour can be taken as an image. From a mere physical shape, limited meanings are generated, whereas from images, unlimited meanings can be generated. The meaning of images cannot be common and universal because they are interpreted by the analyst according to the demand of criticism, whereas the meanings of a symbol are not only slightly easier to locate but are also more concrete. However, all the images might not be able to denote exact and appropriate meanings because “the images are weak, unable to carry a central storyline” (Hunt 108). All the images are not weak. For instance, while the crown image does not carry the central storyline of *Ghātu*, but it still conveys a central meaning, including a symbol of power and a king who embodies such power.

Ghātu has a number of signs, images and symbols which are signifying various meaningful phases in the narrative. Colour of the dresses the dancers wear is red-dominated which stands for beauty, whereas red sign symbolizes life in other areas of everyday life. For example, in a wedding, the father of the bride wears red turban and that of the bridegroom does white one in the western part of Nepal, which shows patriarchal hegemony as “fathers” from both sides because associated with power symbolized by red and white colours. The bride’s father has to give a deep respect to all the people who are from the village of a bridegroom. Another important point to note is the way how the sign is analysed depends on the interest and intellect of an analyst:

The goal of a semiotic analysis of sign systems is focused on interpreting the interplay of a multiplicity of codes. In other words, the process of signification, or semiotic interpretation, involves the deconstruction of the various sign systems and layers of codes that are operating in a passage (picture, image, etc.). Like peeling an onion, one

sign system is studied, then another, then another, until reaching the essence of the sign—a process of unlayering [. . .] to analyse how meanings are built up by the multiplication of signs and codes.

(Moriarty 238)

While analysing the sign system, the interplay of a multiplicity of codes, like picture and image, is interpreted. Some meanings are built up and understood by analysing the multiplication of signs and codes. Some jargons and unfamiliar terms function as cultural codes in this regard. For example, *Ghãtu* itself is a code that it produces multiple meanings when interpreted. Semiotic interpretation of the signs, images and symbols and analysis of *Ghãtu* as a cultural performance performing both art and performativity involved in the cultural ritual helps unfolding the meanings.

The analysis of *Ghãtu* shows similarities and differences when compared to other general dances, as well as the link between local and global cultures. In a general dance performance, the dancers perform the dance effectively through their performative skill. They are guided by certain ego and their career is determined by the performance level; in contrast, the dancers of this performance do not have any ego and their performance is not the career oriented.

The general performers mostly work with hopes of some returns. The *Ghãtu* performers do not have such a big dream concerning returns because they perform the dance almost in a trance-mode. For this reason, they do not care much about the impact upon the audience. This can be explained by performance theory, which says that it is spiritual power that changes the performance when they perform. This study interprets this *Ghãtu* site from performance perspective according to which cultural performances as such have make belief aspects which is also one of the most important factors in folklore. “Folk drama is narrative, enactment, dialogic, musical,

and inexpressive construct kept alive by people through oral tradition” (Neupane 2).

Performance renders creation, performer and audience into a form. This is a characteristic of folk drama.

The significance of *Ghãtu* is related to a supernatural belief system that it is performed to protect all the villagers from evil spirits as well as from some inauspicious mishaps. Biswa Gurung (Appendix B.6: 318) shares his experience with the researcher that most people in Chandibhanjyang attend the *Ghãtu* performance with the purpose of getting their sickness healed. He says that villagers believe that this shaman practice cures almost all kinds of diseases that cannot have been cured by allopathic treatments. This is in accordance with the argument of performance perspective that ritualistic performance can be used to cure some diseases and to make the ferocious gods and goddesses happy as “[i]n traditional societies, health, wealth, fertility and prosperity are generally related to supernatural powers. Rituals are performed to please and protect from the ferocious gods and goddesses” (John 206). This tribal festival is also a kind of ritual and is performed to make the disparate souls of King Pashramu and Queen Yemphawati happy. It also suggests that man is a weak animal because he is afraid of probable upcoming dangers. If the ritual is not performed, man is afraid, and he performs the rituals to please himself and protect his or her community from the ferocious gods and goddesses. After the performance of rituals, he feels secure. From this perspective, the relationship of *Ghãtu* with literature and anthropology is crucial. *Ghãtu* is a narrative poem or “unique cultural heritage and an unwritten epic” (M. Shrish Magar 7). In a sense, it belongs to the genre of literature. At the same time, it also represents man in relation to social community in an anthropological setting.

Henderson analyses that performance “has helped to break down the arbitrary distinction between primitive man, to whom symbols seem a natural part of everyday life, and modern man, for whom symbols are apparently meaningless and irrelevant” (106). So is the case of *Ghāṭu* in which there are a number of symbols. They stand for different crucial cultural meanings even if these symbols are meaningless for the modern man. The scholarly figures, who have worked on cultural activities, analyse *Ghāṭu* as the source of learning wherein everyday life is in it. For the youths, *Ghāṭu* as such is not apparently meaningful, and irrelevant; nor do they ever try to understand it because they have a number of alternative sources of entertainment in modern age. The youths think that it is just a waste of time to observe the performance of *Ghāṭu*.

In *Ghāṭu*, there are images, symbols and other signs—time and space, theme, characters, songs, dances and objects related with the ritual—which signify different meanings. They are significant for the performance and function as a source of cultural semiotics of the ethnic groups and their past life styles. Metonymically, the trident represents the Lord Shiva; the dress and ornaments the traditional fashion, and the tools and objects the rituals respectively. Working together, all these elements symbolize the inevitability of death, and the life cycle of humankind through images, enactments, gestures and objects. Such performing art as can be seen in *Ghāṭu* is traumatic reenactment of funeral ritual as well. As *Ghāṭu* is the traumatic reenactment of how a brave person like King Pashramu was killed, its performance also recalls Dashain representing the traumatic reenactment of how the goddess Durga defeated the devil Mahishashur to protect a human world.

The degree of feminine submissiveness as represented in *Ghāṭu* is rather extreme because the woman has to self-immolate after her lord’s death according to Hindu custom even though such custom is no more in practice. This is called sati

practice which began when a woman named Gangamadeviyar is said to have entered the fire following her husband's death in 1017 A. D. (Orr 112-13). Such concept which is rooted to a historical period, time period and space can be seen in the performance of *Ghāṭu* when the patriotic male figures and the submissive female figure are depicted during a particular performance. *Ghāṭu* dance is known as a condition of trance which has universal appeal and can be understood when juxtaposed with the European gypsy dancers' performance. Such trance-like state is also evoked and enjoyed in the performances of Australian aborigines.

While *Ghāṭu* is reared in the Nepali cultural geography, the indigenous people of Nepal, who have such cultural performances, can also be compared to Australian aborigines. Aborigine means marginalized people who are poor in financial matters but very rich in cultural activities and artefacts. So are the indigenous and non-indigenous groups which are practising such cultural activities in Nepal.

Another important point to note is that a trance-dance performance in which the dancers go into a trance mode temporarily is linked with the shaman tradition because "[d]uring trance-dances many Sidi experience temporarily a state of ecstatic love for the saints, which is the permanent condition of mastans" (Basu 68). Similarly, the *Ghāṭu* dancers are hypnotized by the possession of *Ghāṭu* aura. According to Helene Basu, Sidi people, who are a kind of saints in Gujarat in India, are said to experience the ecstatic love for the saints, and go into a trance mode as if they have entered the spiritual world. Just as Sidi people experience temporarily a state of ecstatic love for the saints, the *Ghāṭu* dancers experience ecstatic love for the royal couples while impersonalizing themselves as characters of the ritual and forget their personalities while they play the role of the royal couple. This type of cultural tradition is not new in several countries in the world.

Ghãtu performances have close universal implication at the performative level and represents truths concerning human behaviours and activities such as teamwork which is necessary to accomplish social activities. Simultaneously, *Ghãtu* as a continuation of shaman tradition gives the lesson of universal facts.

The focus of the current study is to show how the images related with *Ghãtu* performance move from local to universal, and to point out the interrelationship of *Ghãtu* images with their local-universal implications. Such implications are a matter to be guessed from the ways in which images are used in *Ghãtu*. Geertz says, “Cultural analysis is (or should be) guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses, not discovering the Continent of Meaning and mapping out its bodiless landscape” (20). In the context of *Ghãtu*, how the bow represents local cultural meanings is a process of guessing at the formation of meanings and by assessing the guesses. The crown, for instance, signifies the king and the continuation of power. The death of kings does not mean the end of kingship, but only that crown that is handed down from one generation to the next continuously. Crown in this respect has always had a metonymic relation with kingship and its continuity. The bamboo pole that is made to stand to bear the weight of the king’s headgear, on the other hand, points itself heavenward with its literal position of facing heaven from the earth. This is meant to symbolize the connection between mundane and spiritual worlds.

The symbolic interpretation may help one grasp the underlying meanings of images in *Ghãtu* performance. Henderson has pointed out, “[t]he more closely one looks at the history of symbolism, and at the role that symbols have played in the life of many different cultures, the more one understands that there is also a re-creative meaning in these symbols” (108-9). Why not in *Ghãtu*? With this symbolic

interpretation, re-creative meanings in symbols are underscored in *Ghãtu*. Symbols can be metaphoric which the performance theory also explains in some detail by examining metaphorical meanings of gestures and texts, as well as the enactments of the performers. In the performances, “gestures and text are the candle-glass and the action is the flame” (Schechner 54). In *Ghãtu*, the theme is candle-glass and how the dancers perform is the flame.

Clifford Geertz says that cultural performance is viewed in a similar manner as we read a text. *Ghãtu* is also a kind of text that audiences read it when performed. All the meanings and formal features found in this tribal festival are projected into the outputs. In contrast, John Emigh supports Gannah Obeyesekere’s view when he argues:

Sri Lankan anthropologist Gannath Obeyesekere has wryly commented that, “in reading Geertz, one sees webs everywhere, but never the spider at work.”¹⁶ Problems of imagery and metaphor aside, though, if culture is viewed and comprehended “as we read a text,” how did Geertz—a would-be novelist and English and Philosophy major before he took up Anthropology in graduate school—assume that texts are to be read? This matter is crucial to performance studies—so dependent upon and influenced by the critical models that inform it. (61)

Since meanings in the performance spread like spider webs, it is a challenging job to locate the underlying meanings of *Ghãtu* images, for instance. Just as the spider is not seen at work, the source of meaning is not seen in the cultural performances.

Likewise, one sees the webs everywhere, but never the spider at work, there are various cultural performances like the webs, and as a source—the spider—is not seen. The source of *Ghãtu* is also unknown to the performers. Who composed *Ghãtu*? Why

was it created for? When did it start? *Ghãtu* participants cannot answer this question affirmatively. Various such cultural activities are being performed but their origins are not located/prioritized because most of them are unknown. People simply observe such cultural activities because their forefathers used to do it. But the impact of *Ghãtu* is more than this. For this reason, Emigh argues that culture is not to be viewed and comprehended as we read a text. Culture as such is to be perceived. *Ghãtu* site thus has been analysed from semiotic perspectives. The following section deals it with the folk drama perspective.

***Ghãtu* from Folk Drama Perspective**

Ghãtu is a folk drama when interpreted through folklore perspective and according to literary genre. Folk drama has its own importance and popularity and it has a key role in the field of folk literature (Neupane 15). Neupane clarifies that the storyline of folk drama is the event dominant, based on the social, mythical, historical and too natural subjects. The storyline is more prioritized than the character in folk drama. He says that the place, where the character acts out, is not well decorated. Folk drama represents a life process, living standard, behavior, and natural and cultural aspects of a given society. He says that there is daily use of language, mixture of prosaic and poetic language. Music is a major element and enactment is compulsory in folk drama. Dialogic as well as dominance of monologic style is another most necessary element in several folk dramas. Folk drama is a part of folk lore and folk literature. In addition, Mohan Himamsu Thapa argues, “Folklore is the soul of civilization and body of culture. Folk drama is the liveliness of body and soul” (68). This is how folk drama has been theorized.

Folk drama is observed in limited places and is preserved and conserved by uneducated and less educated group. It has a purpose of entertaining, as well as

communicating religious and didactic meanings. Ways and methods of presentation get modified in various performances of the drama event as the performers forget the “original” oral scripts and improvise as they act. When did it begin? These are not easily answerable questions with precision. It is safe to assume that it is based on oral tradition, lack of written form, and it is the output of teamwork tasks, as it is created by a group of people working together.

According to the folk drama perspective *Ghãtu*, *Balan*, *Gopichan*, *Dhowa Sangmo*, *Shyamachkewa*, *Jatjatin*, *Maghonal*, and *Medariya Nãch* are folk dramas. He says that *Dhowa Sangmo* is performed in Himalaya region but has not mentioned the practitioners though one might surmise that it is performed by the Sherpas there. *Shyamachakewa*, *Jatjatin*, *Maghonal*, *Medariya Nãch* are performed in Tarai by Tharus and Maithili speaking groups; similarly, *Balan* is performed by Brahman; *Gopichan* by Magar, and *Gaijatra* by Newar.

Ghãtu, which is based on hearsay, music dominant rather than dance dominant, is hillside folk drama. Both male and female actors can participate in this dance. Like *Ghãtu* and *Gopichan*, *Balan* is another hilly folk drama which enacts devotional and mythical themes, and is performed by male actors. As opposed to these forms of folk drama, however, *Shyamachakewa* and *Jatjatin* are performed by the female actors. Like *Ghãtu*, *Gopichan* is music dominant, and it represents socially important grand narratives, and lays emphasis on makeup, costumes and other decorations. *Gaijatra*, for its part stresses on the elements of dance, humor and uses a short narrative form. Folk drama is closer to a narrative and singing genre of folklore than is related to drama of written literature as it is narrative enactment in a dialogic genre. Folk drama is based on local custom, free from certain rules though it has its own sets of prescriptions, and changeable according to location. Also, sometimes it is

weak in the development of its subject, uses and culture-specific type of makeup and costumes according to the race, place, gender, and language of the people who perform it at various parts of Nepal. Unlike many modern dramas, it is performed in open stage and as the road shows of such dramas continues for many days. Their styles and dialogues undergo modification with each performance as road show style that they vary.

On the basis of geography, *Ghãtu* is hilly folk drama, *Dhowa Sangmo* is Himalayan folk drama, and *Shyamachakewa*, *Jatjatin*, and *Maghonal* are Tarain folk dramas. On the basis of caste- Brahman observes *Balan*, Newar does *Gaijatra*, Magar *Ghãtu* and *Gopichan*, and Gurung does *Ghãtu* (Neupane 1-15).

Mahendra Bhavanat presents seven elements; Dwijram Yadav presents five elements; Govindsharan Upadhyaya mentions ten elements but Neupane presents twelve elements of folk drama. They are storyline, language, music, conflict, character, dialogue, rhythmic metre, style, space and time milieu, dresses, enactment and purpose (Neupane 2-3). *Ghãtu* contains most of these elements. There are three major constituents in such dramas, including song, music and dance. The confluence of these three elements is the characteristics of a folk drama. *Ghãtu*, which is an inexpressible oral literature, is almost always characterized by these elements.

Folk drama is an umbrella term under which *Ghãtu* is a part. Chudamani Bandhu presents the characteristics and classification of folk drama, based on determination of Nepali folk drama, its origin and development, similarities and differences in classical play and folk drama, and introduction of Nepali folk drama (262-70). Bandhu argues that folk drama is a simple performative expression of ideology and behavior of folk life. There is an expression of folk sentiment in folk drama which is based on folk tradition. It does not require the classical rules. There is

a guru tradition in the performance of folk drama with certain ways and methods which carry the eventful storyline. The performance stage is of the local style. The performers imitate the characters on the stage, and the presenters make the performance effective with the help of song, dance and musical instruments (262).

Most folk dramas, according to Bandhu, are performed with music but *Ghãtu*, especially, *Sati Ghãtu*, is performed without music. The gurus clap their hands to serve as music which signifies that human hands are musical instruments of all kinds. And he presents that “(i) guru tradition, (ii) methods, (iii) storyline, (iv) staging, (v) character, (vi) dance and song, and (vii) music are the characteristics of folk drama” (Bandhu 262-64).

There is a difference between *Ghãtu* folk drama theory and folk drama theory. Folk drama is one of the major genres of folklore, and *Ghãtu* is a popular folk drama among other folk dramas that are in practice in Nepal. The entire Nepali folk drama genre is often categorized under the folklore or folk literature genre. The *Ghãtu* folk drama theory deals with how this tribal festival is performed. Like the general other folk dramas, *Ghãtu* folk drama has its own elements, types and characteristics. All the dancers are females, and both male and female have the choice of becoming dance masters. It depends on their expertise concerning the singing art although theoretically, there should be female dance masters as it mostly happened in the past.

Likewise, methods of *Ghãtu* performance differ from village to village. Despite the differences that manifest in multiple performances of *Ghãtu*, there exist some similarities. The *Ghãtu* performances, for example, are based on shaman traditions. All the dancers are girls, especially, a structure of pubertal stage even though all the practitioners do not follow this rule strictly. The dancing girls are usually selected from poorer families, and the members of rich families rarely

participate in the *Ghãtu* performance. The selected dancers must be possessed by the *Ghãtu* aura. The possession of *Ghãtu* god is notified by the quivering of the dancing girls who are placed before the gurus, and the dancers' eyes get closed when they enter a trance-like state during the performance.

In all the *Ghãtu* performances, there is a story of a royal couple and their activities of marrying, working in the farm, hunting and warring, and death of king in his young age. Likewise, there are certain parts of a performance from eight to twelve, involving slow motion-dance and song sequences. The language, including pronunciation, is very difficult for other people to understand as it is one of the main characteristics.

The dancers usually do not speak. The gurus respond both question and answer through the medium of songs. They have to sing same verses of the song repeatedly for a long. How long the gurus have to sing is not fixed. Sometimes, they go on singing the same verses of a song of four lines or five for about two hours. This happens when either the guru forgets the verses of the songs and some woman who is in the menstruation period touches the dancers.

Possession of the dancers by *Ghãtu* aura is realized by the audience when the dancers start quivering when their eyes and mouth get closed. This activity confirms that the guru's chanting or the incantation has affected. This symbolizes that shaman tradition still survives even in the age of science and technology. This is the anthropological aspect of *Ghãtu*. According to literary aspect or genre, *Ghãtu* is a folk drama and these elements and characteristics are presented from folk drama perspectives.

Elements of *Ghãtu* Folk Drama

Elements mean the necessary components and constituents of this cultural performance. The *Ghãtu* guru and the choir group, dancers, storyline, sequences of *Ghãtu* songs, performance stage, conflict, music, language, character, enactment, dialogue, dresses and ornaments, paraphernalia are the major elements of *Ghãtu* performance. The elements are as important as the parts of a body in the body of this tribal festival. Together, all these elements narrate different phases in the life of a royal couple.

Ghãtu guru and the choir group are the most essential elements of *Ghãtu* because this performance is almost impossible in their absence. The guru means a person who has the knowledge of full narrative songs. There is a fatal result if the guru forgets the verses of the songs. They believe that the dancer may die if a minor mistake takes place while singing the songs. Therefore, at least one main guru must be expert in singing the songs with a full memory of every single word of the songs. The choir group also plays *madal*, the double ended drum, as a musical instrument according to the requirements of *Ghãtu*. Others, who help the guru even though they do not have the same level of expertise as guru, are also skilled and their participation adds the beauty to the performance with songs that are extremely melodious.

The dancers are second most important constituents in this folk drama performance. Purity and holiness are the major requirements for those who wish to be the dancers. The dancers must not be bitten by dogs or cats, along with the rule that their hair should not be cut as also that they should be under pubertal stage. Another requirement is that dancers must be possessed by the *Ghãtu* god. In addition, dancing skill of the dancers is another essential requirement without which they cannot take part in the performance. But this restriction is not followed in every *Ghãtu* village.

The main storyline of *Ghãtu* narrates the story of a legendary king who dies young while defending the country in the battlefield. The theme is about sati practice and *Ghãtu* performance is based on death ritual which makes the *Ghãtu* tragic. The performance cannot be meaningful until or unless the storyline is present. The composition of event, context and condition is called a storyline and it is expanded by the characters' activities. The storyline of this performance is long, and it is regarded as the soul of the performance. *Ghãtu* storyline is about the royal couple who suffer much. "The storyline of folk drama is the event dominant" (Neupane 3).

The storyline is supported by narrative *Ghãtu* songs which are extremely touchy while describing the story of the royal couple. The songs narrate the whole story of the royal couple from their marriage life to farming, planting the flower plants, paddy rice plants, hunting and so on. "There are nine sequences of the songs" (Appendix A. 2: 291), whereas there are twelve sequences in the narrative songs in the *Ghãtu* of Nuwakot. Every sequence has a story of some kind.

The songs tell an entire story of the royal couple and the stage functions as an important element in such narration. *Ghãtu* is usually performed in an open stage but sometimes also in a separate house, especially, in some villages (of Gurung). Most villagers perform this tribal festival in an open place like the lawn of someone's house. In other words, there is not strict rule concerning the stage management as far as specific performances of *Ghãtu* are concerned.

Conflict is a necessary part of folk drama. *Ghãtu* depicts the conflict between the King Pashramu and his neighbouring kings. In addition, there is another form of conflict in this performance. *Ghãtu* not only suggests that conflict is nonstop process and that it is in the body of a man, but also that conflict is around him as it is between him and another person or the society at large. In other words, various forms of intra

as well inter-level conflicts between individuals as well as those between individuals and society characterize *Ghãtu* performances.

When the King Pashramu, who comes to conflict with the neighbouring kings, dies in the battlefield while defending his country, the queen fails to decide whether to immolate immediately or not. This depicts the internal conflict of Queen Yemphawati. In addition, the performance also dramatizes the conflict between her and those kings who vanquished her lord. This is known as the external conflict. This *Ghãtu* indicates that every man is characterized by internal and external conflicts.

In addition to the aforementioned elements, music is another most important element of *Ghãtu* folk drama although there is no musical instruments played in Sati *Ghãtu*. Music plays a vital role in any kind of performance. In most *Ghãtu* performances, double ended drums are played. Jagman Gurung (Appendix A. 5: 300) adds that Indian pianos are also played in *Ghãtu* performance in some villages these days. As the researcher also observed firsthand, several villages play the tambourine as also a band in which small bells are attached to produce the music. It is tied onto the legs of the dancers. They bang their legs on the floor with the rhythm of songs in a beat. In Sati *Ghãtu*, instead the gurus clap their hands to serve as the musical backdrop, whereas double ended drum or *Madal* is played in Kusunda *Ghãtu* and Bahramasé *Ghãtu*. The melodious narrative song also adds to the musicality of the beauty of performance even though musical instruments differ from village to village.

Even though music and conflict make the *Ghãtu* folk drama popular genre of folklore, dancers are the major concern of *Ghãtu* performance. The gurus and dancers are the two hemispheres of this performance. The dancing girls are the central attraction point for the audience. While there are King Pashramu and Queen Yemphawati as the main characters of *Ghãtu*, King *Kãjuli* and Queen *Kãjuli* are also

other chief characters. But King *Kājuli* and Queen *Kājuli* seem the double role Pashramu and Yemphawati.

Another interesting thing is that both the roles of king and queen are played by the girls in *Ghātu* performance. The neighbouring kings, king's army, elephants, horses, parrot, dogs function as other characters in the performance. Like in other folk dramas, storyline is very important and the story is helped forward not only by human characters but also contributed by the animal characters. In some *Ghātu* villages, there are many dancers while in other villages the numbers of dancers are limited. There were twenty two dancers this year (2013) of different age group in Syangja (Appendix A.12: 311), whereas there was only one dancer in Rainaskot in 2008 (Appendix A.1: 290).

Enactment is another element of *Ghātu* folk drama. The dancers enact the activities of royal couples in the performance. The enactments depict how the king fell in love with the queen and he married her, how he participated in the war after his son, Balkrishna, was born and how he died, as well as how the queen immolated leaving her breast-feeding baby son in the charge of a foster mother after giving him a blessing of long life. It is because she could not think of living after the death of her husband. The dancers enact different gestures in multiple postures while narrating important shifts in the storyline. The enactment of closing the eyes and mouths, for example, reflects inner repressed pains of the queen. Since the dancers act, as if in a trance, they do not know whether they are enacting the dance or acting in real. All their enactments seem real.

Ghātu folk drama is enactment oriented rather than dialogue based. While there is some dialogue but actresses usually do not speak; it is all spoken by the gurus through the songs but not separately like in the films. Sometimes, questions are also

raised by the guru and answers are also given by same the guru. This phrase of a song is supposed to have spoken by the queen as it is known the specific dialogue with her parents and relatives in the time of her immolation. But it is not spoken by her; rather her dialogues are spoken by the guru in the form of a song, as “Listen to me, my one way word, listen to me, I want to accompany my lord” (Thapa 45). In this sense, there is a kind of silent dialogue in the performance and what is spoken is given a poetic form.

Language, obviously, is necessary to have dialogues in *Ghãtu* folk drama, and disseminate the message to the people. There is not any artificiality in the language of this performance. Theoretically, language of folk drama is simple and should be easily understood even by common people (Neupane 5). Language of *Ghãtu* is complex at present but it was not so in the past. It was simple because the people would speak almost similar language. This makes complex for the modern people. For the words and phrases of the songs are borrowed from diverse linguistic groups but not from *Ghãtu* practitioners. Modern people do not easily understand *Ghãtu* language while gurus are singing because of buzzing sound and language of *Ghãtu* is a mixture of old Nepali, Awadi, Sanskrit, Hindi and Maithili.

Words only do not disseminate the message. Dresses and ornaments are the means of non-verbal language in *Ghãtu* to say something about the performance. Dresses are very simple in the dance performance but again, it varies from place to place. Thus, dress up used in Lamjung and Nuwakot is different from that used in Darai and Magar villages. Not only the shape of headgears is different from one place to the next, but there is difference in colour of dresses and wearing style. All the dancers and dance masters or mistresses wear their particular ethnic dresses and ornaments. Mostly the performers wear red dominant dresses, even though some of

them perform with black dominant dresses. Gurung, Magar, Tamang, Dura, Khasha-Braman wear red and Darai performs with black dominant dress ups. The look, size, types, number of ornaments also differ from one village to the next.

Appurtenances or regalia, part of the non-verbal language, are also part of *Ghãtu* performance. Mostly the tools and equipment used in the performance such as bow and arrow, gambling instruments, basket, dagger, comb, flute, stick, rifle, toy horse, toy elephant, toy deer, bird and sword are made of wood. Such regalia and objects differ from place to place in terms of size, colour and so suggest the dissimilarities.

Every cultural performance has its own specific purposes. *Ghãtu* has the purpose of entertaining and healing the audience. As *Ghãtu* expresses the worship of nature rather than anything else, it is also performed for protection from natural calamities and similar mishaps. While the major aim of this performance is to entertain, but it is also used to educating people, and healing some diseases.

Characteristics of *Ghãtu* Folk Drama

Ghãtu folk drama has its own characteristics as other genres of folklore. The characteristics of *Ghãtu* do not resemble from each other as there are a lot of variations in terms of the performance. While the overall performance is fully based on Guru tradition, the gurus can change the ways, place and methods for specific enactments. There is not a special stage for the performance and it is simply decorated by the villagers. To perform *Ghãtu* in open stage is its characteristics. Open stage of *Ghãtu* symbolizes the openness of indigenous groups. Only one *Khasa-Kshetri* community also observes this *Ghãtu* performance but it is nominal.

Ghãtu is hearsay oriented rather than based on fact. There is not a single author of the performance even though Padam Shrish Magar says that Bhadu Gurung

is the composer of *Ghãtu* (7). However, most of the people do not support this claim. This makes the *Ghãtu* performance is mysterious. Another mystery is that the former dancers, who once took part in it, are possessed by the *Ghãtu* aura anywhere in the world if she hears the verses of *Ghãtu* song or just its music. Some gurus cannot speak the verses of *Ghãtu* songs at other times but they can fluently sing them during performance, thus it is adding to the “mystery” of *Ghãtu*.

Ghãtu, as a cultural performance, is observed with the hope of better agricultural products and other such benefits for all the villagers rather than for a personal benefit. Mostly *Ghãtu* is entertainment oriented although it is observed for healing purpose in Chandibhanjyang. While laughter is not the main element of the performance, there are laughter provoking episodes in *Gharti Nãch* part. Dance dominant and trance-dance modes are other major characteristics of *Ghãtu*. Apart from all this, animal sacrifice is a characteristic of this tribal festival. Consisting in sacrifice of animal as well as hens or cocks, mostly the *Ghãtu* organizers offer the hens or cocks or pigs to the *Chandimata* Who is supposed to grant purgation to the dead.

In this cultural performance, storyline determines how effective it is. The storyline is tragic. Both the king and queen die young and the queen immolates for her security that the triumphant kings would possess everything, even the queen of the vanquished king. This moves the audience or the readers.

Several writers and tradition bearers express several views about the types of *Ghãtu* performances. Tikaram Ale Magar, for example, states that there are Sati *Ghãtu*, *Parvate Ghãtu*, *Masane Ghãtu*, *Kusunda Ghãtu*, *Dangure Ghãtu*, *Jogi Ghãtu* and *Pangdure Ghãtu* (M. Shrish Magar 3). There are mainly two types of *Ghãtu*: *Sati Ghãtu* and *Bahramãsé Ghãtu*. But *Kusunda Ghãtu* is also taken as another type

though it is the sub-part of Sati *Ghãtu*. *Ghãtu* in general means *Sati Ghãtu* which generally every *Ghãtu* guru claims. It is completely a tragedy, whereas *Bahramãsé Ghãtu* and *Kusunda Ghãtu* are observed for non-serious entertainment purpose. Both of them are performed as the hunting episodes.

Ghãtu is sensitive and risky to perform for it makes the dancers senseless and all the mass gets sensationalized when the dancers go into a trance. It is quite a difficult task to bring them back in the normal state, because while some dancers cannot go into a trance nor do they, who have gone into a trance, come out of it for two hours or so. During Sati episode, for example, dancers' eyes remain closed for twenty hours by the conclusion of the performance. When the performance is over, dancers' eyes are still closed. The gurus chant to open their closed eyes. Among nine dancers, two dancers' eyes do not get opened even if the gurus attempt much. The dancers go on splashing water to their eyes continuously with the musical beats but nothing happens. Both the dancers start crying and the mass gets sensitized. Luckily, their eyes open after a long attempt and they burst into a loud cry, as the researcher observed it. However, it does not happen every year in every village. This sensitive activity is a major characteristic of this folk drama expressing extreme forms of sensitivity. This sensitivity characterizes the human world. This is a peculiar characteristic of *Ghãtu*. And it can be centre of attraction to the audiences. Moreover, a former *Ghãtu* dancer, Sunkasi Gurung has the bitter experience (Appendix A.15.iii: 313). *Kusundã Ghãtu* is performed with the episodes of begging and slayings of the deer. This suggests the forest life of the royal couples who use to go out for hunting in the forest to relax and live a bohemian life style. *Kusundã* is a kind of tribe that lives only in the forests rather than in the villages. They also take forest as the symbols of

their freedom. In *Kusundā Ghātu* which has the episodes of both village life and forest life of the royal couples. For its part, the forest symbolizes a utopian space.

Bahramāśé Ghātu is performed throughout the year which is conceived as having neither beginning nor any ending. This particular type of *Ghātu* does not require all the rules and methods to be followed strictly unlike in the case of Sati *Ghātu*. The dancing girls—who are called *Ghātusaris* in Tanahu, *Ghātuli* in Kaski, Bayani in Nawalparasi (Pulami Magar 18), *Ghātu* in Dhading—for example, need not to be pre-pubertal and any women can participate in the dance. It is performed on the occasions of the birth of a son in any family, as also during arrivals of the family heads and the young boys from the abroad. The enactments of episodes are related to hunting, fishing and farming in this particular type of performance.

The performance is full of cultural images: elegiac songs, duets, symbolic objects made of ethnic items, and the folk audience. Furthermore, other necessary items such as the weapons and equipment of the King Pashramu, the *birpatta* (the crown/turban) are made up of wood and other cloths. These entire paraphernalia used in the performance stand for certain purposes and they symbolize the daily lives of the couples as well as their simplicity.

Debate in Language and Theme of *Ghātu*

Another aspect of semiotic study is linguistic interpretation. Especially, since there are other languages involved in the performance rather than just used in the performance the language of those who are observing *Ghātu*. This shows that *Ghātu* does not exclusively belong to the Gurung culture nor does it belong to other practitioners and that it may have other indigenous sources as well. The language used in the performance is not Gurung or Magar except one word or two, and almost all the wordings of the text are from Maithili, Sanskrit, Bhojpuri and Tharu languages.

The language of *Ghãtu* is neither Gurung nor Magar. The language of this specific performance is evoked through poetic dialogue forms. According to Chandra Gurung (Appendix A.3: 397), there are twenty-seven languages in *Ghãtu*. Only few words—like Äiré, (the hounds) *Ghãneri* (the heads of the village) and *Ghãtu* (Gha means “wound” and *tu* or *tuba* means “sew and cure”)—are from Gurung language, and others are from multiple sources. Because of inclusions and exclusions of various words at different times, *Ghãtu* language has been changed unknowingly. The participants say that the *Ghãtu* gurus are responsible in assimilating and transforming words of *Ghãtu* language. An examination of a few words used in the performance shows how *Ghãtu* assimilates and transforms words from different linguistic sources. This shows that language and culture as such do not remain unchanged for centuries; they change.

The words like *Lilatai* or *Lalat* (forehead) come from Sanskrit, *tikiya* (a red spot that is put in the centre of a forehead) from the old form of Nepali, *lalai* (red), *bhaiya* (brother) and *baniya* (a business person) from Hindi or Maithili or Tharu, *besori* (a nose ring) in the old form of Nepali or maybe in Gurung, and *aihri* (a dog) in Gurung respectively. Such mixtures of words make *Ghãtu* a scene of multilingual setting, as well as a multifarious text.

So, the narratives of *Ghãtu* are linked with each other to represent the multilingual oral literature and the mythical practices. As such they remain the main sources of learning and the ethnic knowledge, representing the originality, identity and the authentic proof of primitive culture. The language expresses the primordial words. The syntax which is not so systematic symbolizes the innocence and bliss of the past glory. The multilingual setting of *Ghãtu* signifies that language is formed of multiple vocabularies that are transformed and assimilated. And while in the *sati*

practice was never practiced in the Gurungs and the Magars, unlike in Aryan cultures, they observe this festive ritual. For all these reasons *Ghãtu* is unique.

The presentation of *Ghãtu* signifies the functioning of ethno-semiotics in multicultural setting and cultural dimensions. It also implies the teleological view of history rooted in primitive culture. Nevertheless, there has been a lot of change in styles and methods of this performance in the last few decades. This is all because of death of some gurus and lack of required tools, objects and knowledge as some gurus forget the verses of a song (Appendix B.4: 317). Despite these changes, the essence of *Ghãtu*, which glorifies the cultural history and contributes to broaden its cultural horizons, is not changed. The following section highlights the link of *Ghãtu* with other folk dramas.

Relation of *Ghãtu* Folk Drama with Other Genres

Ghãtu is related with several other folk dramas that are in practice as it is one of the important genres of folklore. There are some similarities and differences between *Ghãtu* folk drama and other genres. Several other folk dramas are in practice in Nepal but *Ghãtu* has been compared only with *Sorathi*, *Balan*, *Gaijatra*, *Gopichan*, *Dhan Naach*, and *Nilbarahi Naach* in order to compare its themes and methods with several other folk dramas. *Ghãtu* has subtle relations with several other genres of folklore, and folk literature as well as with the entire corpus of Nepali literature. *Ghãtu* is just a molecule in the whole world literature. In this way, the images of *Ghãtu* range from the local to the universal.

The cultural geography of *Ghãtu* and *Sorathi* in the western Nepal can be compared. As *Sorathi* is a popular folk drama in the western Nepal, *Ghãtu* is also equally a popular folk drama in the same region. There is a similar movement of storyline, character, singing dialogue and enactment in both of folk dramas. The

difference is in terms of the storyline for *Sorathi* as “there is a storyline of a girl, who was flown by the river and she was rescued. She grows up and unknowingly; her own father wants to marry her, but she reminds him that she is his daughter” (Sharma 35), and he gets shocked. Such storyline evokes the motif of Oedipus complex, whereas the storyline of *Ghãtu* is about the royal couple who died young and it moves the audience.

Ghãtu and *Balan* resemble to some extent even though there are significant differences between the two. Geographically, both are performed in hilly areas although there has been some change because of migration in both. *Balan* song and *Ghãtu* song resonate not only in the hillside area now they also resonate in some part of Tarai belt. Both of them are performed with certain specific methods. Both of these folk dramas are treated as a song and a dance (Neupane 16). *Ghãtu* is performed by men and women, whereas *Balan* is performed only by men. *Ghãtu* is performed under the direction of guru and *Balan* is similarly performed under the guru who is called *Vyas* in the language of *Balan*.

The difference is that *Ghãtu* is music dominant and begins in a fixed day and date, once a year even though the starting date differs from place to place, unlike this, *Balan* is enactment dominant and begins on the occasions of *Krishna Astami* that falls by the end of August, as also *Ramnavami* that falls by April as well as in the leisure times. *Ghãtu* is based on hearsay and myth, and *Balan* is based only on myth. Both *Ghãtu* and *Balan* are dance performances, but former is trance-dance and latter is not. The dancers sing in *Balan* but it rarely happens in *Ghãtu*. Most *Ghãtu* dancers do not sing. While there is a new trend in Ramche, Syangja, according to which the dancers also sing but in other villages, the dancers never sing any phrases of song. Also, *Ghãtu* performance lasts for two days to one week or more, but *Balan* is performed

only for one night. And *Balan* is commenced in the evening time and it ends in the morning, whereas *Ghãtu* is performed both at day and night times.

There is similarity between *Ghãtu* and *Gaijatra* that both of them are dance performances. Both *Ghãtu* and *Gaijatra* are performed in memory of dead persons; both of these folk dramas are performed in open stages, and both of them are entertainment oriented and laughter provoking even though *Gaijatra* puts more emphasis on laughter than *Ghãtu* does. The difference is that *Ghãtu* is music dominant, whereas *Gaijatra* is dance dominant. There is the certain narrative song in *Ghãtu*, whereas there is only the music of big sized drum, as big as the base drum in drum set, and cymbals in *Gaijatra*. *Ghãtu* is semi outdoor performance, whereas *Gaijatra* is totally outdoor performance. *Gaijatra* is satire and comedy oriented, whereas *Ghãtu* is sentimental and tragic.

Ghãtu and *Gaijatra* are based on myths. The myth of *Ghãtu* is discussed in the latter sections. The myth of *Gaijatra* as described in an article as follows:

Gaijatra is performed on the earth to make easy the dead souls to go to heaven. The door of heaven is supposed to have remained closed for a whole year but when this festival is performed, the door is opened by the help of the cow's horns. And small boys are disguised as cows. It means the dead souls are supposed to go across the Baitarni River with the help of cow's tail. (*Gorkhapatra* 4)

Myth of *Ghãtu* is not exactly the same but like *Gaijatra*, it also has mythical origins.

Ghãtu and *Gopichan* are both music dominant and are performed by indigenous groups and both of them are hilly folk dramas. These folk dramas are observed in mid-western part of Nepal. In both of these folk dramas, there is a context of death of king—that of the death of King Manichan, a father of *Gopichan* in

Gopichan and that of the death of King Pashramu in *Ghãtu*. And the difference is that *Gopichan* is make up dominant (Neupane 12), whereas “*Ghãtu* is sentimental dance drama” (Bandhu 277).

Ghãtu and *Dhan Naach* are both dance performances. There is dialogue in both dances. They are both hilly folk dramas observed by indigenous peoples. *Ghãtu* is performed in particular time, whereas *Dhan Naach* is performed on the occasion of carnivals, at shopping junctions, during the gathering of young girls and young boys, who should not be their kin relations, especially in the evening and at night time (Thaklehang 255). *Ghãtu* is enactment oriented and so is *Dhaan Naach* because the song which is called *palaam* in Limbu, as “*palaam* is fully enactment oriented” (Thapa 67). This is the similarity between these two genres. There are some differences as well. *Ghãtu* is about a royal couple’s untimely death, whereas *Dhan Naach* resolves around the theme of secret love exchange between young girls and boys, as also observed by Thaklehang.

Both *Ghãtu* and *Nilbarahi Naach* are dance performances and they are both enactment oriented. Both dance performances have to follow the rules strictly. The dancing girls should not have any scars on their bodies and they should not be beaten by dogs or cats according to the rule in *Ghãtu*. Similarly, “the dancers in *Nilbarahi Naach* should follow the rules very strictly. The dancers have to stop eating, speaking, having a rest, using the umbrella, going to toilet during the dance that lasts for ten to fourteen hours” (*Gorkhapatra* 5). Both dance performances are hearsay oriented and mythical. Both of these performances begin in a particular time of the year. The article in *Gorkhapatra* quoted above says that one day, the *Nilbarahi* goddess took a person from Bode village secretly to the forest and trained him to dance. He came back to the village after some days, and from that day onward, this dance continued.

Likewise, there is a myth of *Ghãdo* that it was given to Gurung by the forest god. And both dance performances are to be accomplished only with the effort of teamwork.

But the difference between these two forms is that the cultural terrain of *Ghãtu* is broader as it is performed by other ethnic and caste groups in several places, whereas *Nilbarahi* dance is performed by Newar community only at Bode, Bhaktapur. This shows *Ghãtu* is similar to many other folk dramas and folk dances in general that are in practice in different communities in Nepal.

Like *Ghãtu*, there are several other cultural activities in practice that they are based on shaman tradition. This comparison is just based on shaman practice. The article of *Gorkhapatra* says that Newar people, one of the notable indigenous groups, performs a shaman dance before Patan Krishna Temple every year from *Kattik Shuklapaksha* that falls by November and it lasts for one month (Tamang 4). The history says that this shaman dance started from the time of King Shiddhi Nar Singh Malla in Nepal Sambat 767 (1647 A. D.) with the participation of all the castes, religions, classes, and communities according to the advice of his educator, guru Haribangsha Upadhyaya, this *Tantrik Gananritya*, shaman dance, is staged with the purpose of welfare of the country and people, and begins with the ritualistic worship of Lord Shiva who is also known as the god of dance. According to the main theme of *Gananritya*, only the main episodes of the dance are performed for a week. This dance is also performed as a tradition of performance in Pharping, Chitlang, Kagati village of Nuwakot with different stories with the lead of Balami community as also mentioned in the book, entitled *Nepal Jatra Sanskriti* just like the *Kattik* dance which is performed in Patan Kattik Dabali. There is a tradition of performing the *Kattik* dance once in twelve years in Pharping with twelve girls in a group based on shaman

tradition, whereas this dance is performed in the intervals of three years by the Mahalaxmi Mahasnan Guthi in Chitlang.

There is a tradition of dramatizing the shows of episodes of this dance before the Patan Krishna Temple totally based on shaman methods. The most popular episode consists in the beheading of *Hirannyakashyap* dance or *Nrishingh* incarnation *Gana* dance in this *Kattik* dance. As a rule, the dancer has to eat food once a day for a whole week and it is believed that if this rule is not followed then the artist, who has played the role of *Hirannyakashyap*, may die immediately. One of the dancers, Pratapdhar Sharma of twenty seven, who has been playing the role of *Nrishingh* for thirteen years in this *Kattik* dance (2013), shares his experience of being possessed by the grand energy while wearing the mask of the god. As Yarrow argues, “Certain features of the use of masks in performance also seem likely to contribute, for example, in affecting breathing patterns, reducing the field of vision, and producing a sensation of disjunction or dissociation between the performer and the entity signaled by the mask” (162). Wearing of a mask makes the performers energetic and adventurous in addition to building up their confidence to perform better. Whether the mask makes the performers confident or it encourages them, the performance is to become upgraded by such means. It is instructive to observe Schechner’s view:

The dancing is a performance, but of a special kind. It is thought that when a man wears a mask he is “animated by the spirits which are derived from the myths.” Each *hevehe* has a name because each is a spirit. The spirit moves only when a man is in the mask. Conversely, a man dances well only when he is moved by the spirit. Two autonomous, symbiotic existences support each other. (40)

As a quote above shows Schechner's argument in that one existence is mask and another is the person who wears it.

On the other hand, this comparison is different because *Ghātu* has compared with a local festival *Chhaith Parva* in terms of popularity; different ethnic groups and caste groups observe these festivals. Like *Ghātu*, *Chhaith Parva* has remained a common festival to people from different castes and communities of different religious groups. Just as *Ghātu* festival is observed by both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, *Chhaith Parva* is observed by not only one particular caste group. Bhauch Prasad Yadav writes that *Chhaith Parva* was observed only by some Hindu people, especially by the Tarai people in Tarai belt, for past few years but it has been observed even by Islam people these days. Moreover, most hilly people, who are Hindu, have also started observing it grandly at present in the capital city of Kathmandu (7).

Yadav further writes, this festival has no clear history since when it started like that of *Ghātu*. There is a myth that Sati Anusuya's husband suffered from leprosy and was handicapped as after his hands and legs fell off. Since Sati Anusuya worshipped the sun god, however, her husband's lost parts were regained again. This festival is observed by offering water to the sun and it is believed that when sun rays fall upon the skin, it cures all kinds of skin diseases; a belief that has persisted from the first day since when people started observing Chhaith. The practitioners pray this verse:

Kohiya magé nirmal kaya! Nirdhan mage dhanedhan!

Aanhar magé nayan ke jyoti! Bājhina magé putralaabh. (Yadav 7)

Hey you leprosy infected ones, ask able body with legs and hands,

And you will have

Hey you poor people, ask material prosperity,

And you will have

Hey you blind people, ask the eyes with god,

And you will have

Hey you childless deserted mothers, ask for a son

And you will have

In this way, *Chhaith* festival is observed as a wish fulfilling festival by its followers.

This festival begins by pouring water with a happy mood to the sun that is about to set in the evening; and comes to an end with the ritual of pouring water again to the rising sun in the next morning. The followers stay fast on the day of offering the water to the setting sun and they eat food when they give water to the rising sun early in the next morning.

Just as in the case of *Chhaith*, there is a local belief that there are a number of advantages that can be gained by observing the *Ghãtu* performance. As the *Gananritya* symbolizes shaman tradition and *Chhaith* festival embodies the belief system of protecting and curing some serious diseases like leprosy, *Ghãtu* symbolizes the cultural confluence of these traditions as there is both shaman tradition and belief system of healing process related to animism in *Ghãtu*. Comparing *Ghãtu* with other festivals also is not the major concern; major concern is to interpret images.

In sum up, the performance perspective analyses *Ghãtu* as an illusion. This also analyses the relationship between *Ghãtu* performers and its audiences that mostly both of them are from the same village although some audiences come from other villages. The performance theory analyses that there is a kinetic relation between performers and audiences. The audiences are also considered as the silent performers although it is not highlighted. Symbolically, trident symbolizes the Lord Shiva; the

song the lament of the queen and so. According to folk drama perspective, *Ghãtu* is enactment oriented, performed under the open sky. Anthropologically, the relationship between King Pashramu and his consort as well as his relation with other members of his family and with his peoples have been analysed. This reality is exposed in the main text of *Ghãtu* in which one Nalma *Ghãtu* and Nuwakot *Ghãtu* performances have been presented.

CHAPTER IV

GHĀTU DANCE AND ITS TEXTUAL DIMENSIONS

Ghātu is popular trance-dance along with *Churka*, *Kaura* and theatre dance. It is a meditative dance performed with very strict methods and rituals. The idea of how this cultural practice originated varies from place to place. However, the pattern of the dance's ending in diverse communities indicates final purpose of the celebration. The concern of this chapter is to describe how *Ghātu* performance is like. Among several *Ghātu* performances, the study presents only Nalma *Ghātu* and *Aryal-Kshetri Ghātu*. The researcher finds Nalma *Ghātu* performance more detail than other *Ghātu* performances. The participants from this village share more knowledge about this site than others. *Aryal-Kshetri Ghātu* is only the performance observed by the ruling class. These two performances cover the overall information about *Ghātu*.

Based on a narrative song with traditional methods, *Ghātu* is a traditional dance performance as well as a duet song performance. In this dance, dancers move their bodies and hands in slow motions and flicker their fingers in trance mode with their eyes closed in the rhythm of the song while singers involve in a dialogue. In Chitwan, Dhading, Tanahu, Nuwakot, Syangja, Baglung, and Gorkha, the *Ghātu* dancers perform in complete trance with their eyes closed. Contrarily, the dancers perform with their eyes open in Nalma village of Lamjung. Such a variation in forms of the same folk drama implicates cultural diversity in different regions.

The entire performance is symbolically presented by choosing the pre-pubertal girls of the ethnic group, which indicates the age of the queen. It means the queen was in pre-pubertal stage when she got married to King Pashramu. Pre-pubertal semiotic image is symbolic of queen's virginity.

Most Gurungs and Magars begin to perform *Ghãtu* at *Shreepanchami*.

Although all the practitioners do not do it on this day (see Chapter I), they end it in almost in same date. Almost similar ending dates of *Ghãtu* suggest that ultimate goal of every man is almost similar. Variation in beginning dates symbolizes the variation of human evolution in different ages. “In human evolution, there are many ambiguities and uncertainties” (Peoples et al. 7). Why do not they begin it to perform on the same day? The participants do not know why all the practitioners do not do begin it on the same day. But they claim they are doing as their forefathers started doing (Appendix B.4: 317). The variation creates the ambiguities as well as uncertainties and the “idea of human evolution leads to the hypothesis that cultural resources are ingredient” (Geertz 83). Similarly, there is not any authentic claim from practitioners about the beginning day. *Ghãtu* is also an ingredient of cultural resources and it is a sign of human evolution that occurred in different days and dates.

Younger generations continue to carry on this cultural practice in rural parts of the country. Taylor observes, “Culture supposedly passes through the groups and communities, conferring on them sense of identity and continuity” (95). *Ghãtu* also passes through indigenous groups and *Aryal-Kshetri* conferring on them of identity. But *Ghãtu*'s days come down to a countdown in several villages.

***Ghãtu*: A Cultural Debate**

Ghãtu has a cultural debate in terms of its practitioners, storyline, language varieties, theme and nature. Seven indigenous groups and *Aryal-Kshetri* perform *Ghãtu* but there is no clear information of which particular ethnic group started observing it first and subsequently spread to other indigenous groups. It leads to the question: who is the authentic practitioner? Ratna Bahadur Darai (Appendix B.4: 317) claims that it is Darai culture, and Darai is the authentic practitioner. Indra Bahadur

Gurung remarks that it is Gurung culture (Appendix A.6: 303), whereas Chandra Mani Gurung confirms that it is not Gurung culture (9). Opposing views on the authentic practitioners of the dance have ignited heated cultural debate. Bernard Pignède, a French researcher, presents the Gurung's involvement to observe the tribal festival. Amar Bahadur Gurung claims that the Gurungs have been observing this dance performance for entertainment so far (A. B. Gurung 125). However, Magars, Tamangs, Duras, Darais are also marking this ritual (see Chapter I).

Whosoever observes *Ghãtu*, they have different ways and methods. According to the Gurung methods, the organizers select the appropriate girls—the pre-pubertal girls—whom the *Ghãtu* aura must possess. Jagman Gurung says that the performance begins after dancing girls are selected (Appendix A.5 xi: 300). Gurung further says that the practitioners confirm the dancers on the *Shreepanchami* Day. From that day onwards, the Gurungs perform *Ghãtu* intermittently on Tuesdays and Saturdays until the Full-Moon day of Baishakh, on the Buddha anniversary. The dance performance takes place from the first week to third week of May. There are nine to eleven episodes of this performance observed ritually. Every *Ghãtu* episode changes viewers' perception.

The nomenclature of this performance is not based on facts but is based on mythological contexts. A number of myths are available about how *Ghãtu* is named (see Appendices A.1 and A. 2). The mythical origin of *Ghãtu* symbolizes the conflict nature within humans. The myths, which are the products of human imagination, are associated with representing the creative past. Campbell says, “Myths, so to say, are public dreams; dreams are private myths” (12). The mythical cultural presentation of such performance thus amalgamates the myth and culture and it is usual that such cultural activities derive their ethos from myths rather historical facts. Jagman Gurung

claims that *Ghãtu* has been in practice from King Kulmandan Shah's time. Was there no *Ghãtu* before Kulmandan Shah's time—king of Kaski in around 14th century).

There is no historical record since when *Ghãtu* has been in existence and who the first practitioner is. When location differs, the opinions differ and everything differs. Such situations of confusions—intra-group differences as well as inter-group differences—pose a rich cultural *mélange* which attract thorough study to understand the inter- and intra-ethnic group nuances that have enriched all these indigenous cultural performances. As such a “cultural palette assessment method will make it possible to better manage these cultural intersections in order to deliver visual messages that are more sensitive to cultural nuances” (Moriarty et al. 123). The study presents a better understanding between the similarities and dissimilarities, and harmony-in-diversity and diversity-in-harmony.

***Ghãtu* and Mythologization**

Another reason of debate is that there is mythologized idea in *Ghãtu*. Mythologization is the term formed from ‘mythologize’ which means making somebody or something into a myth, and to explain or relate myths. It seems that *Ghãtu* is derived from *Ghãdo*, a kind of harness bell (Appendix A.2. ix: 294). The anecdote of the hound dog involves in it the solution for the hunters who would have to trace their prey by tracking the harnessed hound that was supposed to run after the prey when the hunters had injured it with their shot. This image of hunting reflects, “The world is made up of two classes—the hunters and the hunted” (Connell 51). In a way, *Ghãtu* reflects this reality. And most Gurubas still pronounce *Ghãtu* as *Ghãdo* which supports the above anecdote. There is also another myth, or a legend, that claims that the *Ghãdo*, a harness bell, was given to the Gurung kings by the forest god. There is a whole story behind it (Appendix A.2. x: 296). Now the Gurung's king

and his fellow hunters did not have the problem to trace the prey after they had possessed the harness bell from the forest god. The very harness bell is called *Ghãdo* from which the term *Ghãtu* has been coined in a sense. Another myth is about how *Ghãtu* is based on shaman practice (Appendix B.12: 322).

Like the word, *Ghãtu*, for the term *syai-syai*, another myth is presented. One of the tradition bearers, Rana Bahadur Gurung from Lamjung narrates a story about the term, *syai-syai* (Appendix A.13: 322). What all these myths suggest is that *Ghãtu* is a text based fully on oral tradition. Oral tradition is a universal phenomenon insofar as tribal people's traditions are concerned.

The villagers perform *Ghãtu* to cater to several beliefs that the disparate souls of both the king and the queen go on hovering around the surroundings where they died. Then, according to the gurus, to solace their souls, *Ghãtu* practice, which heals some patients, is necessary for the protection and healing of the villagers. Leslie Marmon Silko presents the similar practice of healing process as the curative ceremony in *Ceremony*. If not, the deposed souls may harm the villagers although it is a ritual. *Ghãtu* practitioners believe that performing *Ghãtu* avoids the chances of misfortunes like unnatural deaths and natural disasters. *Ghãtu* is a mythico-cultural performance as it is based on myths and legends. "Milton uses myth for what it is, the imaginative projection of all man's deepest hopes and fears" (Daiches 439). It shows that every ritualistic cultural activity is observed for certain hopes and fears which represent the nexus of a global reality. Similarly, if *Ghãtu* dance is done properly as the continuum of tradition and ritual, the royal couple's disparate souls become happy and they bestow good harvest and good health upon the followers/practitioners. The participants say that it is a local belief. All these myths and mythico-cultural spectrum represent the general human activity.

Mystery of *Ghãtu*

Ghãtu performance is very unique because the former dancers are instantly possessed by the *Ghãtu* aura if they happen to hear the verses of *Ghãtu* song or just its music even in the foreign land. It has already been experienced in and across Nepal although it was not experimented. Raju Gurung from Lamjung says that once there was a formal gathering of the Gurungs in the UK, and they happened to play the *Ghãtu* cassette (Appendix A.2: 291). As the *Kusundã* episode of the record was being played and one of the Gurung females displayed unease. All of a sudden, she began to quiver and collapsed after some time because she was the former *Ghãtu* dancer. This sabotaged the purpose of gathering which was to enjoy and share their feelings. They found themselves in an undecided state. After a while, as per the suggestion of *Ghãtu* guru in Nepal, they played reverse song until the woman recovered consciousness. Young people appear to be skeptical about such superstitious stuff but when they observe such performances, their skepticism eases as they begin to realize the mystery behind it.

Another visual record is the evidence of a similar incident at the performance in Rastriya Nachghar—National Concert Hall—opposite Tourism Board Nepal in 2005. The former dancers, who were present as the audience, were possessed by *Ghãtu* aura. The announcer had warned of such possible happening to the former dancers if any but they did not care the announcement. When the *Ghãtu* music started, two of them started quivering and the audiences stirred up to run away from the hall. The programme organizer suspended the performance for some time and convinced the audience not to leave the hall, as the audiences were afraid of adversity. The dance masters, whom “the Magars call *migurma*” (Pulami Magar 20), instructed both former dancers to sit on the stage where other assigned dancers were dancing. They went on

singing the reverse song and playing music with it. Luckily, the former dancers, who were victimized, were released from the *Ghãtu* aura. This reflects the shaman power is still functional. This reflects the wonderful nature of *Ghãtu*.

The wonderful nature of performance is typified by the dancers' ability to dance in both sitting and standing postures for a long time. They do the dancing closing their eyes and mouth, which represent their melancholic condition, but in Nalma village the dancers do not close their eyes while dancing. It distinguishes itself from usual and ordinary type of dances. At first, especially in *Kusundā* episode, the dancers in a sitting pose move their bodies round and round for more than two hours. Then they collapse on the laps of their helpers' one after the other. No guarantee of the fixity of time limit exists, nor can any gurus predict about how long after the first dancer the second one collapses; there is a long gap in between sometimes, whereas they collapse simply one after another or together at other times. All this highlights, and points to the fact of, the performance's being a distinct phenomenon.

As a distinct phenomenon of the performance, the dancers and dance masters show unease when performance's time is at hand. The announcer always warns the former dancers to go away from the performance spot for their safety, every time when *Kusundā* performance is about to go. If any former dancer neglects, she is possessed by the *Ghãtu* aura. That's why the music of *Kusundā* episode, especially, in Nalma, is generally not recorded in the *Ghãtu* cassettes. This ritual performance thus is unbelievable and uncommon. Not uncommon but unique performative aspect of the performance is, most of the cultural activities are performed by both male and female but *Ghãtu* is a cultural activity in which women's involvement is mandatory. This characteristic is neither common nor uncommon, it is mysterious. Several myths are

available as it is mythico-cultural base in mystic power of possessing the former dancers.

Women's Involvement in *Ghãtu*

Another important aspect of this performing art is about the involvement of women. *Ghãtu* performance is almost impossible in women's absence. Women participation is witnessed from making of headgears of the dancers to singing, dancing, caring of the dancers, cleaning, cooking, and welcoming the guests. In Chandibhanjyang village of Chitwan, Ramche village of Syangja, Dulegaula village of Tanahu, Baikuntha village of Makawanpur, there are still women gurus (Appendix A.3: 397). So, presence of male is not highlighted.

Mostly, the women prepare the headgear in all the *Ghãtu* villages according to researcher's observation.

Figure 6 shows that women involvement is a must in *Ghãtu* performance. Women



Fig. 6 *Ghãtu* in Chandibhanjyang, Chitwan

make *birpatta*, the headgear, but the methods differ from place to place (figure 28).

Accordingly, the finishing and look of headgears also differ. Some males also work for this task but it is not accounted. The women manage the necessary constituents for constructing the turban, the headgear. To prepare this toy crown, the women fry the paddy rice and it is known as the parched rice/grain. It is women who sew the straps of plain white and red or black cotton cloths by folding it twice or thrice as a base to attach the small bamboo strips of about two feet and half on its seams. The strips are

naturally flexible and they can be twisted into U-shape to make the height of a crown. The bright white turban suggests the bright white Himalayas of Nepal.

When the required number of bamboo strips is prepared according to the number of dancers, they prepare the cloth straps. Some women sharpen the bamboo strips slightly at the ends to weave the white and red flowers and parched rice altering one by one. About one and half inches of both sides of space are left empty in every strip to attach into the seams of straps. The sewn straps are tied on the dancers' heads individually. The turban should not be loosened while dancing that it is highly taken care of. The cloth straps are placed around the dancers' heads just above the ears and on the forehead. The seams on the strap are visible there because it is sewn by hands that they are obviously longer than that stitch of sewing machine. This makes easier for them to attach the bamboo strips in them. The bamboo strips are to weave the parched rice and flowers so that they are attached in the seams of sewn threads. The bamboo strips are used to weave the flowers and parched grains, and it looks like a garland. Two ends of the small bamboo strips are attached up on the turban twisting them in a crisscross way. As the cloth straps are tied around the dancer's head, one end of the bamboo strip is attached in the seams on the side of forehead, and another end is attached at the back on the neck side. The bamboo strip is attached in the seam on the right side of the ear and it is also twisted into U-shape to the left ear respectively. Now all the bamboo strips, which are woven with parched grains and flowers, are attached on the seams in a similar way and a beautiful crown like headgear is prepared.

The headgear is the product of local knowledge. From preparing this headgear to singing and dancing, preparing food for the attendants and other necessary managements for the performance, involvement of women is higher than men are.

Story of *Ghātu* is about the tragedy of a woman, Queen Yemphawati. Only women used to perform *Ghātu* in the past. But at present, there is males' involvement in the performance. In Tanahu, Dulegauda, Chandibhanjyang, Ramche villages, the dance masters, singers, dancers, assistants of the dancers are still all females. In other villages from Nuwakot, Kunchha, Lamjung and Dhading, male singers perform *Ghātu* but the dancers are females. To construct the tools and equipment, both male and female work together. However, number of female participation is obviously higher. This suggests the equality between male and female.

The *birpatta*, the headgear, is the major object in the performance. The attraction of audience is upon this headgear, dresses, cloaks and ornaments. How beautifully this headgear is constructed matters the level of performance. This headgear is the centre of attraction of the performance. Mostly, the females engage themselves to decorate this toy crown during the performance. For all of these decorations, women's participation is necessary. The compulsion of women's participation for such activities may have arisen from the fact that they are more skillful in such indoor activities than the men are. And indoor activities have remained the field of women for centuries in many communities. They welcome the guests and other visitors warmly. Thus, involvement of women in the performance is highly considerable.

The audience feels pity for the queen because her tragedy is touching and heart rendering. Queen Yemphawati self-immolates in her young age not only because of her love for her lord but also for her safety. She falls into an unbearable condition of marrying with the triumphant kings and she commits suicide. Clifford Geertz forwards the idea of suffering "the problem of suffering is, paradoxically, not how to avoid suffering but how to suffer, how to make of physical pain, personal loss,

worldly defeat or the helpless contemplation of others' agony something bearable, supportable-something, as we say, sufferable” (Nagarajan 104).

Another reason of why Yemphawati immolated is the religious belief as she is from Hindu background where the followers are very strict in their belief of spiritual world. For her, the problem of suffering is not how to avoid suffering but how to suffer, how to make physical pain, personal loss and worldly defeat something bearable as Geertz analyses, according to Nagarajan. The queen has been perished in confusion and despaired after her husband's death. She does not find her life meaningful to survive any longer in the absence of her lord.

The main theme of this cultural performance is located around the tragedy of a woman. So, the involvement of women is usual in the performance. Except making some tools and equipment by men, the women manage everything for the performance. The leg of deer is carved of the yellow coloured wood as it looks like the flesh. In Nalma village in Lamjung, men's involvement takes place for this but it is not done in Salyantar village in Dhading, for instance. The tools and equipment differ from place to place and it is not necessary that there should be this and that for the performance. Many of the tools are constructed by women as well. There are male dance masters to conduct the *Ghãtu* performance in Lamjung and in Dhading but all the dancers and their helpers are all females. The main plot of *Ghãtu* is queen's tragedy hence women's involvement is natural.

Ghãtu performance is about woman's tragic opera. The whole narrative is expressed through the phrases of the song. Men participate in singing and playing the double-ended drums in the performance. In the past, only women used to perform *Ghãtu* and some men started participating in it, but because of long time consumption in the performance, women could not spare time. This culture is still going on under

women's guidance in Makwanpur village and in Chandibhanjyang. But still male singers are dominant in Nalma and Rainaskot. This tribal festival is subject to female rather than male. *Sati Ghātu* is performed only by female. The real importance of *Ghātu* lies in this *Sati* episode that it is the centre of attraction of the performance. The etymological meaning of *sati* is to "die." A widow woman has to die after the husband's death. *Ghātu* is related to the crematorium. This practice is called *Sati* Practice. It was also in practice in Nepal. As Orr presents the record of inscription:

There are, however, at least four inscriptions of the medieval period that have been engraved on temple walls in various parts of the Tamil country that record women's self-immolation: a tenth-century inscription from Allur, in Tiruchirappalli district, that records the gift of gold to the temple by a woman named Gangamadeviyar "who was entering the fire" (SII 8.690); an inscription from Dharmapuri district, dated A. D. 1017, in which a wife is said to have "entered the fire." (112-13)

This is how *sati* practice existed in India and it was in practice in Nepal until 1920.

The theme of *Ghātu* is also *sati* practice as the queen immolates when her Lord dies young. Some Hindu women are too submissive, as "women's vows and self-immolation, which do not indicate that these acts were performed for the sake of offspring or a husband" (Pintchman 11), whereas some women want freedom. In contrary to immolation, Govindamma was a widow and according to the ritual, she did not have to wear the *bottu* and *tali* but she claimed that it was given to her by the god. She argues, "Why should I take them off when my husband dies?" (38).

This is a contrast that Gangamadeviyar immolated in the demise of her lord but Govindamma, another woman, is ready to wear the *bottu* and *tali*, which are

restricted to widow women to wear them according to Hindu custom. One of the women called Gangamma by tenth century in south India says, “I haven’t removed my *bottu* and *kumkum* even though my husband is dead. Because 101 Ammavarus put on my *kumkum/pasupu*, I haven’t taken it off” (Pintchman 49). This contradiction represents the universality that it is necessary to exist in the world. Although there is not such contradiction in *Ghātu*, the theme of *sati* was not liked by anyone else. Such a lot of women did not agree to follow this *sati* practice but it is said that the widow women were forcefully instigated to jump into the fire of the pyre. So a kind of musical band was played to dominate the cursing voice of the widow. Most of the widow women did not want to die alive by self-immolating. This book imparts the information of the *sati* practice, the self-immolation (Orr 112-13). This system has come into existence since Licchavi dynasty in Nepal (Appendix B.13: 322). Queen Yemphawati commits *sati* because of evil custom. Pintchman contributes the present research additional information about *sati*.

The *sati* part, however, makes the audience spellbound. During the time of queen’s immolation, her lamentation is heart rendering. She gives the charge of all her property to her relatives, her baby son to a foster mother. She asks a foster mother to take care of Balkrishna very sincerely. She instructs the servants and workers to well feed the birds and animals as well. She does not want to be irresponsible. While the queen is transported to the *Deurali*, the musicians play the Nepali band of music in a tragic tone among the attendants there. The queen says, “listen to me, mother and father, listen, I want to go with my lord, “good-bye” (Thapa 45). All her relatives then go ahead towards the crematorium. The queen’s relatives transport her to the crematorium carrying her in a palanquin shadowing with the plain white sheet as an

umbrella. On the way to Deurali, hen is offered to the goddess *Chandimata*, the death god, and then gun is fired to scare the evil spirits.

The queen is transported to the crematorium as the dead body but she is not dead. It is known as carrying of the life-corpse. She waits there for some time in the encampment at the bank of Jamuna River (Marshyangdi) to perform certain rituals before she ascends to the pyre. The queen's wish of immolation represents women's stubborn nature.

All relatives of the queen and other attendants reflect the image of funeral procession (figure 36) as the unprecedented tragic severity, which depicts the uniqueness of *Ghãtu*. When the relatives and attendants had been to dancing girls' houses as if they were there with a marriage proposal but when they reach to the crematorium, their return turns into a funeral procession. Yemphawati weeps too much for she makes such a bold decision. The weeping of the protagonist is far more different from the same in other enactments in that the latter is just an enactment while the former is filled with so much life that the dichotomy of acting and reality gets obliterated here. Queen Yemphawati becomes a widow in her young age and the attendants feel sorry in her immolation. Thus, *Ghãtu* represents not only the royal couple's tragedy but the entire of human life.

Texts of *Ghãtu* Performances

In the discussion, only two main texts from Nalma village and Majhitar of Nuwakot are presented. Other *Ghãtus* are discussed only in case of distinct features. Nalma *Ghãtu* is the representative of indigenous groups and Majhitar *Ghãtu* is the representative of *Aryal-Kshetri* although all *Khasa-Kshetris* do not observe any *Ghãtu*. In the beginning, Nalma *Ghãtu* is presented and Majhitar *Ghãtu* is presented

later because Lamjung is supposed to be the origin of this tribal festival and Gurung *Ghãtu* has comparatively more information than other *Ghãtu* performances.

The beginning of *Ghãtu* is an incantation to summon the god. However, an imperative of a different mythico-cultural significance also emerges from such an assertion. The initiation into self of the queen the song creates a very significant trance-like atmosphere. The music and song reverberate in the air which ultimately captures the self of the performing girls' self. The *Ghãtu* Guru hypnotizes all the dancers with the power of chanting and sends them into a trance. In the beginning of the second session, which is performed in the *Tharku* or *Thatighar* outside the house where testing of dancing girls takes place, the dancers are asked to sit on the mat made up of bamboo strips before the gurus, and the guru starts chanting. It makes them gradually quiver. All their mouths and eyes get closed and after some time, the dance is suspended and the dancers take water into their noses through the nostrils which make their eyes open. They do this once or twice. Then they get up to dance. They enact different gestures in slow movements. The slow movements of the dancers signify the ritualistic performance.

In *Ghãtu*, there are parities and disparities of methods of *Ghãtu* performance. For instance, only the *Sati Ghãtu* is performed in Rainaskot without any musical instruments but all the *Ghãtu* gurus clap their hands to serve as the music, whereas *Kusundã Ghãtu* is performed in Nalma with music. The way of singing is different although the lyrics are similar to some extent. Likewise, the ways and methods in Tanahu district vary. The dance masters in some villages of Lamjung mostly are males but there are female dance masters in Tanahu.

The verses of song or lyrics also differ from village to village. Nalma of Lamjung has different narratives about this site. Rainaskot has the separate version for

the same. Similarly, Dulegauda of Tanahu, Majhitar of Nuwakot and Sallyantar of Dhading also have separate versions. The lyrics and tunes do not resemble to each other. Moreover, the language used in this site is mixed of diverse languages like, Sanskrit, Maithili, Bhojpuri, and old Nepali. This shows that *Ghāṭu* does not belong to indigenous groups alone.

The *Ghāṭu* practitioners perform this cultural activity once a year but its time duration ranges from about one month to about four months. The dance is not performed every day after it is commenced. Gurung and Magar begin it on the occasion of *Shreepanchami* that falls by the end of January. And they do the dance intermittently. Jagman Gurung says that the performance gets commenced when the dancing girls are selected (Appendix A.5: 300). From the day of *Shreepanchami* onwards, they begin the performance intermittently on Tuesdays and Saturdays until the Full-Moon day of Baishakh, on the Buddha Anniversary. Now again, generally after second day of Buddha Anniversary onwards, the performance is ritually commenced. It occurs by the first week to third week of May. The ending date is almost similar; it symbolizes the similar ultimate goals of everyman.

As the ambition of every piece of art is to change every spectator's perception, *Ghāṭu* as the performative piece of art can also change the spectator's perception, when one observes this closely. But on this occasion, the Nalma village performs *Ghāṭu* continuously for one week or so. They perform the dance from early in the morning to afternoon. They take a rest for breakfast and lunch in the intermission. After a lunch the dancers take rest for two hours or so. Again they continue the performance till midnight. And they suspend the dance for dinner and again they take a rest. This suggests that timely rest as such for every human is a must for performance stamina.

The Magars, the Gurungs and the Duras begin it by January and they end it by last May; the Darais and *Aryal-Kshetri* do it from April to May; Some Gurungs in Syangja do it from February to May and “Tharu begins it on the occasion of *Chaitra Purnima* and they also end it by May” (P. Shrish Magar 24) that falls by 6 April although the date differs according to Nepali calendar, and they also end it in May. Only limited people perform *Ghātu* at present.

Ghātu has some episodes or sequences that vary from village to village. Nalma *Ghātu* comprises nine episodes and they are called *dādi*. The number nine signifies the nine months of period of every man’s stay in the womb. These episodes are called *khanda* in Syangja, whereas *Khasa-Kshetri Ghātu* comprises eleven episodes and they call them *parvas*. There is not any significant difference in these terms. The terms, *dādi*, *khanda* and *parva* have the similar meanings, the part. This difference suggests that same thing is addressed with different terms.

This cultural dance is a slow motioned dance that the dancers should be good at dancing. This dance is not like the general dance as some perform it in an informal gathering such as picnic programme. The general dance, which is performed in informal gathering like wedding ceremonies, and *Ghātu* dance can never be compared. Simple practice may not meet the requirements of this dance.

In the *Ghātu* performances, the process of selecting the dancing girls, preparation of the necessary objects, performing the dance and ending it take place in a way how the performers do it from the beginning. This *Ghātu* performance is extracted from Nalma village. This performance art can be analysed as the pre-performance, performance and post-performance.

Pre-Performance of *Ghãtu*

The performance of *Ghãtu* has been deeply ingrained with the spiritual need of the ethnic groups of a few mid-Western districts. From the day of *Shreepanchami* onwards, the Gurungs begin the performance intermittently on Tuesdays and Saturdays until the Full-Moon day of Baishakh. The former dancers train the new ones on the know-how of the performance. During the whole month of Chaitra (from 15 March to 15 April), no one from other villages is allowed to enter the village nor anyone from the *Ghãtu* village is allowed to go out that “[c]ulture is most effectively treated, the argument goes, purely as a symbolic system [. . .]” (Geertz, 17). This method is only according to some Gurungs and Dura because all the ethnic groups do not begin it in the same date. This represents the local beliefs.

All such rituals are observed with a belief that the diseases of any other villages may not get transferred to the *Ghãtu* village. The villagers formally end it on the Full-Moon day of Baishakh that falls towards the middle of May. While the popularity of the festival itself should guarantee its importance for the tribal groups that perform it, the festival has also had its importance to make up for their spiritual health.

A study of *Ghãtu* should entail with it certain questions. What is *Ghãtu*? What are the methods of *Ghãtu*? The answers to such questions in turn have their roots in the mythical story of *Ghãtu* itself. The royal couple has a mythical story. The story has it that once there was a legendary king called Pashramu in Lamjung district of mid-Western Nepal. But Pulami Magar says that Pashramu was also the king in the hilly area of Nawalparasi district (19). The king, in course of his hunting, met a beautiful girl called Yamphawati at a place called Nawalpur. The girl was supposed to have come from the Rajput dynasty in India. The king fell in love with the beautiful

girl and got married with her, who gave birth to a son called Balkrishna. The neighboring kings got envious of King Pashramu and waged war against him. In spite of his relatives' suggestions of not getting involved in war he was arrogant enough to go to war. He was guided by the principle of "*hato wa prapsysasi swarga jitwa wa bhokshyase mahim*" (Shrimadbhagavadgita 2:37). Here the clause means that if you are killed in the battlefield you will go to heaven, if you win you will enjoy the kingdom. This suggests that there is no loss to the patriotic warrior.

The king gets victorious and confident initially but is subsequently defeated at the frontier near Gorkha, a district belonging to Gandaki zone in contemporary Nepal. A parrot is said to have gone to inform the Queen Yamphawati about the king's death. Parrot and pigeon are considered as the messengers in Hindu context. Jahyun Kim Haboush mentions the similar context, as "a goose arrives with a letter bound to its leg. The princess notices that the letter is addressed to Söngüi" (Haboush 88). Later, a horse also goes to give her with the sign of the king's death. The queen does not believe the signals; but when the head messenger comes with blood-stained crown of the king and gives it to her, she is forced to believe the king's fate and gets fainted out of bereavement for the king's death. It is said the queen trembles to show her sorrowful moment.

The subsequent performers are said to have been doing the same to enact the queen's sorrows. *Ghãtu* gurus claim that *Ghãtu* has certain methods without which it is not to be commenced. They also claim that it is not to be performed out of time and place. The *Ghãtu* gurus state that it is totally based on shaman tradition. If a minor mistake takes place during commencement, the *Ghãtu* performers have to face the terrible results. The gurus also say that any kind of misfortune may happen to the gurus, dancers or to the whole villagers in case there are certain lapses in the

performance: some may go mad; some may fall sick; some may die or some kind of natural calamities also may happen. So they believe that performers should not miss a single letter or phrase of the songs while singing. And if the performance is not done, they believe that there may be plagues, floods, landslides, and bad harvest. But if it is performed timely with correct methods, the villagers believe that they are benefitted.

The ethnic groups have a story to tell of the legendary royal couple, whose desperate souls they believe will become unhappy if any lapses occur in the performance. If the *Ghãtu* is performed in the right time, it might ward off mishaps and misfortunes. So, the rituals related to the performance come to the forefront of importance before any other things.

Part of the ritual consists of seeking the appropriate dancers to perform the dance. The *Ghãtu* performers have to fulfill the requirements of this dance. As the dancing girls in the beginning must be of pre-pubertal stage; there should not be any scars on the body of the girls; they should not even be bitten by dogs; their hair also should not have been cut all their life and all of them must be healthy not handicapped. And the girls, supposed to be well qualified to suit the requirements, should be asked of their interests to participate in the dance. When they agree, the performers should take the permission from their guardians. All the villagers and *Ghãtu* performers go to the girls' houses individually with certain gifts to make the parents happy so that they grant permission to the girl for performance. On this occasion, the villagers play the music band and the attendants enjoy as if they are participating in marriage ceremony. This evokes the happy ambience.

The villagers behave as though they are really going to ask the hand of a girl for marriage. On the way, some crack jokes and some do not lag behind to tease the girls. The young girls and boys may fall in love as well because this allows them

freedom to exchange their feelings. All through the year, most of them have to be busy in their farm works, these people may lack the opportune time to convey their love to each other. In this gathering, the guardians do not mind the young peoples' romances, either indicating that the indigenous society is a bit free comparatively. So, some young people might be waiting for this occasion to express their love to their loved and loved ones.

This part of *Ghãtu* performance, that is, the pre-performance part, can be taken to be the happy episode because no one is unhappy this time. They do not worry about their tired life in the farms. The farmers stop working in farms when *Ghãtu* commences. Most of the children do not go to school at this time. Some teachers and civilians from the villages where the performance occurs stay on leave. Those who have gone away from home for employment return home to participate in the occasion. They also take leave for the same. Some other people are also invited from other villages to observe the *Ghãtu*. Sometimes the researchers from inside and outside the country may go there to observe the dance. Some media persons also visit there to make news of such cultural activities. They have to be busy for the whole year in their farm works but the festival offers them an occasion for rest. The relatives of the villagers who are abroad enjoy coming back to the village on the occasion of this tribal festival, and some attend this festival as their pre-plan, and it provides everybody a happy moment to the people.

Now when these people reach the house of the dancing girls, they propose to the guardians that the latter should allow their daughters to participate in the *Ghãtu* performance although the parents have already been informed informally. This is the formality that they must fulfill this responsibility as a ritual. Unexpectedly, some guardians refuse the proposal, and if no guardians accept the proposal, the *Ghãtu*

dance is suspended that year. Nevertheless, such an unkind situation rarely occurs as the villagers somehow manage to find the dancers from the permission of one or the other parents. So, the performance continues with the permission of the parents; as it is a ritual, it must be fulfilled anyway.

The *Ghãtu* performers then manage all the necessary objects, tools, equipment, and space for the performance. They prepare the tools and equipment like bow and arrows as they were used by the legendary King Pashramu. They make these tools from wood. Other objects like horse, elephants, dog, cock and hen are also made of wood. Before this, they make a separate house, considered to be holy for all, where *Ghãtu* is performed for a week or so. The villagers usually construct the house for performance in the middle of the village. They also collect some money from the villagers to construct this house. This house is mostly used only for the performance. Although some other social activities may also be performed there, if necessary, it is not used for the personal use. After that, on the occasion of *Shreepanchami*, at midnight, the girls are transported to the public tap to take bath. They manicure their nails and they take bath. Then, the dancers change their used clothes and they wear totally a new dress of a particular ethnic group. Their relatives cover the dancing girls with plane white cloths and they transport them to the *Ghãtu* spot (Appendix A.2: 291).

In the meantime, some *Ghãtu* gurus prepare the space and wait for the dancing girls there. The spot is prepared with certain methods where all the people are not allowed to go in and watch it. The space for *Ghãtu* is sanctified by smearing with the cow dung and the water from seven sources, and banana leaves are placed on it in one of the houses of the gurus. The banana leaf denotes that the dancers have entered the spiritual world from the mandatory world. The girls have to sit on the banana leaves

and the gurus invoke the *Ghãtu* aura. These are the methods to be prepared before the performance.

The *Ghãtu* aura takes place after the *Ghãtu* gurus recite mantras. It is a proof that there is some mystical awareness associated with the tradition of *Ghãtu*, which in turn requires one to clarify the meaning of the term *Ghãtu* itself. It is a song sung with the fricative glottal sound with rhythmic beats that cause much difficulty to the singers.

Performance of *Ghãtu*

First, *Ghãtu* gurus are needed to begin the performance. Second, only the appropriate dancing girls of pubertal stage are qualified for the performance. Then the choir groups and helpers to the dancers are required. When all the requirements of *Ghãtu* are fulfilled, then the selected dancing girls are sit on the banana leaves after they take bath at midnight on *Shreepanchami* and all the methods are followed strictly to invoke the *Ghãtu* aura. The gurus recite the following phrases of the song rhythmically:

Lipa ho re bhaiya, mali gaiko gobarle lipaila

Satai mulko panile lipa, varchuli devta awaila

Hamara balakannyako shiraima baisela (Appendix A.3: 297)

With the dung of spotted cow, smear! Oh brother, smear!

With the water from seven sources smear! Oh brother, smear!

Oh, Deuchuli god, come and possess the pre-pubertal girls dear

The above verses of the song are recited to invoke the *Ghãtu* aura. Then *Ghãtu* aura possesses the dancers. In this part, all the gods from all the directions are called up.

And although the place for the dancers is well smeared, the dancers enact smearing

with the rhythm of the songs. Simultaneously, the assistants tie the headgears on the dancing girls' heads. They also put the coloured rice on their heads.

Lifa Dãdi (Smearing the Ghãtu Spot, First Episode)

In this section, the selected dancing girls manicure their nails and take a bath changing the used clothes. The girls' relatives assist in such activities. Then they sit in a row before the gurus according to the instructions. Now the gurus start chanting in a way that the *Ghãtu* aura possesses the girls as it is a procedure. Sometimes, the aura does not possess some girls or any girls. Usually this testing activity is performed at midnight. The performers say that this procedure is the most important activity because they do not have to perform the dance if the aura does not possess the girls. This episode is performed especially for the confirmation of dancing girls. According to methods, the *Ghãtu* aura must possess all the dancers. If no girls are possessed, they suspend the performance that year. Luckily, it has never happened before.

Lifa means smearing the spot of the *Ghãtu* in local language. The performers do not commence the *Ghãtu* until or unless the *Ghãtu* god possesses the dancing girls. Other people are not allowed to go into the place where a test of dancing girls by the *Ghãtu* aura is going on. Even the visualization is not allowed. This part is known as the secret part that it indicates that every human being has his/her own secrecy. It also proves that maintaining the secrecy is a power of individuals.

Every year *Ghãtu* aura does not possess the girls and dance masters have to go on singing for two days or three *Ghãtu* gurus claim. The dance masters cannot guarantee how long after the aura possesses dancing girls. When the aura possesses the girls, they start either quivering gradually or some start crying. It is a tradition that the first girl, who is possessed by the aura, is given the role of king to play and rest of the girls who are possessed by it later are given the role of the queen or queens. But

this method of selecting the king is not applied in every *Ghãtu* village. In Dulegauda, Tanahu and Nuwakot, the youngest one is given the role of king. This suggests that many young boys used to marry the elder girls in the past.

Now the gurus stop singing and chanting after the girls are possessed by the aura. This makes the girls stop crying and quivering. The gurus sprinkle the water to the girls as they have been qualified to dance for three years. In 2008, only two girls were possessed by the *Ghãtu* god in Nalma village but one girl remained intact from the possession. However, she was allowed to dance later by the decision of *Ghãtu* organizers for her dancing skill and for a quorum.

***Sarswati Dãdi* (Learning Episode)**

This *Sarswati Dãdi*, the learning episode, is performed to invoke all the gods from all four directions so that they would protect the *Ghãtu* gurus and dancers from evil spirits. The gurus believe that the evil spirits bother them while performance commences as *Ghãtu* is based on shaman tradition and death rituals. They never start this cultural activity without doing this ritual. Sometimes, the dancers start quivering suddenly while dancing; they start teeth gritting, and they collapse, as “gritting of the teeth, rolling or closing of the eyes, [. . .] characterize the trance situations” (Muthukumaraswamy 141). It happens so when the gurus forget some lines or phrases of the songs or if cleanliness is not maintained. The smearing part is secretly conducted and this *Sarswati Dãdi* is the first episode of *Ghãtu* as a public show. So this episode is the beginning of the performance. Or the starting of *Ghãtu* is done on the day of the birth of the Goddess *Sarswati*, the goddess of learning. This means it gives the sense that *Ghãtusari* was also supposed to have been born on the very day. On the very day, the small children are taught to learn the alphabets-A, B, C, . . . (See figure 19) or they are sent to school. In this context, the line, “the gurus might have

established the *Ghātuli* as the image of Saraswati” (Thapa 19) can be relevant.

According to the research of Dharma Raj Thapa, the dancer is called *Ghātuli* who symbolizes the god of education. And it indicates that *Ghātu* is the source of spring season and a herald. In this respect, *Ghātu* is the light of education and knowledge.

Biruwa Sarne Dādi (Planting Episode)

In this episode, the dancers enact planting several kinds of flowers in the garden. To water the flower plants, Queen Yemphawati, a newly married daughter-in-law, goes to fetch the water to the public tap but she does not find water there. All the wells and the taps are found to be dry because of dry season of spring. Then she goes to the Gandaki River which is far away. As she gets back home it is already night. So she cannot walk properly in dark, and she stumbles down on the way and she breaks the water pot. This makes the newly mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister-in-law and brother-in-law angry. They scold her bitterly but her husband convinces her not to be worried. It proves that the friendship between husband and wife is the credible friendship in times of crisis. It denotes that flowers do not only beautify the surrounding of the house, they are also the main source of oxygen. So flowers are planted around the houses. The aesthetic sense of flowers was prevalent even in the past. Similarly, flower farming activities suggest that Nepal is an agrarian country and it is a good source of economic factor.

Balkorne or Shringar Dādi (Make-Up Episode)

The importance of beauty has been realized by man from the beginning of human evolution. Beauty is highlighted in this episode as it is a must for personality development of every individual. Beauty is not only about the human body, it is much more than that. It plays a vital role in social, political, religious, moral, financial, educational, geographical or natural aspects in the human world and its importance is

beyond human imagination. To acquire the beauty by a man in all these aspects is supposed to be a matter of good luck. To appear beautiful and show off themselves before the audiences, people in the world clad themselves in their own dresses according to their caste, religion and gender. *Ghātu* reflects this universal reality that beauty has a great value in the world. Several literati have written a number of poems on beauty. From the English poets like Wordsworth, Keats, and Byron to Nepali poet Lekhnath are the poets who have been noted for their poems on beauty. Most people are dying of acquiring the beauty from cosmetics. Likewise, Dharma Raj Thapa explains the beauty:

Beauty is the specificity of the creation. The entire world becomes totally tasteless in the absence of beauty. The creator also must have realized this reality. For the make-up, the lord Shiva has accepted the snake-garland to wear on his neck, and the Vishnu the lotus. The mountains get the beauty from the dawning ray of the first sun and the vegetation gets the beauty with green new leaves and colourful flowers in the spring season. Similarly, the rivers and streams get the beauty in the ripples when the morning rays of the sun fall upon them, and a ripe with the youth, the young early teenage girl gets the beauty in her first smile she shares with. (Thapa 28-9)

Accordingly, the hair combing or make-up episode tells that a person's get up is well determined by his/her hair style. So combing of the hair differentiates the personality to a great extent. That's why the importance of beauty has been stated out here in *Ghātu*. Only by beautifying the outer part of the body, human cannot survive. He needs food as a basic need for which agricultural activity must be performed.

Agriculture is still the main occupation in Nepal even if trade, business, government jobs, working in industries and factories also employ the public.

***Dhan Ropne Dādi* (Paddy Transplanting Episode)**

This episode attempts to portray agricultural activities that a farmer has to carry out in daily life. The dancers enact the farm works such as how to prepare the agricultural tools and equipment; how to make the canal; how to sow the paddy seed; how to uproot the paddy plants when they are ready to transplant into the next field; how to take care of the paddy field like irrigating and weeding; how to reap; how to thresh and how to harvest. It is very interesting to watch the scene of this paddy plantation episode although agricultural life is fully based on physical strength and often painful.

Only the agricultural product is not sufficient to support the food and financial needs of the public. Several people go abroad in search of works or jobs. All the people do not possess the sufficient land and they have to work in others farmland. They do not get well paid for this and they are compelled to go abroad for jobs. This reality is projected by the following episode.

***Bideshi Dādi* (Going Abroad Episode)**

This episode is also known as the *Kusundā*, the nomadic man episode because there is a description of it. *Kusundā* tribe is considered like the *Raute* people who live in the forests in a sense that both of them are nomadic men. Seeking the forest root-fruits and hunting is the daily schedule of this tribe. The dancers enact of how the main characters of *Ghātū*—the royal couple—wandered to the forest disguised as jungle man and woman wearing the yellow dresses, leaving the well facilitated lives of the palace. To the ruling class, it was something like a trend to roam around the forests. But their living in the forest for a long time suggests either they forget the

way home back or they are compelled to settle there. For this, the royal couple respects the *Kusundā* as their guru to learn about forest life there as long as they lived there. So, to live in Brinda forest, to ignore the comfortable life of the palace, wearing the ash on the forehead instead of sandal wood paste, might be the compulsion of the royal couple or irony of fate. *Ghātu* enacts all these activities one by one. It is also known as foreign junket as king and queen leave the country for honeymoon.

But the royal couple cannot get back home for some days, their looks change obviously, and they are known as the King *Kājuli* and Queen *Kājuli*. The dancers enact these realities of how they suffered in the forest. This dance is called *Ghartinach*, a dance of nomadic man. This dance entertains the audience well. As the theme of *Ghātu* is too tragic, the audiences are likely to feel a lot of misery. To brake or to make the audience forget of the queen's overwhelming sorrow and demented condition, this dance helps entertain for some time. If not, the audiences are obsessed with only to a tragic theme of queen's immolation. *Ghartinach* diverts the audience's mind from tragic theme. A short dance of the grave diggers in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* also reflects the similar motif.

The *Gharti* dance is acted out as an enactment of the royal couple when they were in the forest. But the dancers on the other hand show the real behavior of the *Kusundā* tribe. Only the difference is that the characters of *Gharti* dance perform different activities consciously, whereas the *Ghātu* dancers do everything in tranced-mode. *Gharti* dance attracts the audience. But by the enactment of *Kusundā*, all the audiences become spellbound, and whole environment get sensitized when the gurus send the dancers into a trance. The dancers sway the top half of body round and round with the music and song; the gurus go on singing; all the dancers should collapse on their back, and they go into a trance. But how long after do they collapse? It is not

guaranteed. This is the most sensitive part of the performance that gurus should be too careful. Sometimes, it takes more than two hours to go into a trance.

The dancers go on swaying non-stop like a wheel until they collapse on their backs and go into a trance. When the dancers go into a trance, it is called releasing the *Kusundā* in the language of *Ghāṭu*. All the dancers look as if they are dead and still on the laps of their helpers who are present there for their help standby behind every dancer. And it is very difficult to bring the dancers back out of a trance, to the gurus. After all the dancers collapse, the gurus sing the reverse song. This also consumes a lot of time and makes the mass sensitive or worried because the dancers, who are fully in unconscious state, should come out of this state into a normal state. All the audiences are very curious to know when the tranced dancers come out into a normal state. Sometimes, the dancers cannot come out of a trance and they start their teeth gritting and quivering. The dancers behave so abnormally after they come out of a trance. Some of them cry and few of them keep silent looking angry and frowning. When interviewed, a former dancer, Sunkashi Gurung says that it is not the dancers who weep, it is gods and goddesses (Appendix A.15.ii: 313).

Now when the dancers come out of a trance, they sit before the gurus in a row with a disturbed mood. The gurus ask them where they are from and who they are. They do not speak for a long time although they are repeatedly asked where they set for. They speak roughly and say that they are the king and the queen of the forest; they have come from the Kailash, the Himalaya there in Palpa to take a bath and to collect the alms. It is also known as the *Kusundā* part that in *Kusundā* episode, the King *Kāṅjuli* and the Queen *Kāṅjuli* are the double roles of royal couples.

Padam Shris Magar has the separate view about *Kusundā* or the King *Kāṅjuli* and the Queen *Kāṅjuli*. Balkrishna, the crown prince, decides to become the king of

forest when he knows that he has no sign of becoming the king of his kingdom. It means the nomadic people, King *Kājuli* and the Queen *Kājuli*, are not King Pashramu and Queen Yemphawati but they are Pashramu's son and daughter-in-law, Balkrishna and his wife, Basantawi (25). This anecdote implies that the state heads should play several roles. They go on exile by their either interests or compulsion. For instance, the Pandavas in *Mahabharata* go on exile as a compulsion. The royal couple has to play different roles and face different critical situations. *Ghātu* indicates this reality.

After a long effort of the gurus' singing of reverse songs, the dancers come out of a trance mode into a normal state but they are not as fresh as other people are. Few minutes later, all the dancers collect the mustard oil and hubble-bubble to serve the gurus. They apply the oil to the gurus one by one, and they serve them the hubble-bubble. All the dancers who are in half trance mode quarrel (Figure 32) there because they want to serve only to their own personal guru. They fight really but that fight does not last long. Some dancers get injured in this incident, too. After a fight, they collect the alms from all the attendants personally there. Everyone must give them some money as they wish and if not given, they beat the person with a stick. The fund of *Ghātu* organization is raised from this money. They sit before the gurus after they complete their begging enactment, and the gurus release them from the *Kusundā* aura by chanting the reverse song. Only then their face changes into a normal look.

***Vivaha Wa Janma Dādi* (Marriage Or Birth Episode)**

This episode defines the marriage as an eternal process and the medium of having the relation between male and female to give continuity to human relation. The relationship holds a great significance. To run a family with ease, people enter into marital vow. Another reality is to quench the sexual hunger which is a biological need and is essential. Although the practice of homosexual and lesbian is in existence, all

the people cannot entertain this because of their orientation. The third gender is outnumbered. This ritual corroborates this fact that sexual satisfaction is a must in an individual's life. This episode shows how the royal couple gets married. For the marriage of the king, all the king's men go to Tarai from the hill side to procure necessary goods and commodities in the shop of the Lalai Baniya, a shopkeeper. After shopping, the people get back home and now they head to fetch the bride, Yemphawati, in Nawalpur. The marriage ceremony is really exciting and the marriage procession gets back home with the bride. Now she bears the king Pashramu the baby boy. The baby is given the name, Balkrishna in the name giving ceremony. The birth of Balkrishna takes place in an inauspicious time so that the king has to face untimely death. This is also a Hindu belief. After his death, the queen immolates. The dancers perform all these roles lively. This episode reflects the marriage as such is a must in every human.

***Sati Dādi* (Immolation Episode)**

The real importance of *Ghātu* lies in this *Sati* episode which is performance's centre of attraction. The etymological meaning of *Ghātu* is connected to crematorium. Queen Yemphawati immolates into her lord's pyre. So this term, *Ghātu*, is derived from cremation. The *Sati* Practice that was followed by the *Khasa-Brahmin* and *Kshetri* in Nepal but not by any indigenous groups. The *sati* does not mean that a widow woman is forcefully encouraged to jump into the flame of a funeral pyre where her husband's dead body is burning, but *sati* means the one who dies immediately after she comes to know that her husband is dead, and condition of cremating duo dead bodies take place together. And *sati* is that widow woman who is never convinced by others not to take her life, and she does not like to live without her lord (Thapa 43). It shows that queen decides to immolate because her lonely life becomes

tasteless. There is no guarantee of her security as well. So she immolates there for the safe of her soul. If she had not immolated, she would have been victimized by those kings who defeated her lord. Campbell observes:

The feminine present participle of the Sanskrit verb “to be” is *sati*, pronounced “suttee,” and refers to the character of the virtuous Hindu wife immolating herself on her deceased husband’s funeral pyre. In this selfless, thoughtless, dutiful act, fulfilling her social role, she has become something eternal, of eternal validity and life, undestroyed: that is to say, a wife. Any Indian wife refusing to fulfill her role to the end would be *a-sati*, a “non-being,” a mere nothing; the whole sense of one’s existence on this earth is encompassed in the enactment and experience of one’s social role. (*Myths to Live By* 66)

Campbell argues that “to be” is *sati*, and it refers to the character of the virtuous Hindu wife. To immolate is to be the selfless and dutiful act. The queen becomes something eternal and she prioritizes the spiritual values rather than material prosperity of the throne. To be a *sati* is to be a “non-being,” a mere nothing, the spiritual but beyond material value as Campbell observes. She immolates for spiritual union with her lord.

The dancers enact immolating in *Deurali*. A small fake pyre is also stood there and they lit it with fire when the sequence of phrases of song is sung. This is symbolic cremation of the royal couple. When this enactment is over, the gurus say bye-bye to all the gods and goddesses. Then the eye-opening performance takes place. The dancers’ eyes are closed and the gurus ask all the dancers to sit in a row. The dance masters go on singing the reverse song, “*Jharaila-jharaila, patisarako phulale. . .*” until the dancers open their eyes. It means “oh god! Release the maids, oh god!

Please! Go away to your residence.” They have to sing for about two hours or so, to open all the dancers’ eyes because their eyes are not opened together at a same time. Eye-opening performance of the dancers is very painful to observe. The dancers start crying and this crying symbolizes the crying of every human being in the time of his/her birth. This crying reflects the image of a mother who is crying because of severe pain of delivery. The *Ghātu* performance thus reflects the aspect of human life cycle, too.

The singer groups shout suddenly in a scaring voice like, “hey!” for many times so that the dancers open their eyes. This makes the dancers’ eyes open but it does not help some dancers. At the time of opening their eyes, most of the dancers cry as if the newly baby is born. The performing girls behave a bit abnormally after their eyes open as Grace observes, “She finally came out of her trance with a jerk and a frown” (45). Then their helpers and other relatives convince them and they calm down after some time. When all the dancers’ eyes are opened, all the attendants enjoy dancing there around the symbolic pyre. It gives the image of the birth ceremony.

After a long effort, dancers’ eyes are opened, and this eye opening performance is over. Now the organizers gather in the *Tharku* and they enjoy there for some time by binding the yellow thread on the necks of attendants. They also manage a picnic programme after some days to get refreshed.

Post-Performance of *Ghātu*

The post-performance rituals differ from place to place. The *Ghātu* organizers and attendants perform certain activities after the performance is over. The people present at the ritual make round of the symbolic crematorium, *deurali*, where all the appurtenances, tools and objects used in the performance are abandoned there. The dance masters sing a release song of departure at the time of saying good-bye with

Ghãtu gods and goddesses. If the performance is going to be observed next year, the dance masters pledge to see the *Ghãtu* gods and goddesses the following year. If not, they bid good-bye until the next performance. It is not performed every year everywhere though there is a ritual to do it annually. The *Ghãtu* participants claim that the dancers fall in a kind of love with the *Ghãtu* gods, and the departure is not easy. The release song also differs from village to village. This is a song from Nalma village. The gurus sing the songs repeatedly. The phrases of songs are:

jharaila-jharaila, patisara ko phula le

jharaila-jharaila, Ghãtu sara ko phula le.

Release! (Oh *Ghãtu* god!) Release the dancing girls now

With the leafy flowers

Release! (Oh *Ghãtu* god!) Release the dancing girls now

With the *Ghãtusari* flowers

The gurus sing the song repeatedly until the dancers' open their eyes. Some dancing girls cry with a shrill voice after they open their eyes but all the dancers do not do so. Some look disappointed and stay mum in agony. After all the dancers open their eyes, the participants become elated. The environment gives an image of a birth celebration and blissful moment as if the dancers have been reborn. This phase is taken as a happy occasion. These are the post-performance activities.

Generally, aftermath of performances is not given high importance, but the ending phase embodies great significance in many respects. The real output of the performance is resulted after some spread the news about performances and some write books and some make documents on it. The performance gets reputation if it gets publicity among the majority of the people. So, post-performance cannot be ignored.

Post-performance means the aftermath of performance—finale—which the performers seem to have ignored it because “[t]he analysis of that aftermath is the subject of another essay” (Schechner 149). The aftermath is crucial that the observers and the villagers or all the attendants make the subject of their talks after the performance is over. The attendants talk about how the performance was. Either they pass a judgment on it positively or negatively which is worth having. Richard Schechner argues:

The ways people cool off and the sometimes extended aftermath of performances are less studied but very important. Cooling off includes getting performers and spectators out of, or down from, the performance; putting the performance space and implements to rest; the aftermath includes spreading the news about performances, evaluating them—even writing books about. (XVIII)

Several levels of people gather there to observe the performance and when the performance is over, some expert audiences write the books and some make the documents on it. This is the final product, it has the wide horizon, and more people know about the performance through books and documentaries. “[. . .] around the aftermath of the event. Talk in the crowd is about what happened, to whom, why; this talk is largely interrogative:” (Schechner 176). Different people pass the comments in a different way after performance is over; either they are road accidents or cultural performances.

Not only the performers but several villagers attend there in last phase of the performance. It makes the performance very interesting to observe evoking a kind of separate image of *Ghãtu*. The dance masters chant some mantras to free the dancers and other villagers from the grip of ferocious gods and goddesses. Some women start

binding the sacred yellow threads on the necks of attendants that it is prepared in advance dipping into the turmeric flour and water pronouncing the words—*syai-syai*. *Syai-syai* means the victory or “Eureka” (Appendix A.13: 312). The term is used in Gurungs language. The turmeric, which is “the symbol of holy and productivity” (Bhandari 164), is supposed to be a good substance in a conservative society to ward off the evil spirits.

The organizers start post-performance activities in *Thātighar* when the major performance ritualistic activities are over. The attendants, dance masters and dancers get back to *Thātighar* again. Then the attendants start eating and drinking. Again the elderly women serve the attendants the liquor and yellow thread pronouncing—*syai-syai* (Appendix A.13: 312). As [i]n Tamil, *kaappu* means “to protect” or “to prevent.” Here, *kaappu* refers to a yellow cord [. . .]. Devotees believed that the *kaappu* will protect them from evil spirits” (John 207). Similarly, at the end of *Ghātū* performance, the cotton thread dipped into the turmeric paste is served to all the attendances to tie on their necks with a similar purpose as of the *kaapaau*.

The organizers manage the delicious food items there. Gathering of the relatives and other guests also take place there. Now some groups are formed and they start singing other songs and play the double-ended drums and tambourines to enjoy as much as they can. This programme continues until the mid-night. It sounds as if they are celebrating the new birth. Therefore, it symbolizes a kind of rebirth of the dancers. After the queen’s immolation enactments, reviving of the dancers as they open their eyes symbolizes their new birth.

According to Raju Gurung, the villagers and the guests donate some money in the *Ghātū* fund (Appendix A.2: 291). The *Ghātū* organizers make a fund-raising programme. They make separate sub—rules made to collect money for *Ghātū* fund.

The rules (2008) differ from place to place but in Nalma village, there is a rule that the new sons-in-law in the village have to deposit Rs. 3000 per head in the *Ghãtu* fund. Jangaraj Gurung says that they collected about Rs.150, 000, one hundred fifty thousands in 2011 in the fund. He clarifies that the rate goes on changing. If the number of new sons-in-law is large, the amount of money becomes larger but other attendants and villagers also donate in the fund. Some donates money in the hope of curing of some diseases and some does it expecting good luck. The sons-in-law are highly respected in Brahmin culture but it is slightly reverse in the Gurungs. But this rule is not in all the *Ghãtu* villages. This suggests that females are highly respected in most indigenous groups. With this money, the villagers manage a picnic programme as well as they do some social work. These days, there has been a change that some money is also utilized for a development field of the village, like constructing the rooms of school, roads and others in the village.

There is no hard-and-fast rule of how many days after the completion of performance, this programme is to be managed. The programme is managed after some days of completion of *Ghãtu* performance according to the favourable time. This picnic is called *khoi khane* in Gurung language which is a practice. The expenses are managed from the collection of the performance and some other sources. The performers invite their friends and other relatives on this occasion. When the invitees attend the programme, they are so heartedly welcomed with the bouquet of flowers and garlands to all the guests. The invitees also give some gifts and deposit some amount of money in the *Ghãtu* fund although it is not mandatory.

The researcher observes this *khoi khane* programme in Dulegauda, Tanahu that was organized in 2011. It is conducted every year in Dulegauda village of Tanahu but it is not done every year in all the *Ghãtu* villages because of financial constraints.

It needs a hefty budget to perform this *khoi khane* programme. According to Kumar Gurung, there are sixteen houses in the village (Appendix A.14: 313). Every family head is charged to collect sixteen bottles of local liquor, that is, 256 bottles, about 160 litres. Some money is donated by those Gurungs who are abroad as the job holders. The organizers manage four he-goats and one he-buffalo for meat to serve. They spend about one hundred thousand rupees for the programme. The *Ghãtu* practitioners manage this *khoikhane* programme every year in Lamjung and Dulegauda among the Gurungs if performance takes place. According to researcher's observation in 2013, it is performed in odd number years, as one year or three years or five years or seven years of performance in Nuwakot.

To conduct this programme, a temporary camp is built in one of the appropriate houses of the village. The site is well decorated with the flowers and colourful cloths, papers, and chairs are well arranged for seating. *Khoi khane* is a grand party. As soon as the invitees enter the camp, the host directly leads them to dining places. All the guests sit in the place as set. Males and females take their seats in separate row.

When the guests arrive, the host people come there with the washing bowls and water in the shining brass jars to wash the hands of the guests. Mostly the host people, who are supposed to welcome the guests, are young. A group of young girls approaches the row of male guests and start washing their hands with soap and other girls pour water. A group of young boys approaches the row of female guests and start washing their hands in a similar manner. There is no option of washing the hands by the guests themselves. It is a ritual that the hosts give the high respect to the guests. This ritual shows the common characteristics of the indigenous groups. No doubt, it helps to maintain close bonding between guests and hosts. The way to celebrate *khoi*

khane programme differs from place to place although the purpose is the same. In Lamjung the way of picnic (*khoi khane*) is different from Tanahu. This description of post-performance is related to Tanahu. Welcome of the guests is grand.

The number of participants might go up to six hundred or seven or more, as guests are invited from many places. Mostly, the *Ghãtu* villagers invite their relatives and some close friends. Even the people from communities other than indigenous groups may participate in the celebration. This gathering gives a kind of image of a carnival. Different types of local and special drinks are served. The liquor such as the beer, whisky and local liquor are served which bring the happy and entertaining ambience. Even the non-drinker has to sprinkle the drop of liquor into their mouths. Number of people present determines liquor quantity and animals to be served and sacrificed.

Likewise, some people crack jokes and some start teasing to each other. This happens especially between young girls and young boys. It is common in an indigenous group. Parents and guardians too do not mind such behaviours. Instead, boys' parents encourage their sons to tease the girls as much as they can, if they are present and if not the elders encourage the young boys for the same. This is also the opportunity for those who want to choose the life partner. The participants enjoy singing and dancing. So, the burst of laughter keeps ringing time to time in the camp as the attendants get excited in such joyous environment. The participants enjoy singing and dancing. Drinking the liquor and enjoying the programme is a way of life among the indigenous groups in such gatherings. The host people give a care to the guests time to time. The participants organize different programmes like playing theatre, *kaurā* dance, duet songs, and cultural programmes throughout the night. The main purpose of the programme is to entertain the guests and enjoy them. The

programme lasts until the next morning. Sometimes, the programme continues for all day long. In this way, this performing art has three phases of off-stage-on-stage-off-stage. Pre-performance and post-performance are off-stage presentations, and performance is on-stage presentation. It can also be termed as beginning, middle and ending. This description is all about the Gurung *Ghãtu* performance of Nalma village, Lamjung and post-performance is from Tanahu. Only Gurung *Ghãtu* and Aryal *Ghãtu* have been analysed so as to give the flavour of multicultural imagery.

Ghãtu has its own standard of excellence that a simple practice of other dance forms cannot match. *Ghãtu* is of surpassing beauty as it represents artistic achievements of indigenous groups and the *Aryal Kshethris* in Nepal. And it is also a cultural folk dance and folk drama which all the communities do not practice. It is ritually narrated through the songs with lively enactments. Moreover, it is a ballad because it tells a story accompanied by songs. It can also be considered a folk opera or ballet because it is long enough to give a sustained musical quality as well as the dance movements to the drama. It is also an elegy, sung as a duet song, and it represents the queen in her bereaved condition. Those who observe this tribal festival, follow the same tragic story of the legendary royal couple although the names of king and queen differ from village to village. There is no significant difference in the styles and methods as some commonalities are there but some differences are located.

Now the Aryal *Ghãtu* has been presented. According to literary genre, *Ghãtu* is considered as a folk drama. The range of this tribal festival is from Gurung to Magar, Tamang, Baram, Dura, Darai, *Aryal-Kshetri*. Kesharjung Baral Magar adds that it is in Limbu, Newar and Tharu (97-8). Owing to the lack of written records, the practitioners claim some unauthentic views about this oral tradition base performance.

Methods of Aryal—*Khasa-Kshetri*—*Ghātu* Performance

This method is about Aryal *Ghātu* in brief. First, the organizers call a meeting and they divide the tasks. They ask the permission from the girls' parents as all the parents do not allow their daughters to participate in the performance. On the other hand, *Ghātu* God does not easily possess the girls. When these requirements are fulfilled, the performance is confirmed and the *Ghātu* organizer begins it according to



Fig. 7 The performing king and queen in the beginning of performance

its ritual. All these information presented here are based on researcher's observation.

Nimantraila Parva (Invitation Episode)

Khasa-Kshetri, Aryal performs *Ghātu* dance in Majhitar, Nuwakot. Usually they do it before the temple of Raktakali every year on *Panchami* that falls by the end of April. One local social organization, the Trishuli Youth Club, initiates this performance. The main guru is Gopal Aryal and other people are the choir group. Ranju Majhi and Pratibha Khadka, who are eleven and thirteen years old respectively, are the dancers and their helpers are Ujeli Majhi and Iswari Khadka (figure 7). Ranju with the white turban plays the king's role and Pratibha with the red turban does the role of a queen. The gurus start singing the verses of a song in this way:

Chamari gaiko gobarle lipaila

Afno Afno thanama lipaila

Lipaila yamai rani lipaila

Ganga jalko panile lipaila

Smear your spot with the cow dung, smear

Smear your own spot, smear

Smear Oh! Queen Yamai, smear

With the water from Ganga River, smear

The dance masters call upon all the gods and goddesses from all four directions for the protection of all the performers, villagers and other attendants because they have a belief that anything may happen to them if they miss the ritual. The verses of the song continue:

Gāwai kyare simebhume nimantraila

Thaanai patti simibhume nimantraila

Gāwai kyare Chandi mailai nimantraila

Gāwai kyare Panchakanne nimantraila

Invited the gods and goddesses from water resources

Invited the gods and goddesses from their residences.

Invited the goddess *Chandi* from the village

Invited the goddess *Panchakanne* from the village

Although there are several other verses of song the researcher has not mentioned all of them. As the guru invokes the *Ghātu* god, the dancing girls are possessed by the *Ghātu* aura and their eyes get closed. By the effect of chanting dancers' "eyes are closed, images can be seen in the heart. The god who dwells in the heart makes this possible" (Parish 153). Now the gurus ask the dancers to get up and dance with the rhythm of songs, and they do the same. The verses of song are as follow:

Uthi jauna Yamairani uti jauna

Uthima naacha Yamairani khehlaila

Dahine barta ghumi ghumi uti jauna

Get up, oh Queen Yamai, get up

Get up and dance, oh Queen Yamai, get up

Take the round from right side and get up

After this song is sung, the dancers get up and start dancing in a slow motion (Figure 8). The performance begins in the presence of a few villagers. As shown in the picture, the dancing girls are placed on a mat in neat and clean dresses and simple



Fig. 8 The dancers in different poses

make up and ornaments. The girls take a bath before they participate in the dance. The guru starts chanting and invoking the gods

and goddesses from all four directions. It is a ritual of the performance.

The dancing girls gradually close their eyes as if they have entered the spiritual world from this mundane world. The dance masters go on singing the verses of narrative song repeatedly. This makes the dancing girls possessed of the *Ghãtu* aura.

There are eleven sequences of the narrative songs. They are called *parva* in the language of Aryal *Ghãtu*. *Parva*

means section. The dance masters sing the narrative songs very sincerely because they believe that anything may happen to the dancers, even the death, if a minor mistake takes place while singing.



Fig. 9 Being served water

Among the eleven sequences, nine of them are performed on a single day. As they do *Samjhaila*, *Pujaila* and *Juharaila*, *Ghaila*, *Ropai*, *Shikar*, *Bhikh Magne*, *Bibah*

parvas serially after *Nimantraila parva*. They perform *Sati* and *Duerali parvas* the following day but they again do all the sequences as a ritual. In all these episodes, the dancers take a rest and the helpers serve them with water and fruits in the intervals covering them with the shawl (figure 9). It is a belief that dancers fall sick if they drink or eat publicly. They spend one hour or so to complete one episode. The dancers and singers take a rest after every sequence. This picture (figure 10) shows that dancers are worshipping the gods and goddess.

***Samjhaila Parva* (Remembering episode)**

***Pujaila Parva* (Worshipping episode)**

***Juharaila Parva* (Asking for help episode)**



Fig. 10 Worshipping the gods and goddesses



Fig. 11 Musical band at the *Chandi* spot



Fig. 12 A pig being offered to *Chandi* goddess

In all three episodes, the gods and goddesses are remembered, worshipped and called upon. The verses of song in first four sequences are not different except the last word. The performance continues. The dance lasts till the evening and gurus suspend it for dinner. After the dinner, the organizers, dance masters, villagers and the dancing girls gather there again in front of Raktakali temple and they set out to the *Chandi* spot. The peculiar Nepali musical band (figure 11) play the music with which a crowd of

people moves toward the *Chandi* spot that is about a kilometer away from the *Ghãtu* spot. A crowd moves ahead to *Chandi* spot at a moonlight night. As a ritual, the pig is sacrificed in the *Chandi* spot after the dance organizers and performers worship there. As a rule, the villagers appoint a priest. The priest and the dancers worship together there. The priest is Dhan Bahadur Majhi and his task is to chop the pig up to offer to the goddess *Chandi*, one of the major goddesses of *Ghãtu*. The pig is sacrificed there when a ritual of worshipping is over (figure 12). All the activities are over by the midnight. Then the dance is suspended till the next day and all of them get back home. The following day, the dance masters continue the performance by eleven in a similar manner. The performance reaches in its climax by the evening.

The masters start the performance asking the dancing girls to sit on the mat as they did on first day of performance. Now the dance masters sing the verses of song of *Nimantraila parva*, the inviting episode, from the beginning. They call upon all the gods and goddesses from all the directions again. The dancers are possessed by the *Ghãtu* aura. Then they stand and dance in a slow movement (figure 7).

Ghaila Parva (Water Episode)



Fig. 13 Pouring water from the jugs symbolic of demand of rainfall.

The gurus sing the songs as follow:

Bhui kyare ghaila ta bahulima khojaila

Bhui kyare ghaila ta bahulima leu

Subarna ta bahulima leu

Ha re bahuliko ghila ta kammaraima leu

Find the water pot on the floor

Take the water pot on your hand

Take the gold water pot on the hand

Take the water pot from your hand on to waist

In this episode, the dancers enact pouring the water from the jugs as it symbolizes the rainfall (Figure 13). The villagers say that they demand rainfall from Indra, the rain God. Coincidentally, it rains and this makes the villagers believe upon the power of *Ghātu*.

Ropai Parva (Paddy Planting Episode)

The Ropai Parva (figure 14) is one episode of this *Ghātu* performance. The dancers enact the paddy planting activities as the gurus sing the verses of song of this episode. This activity symbolizes the agrarian aspect as one of the most important occupations. The guru and other assistant singers sing the verses of the song melodiously:

Rajai jyuko chapaisero biyadai maarna jāu

Halai goru liyera byadai maarna jāu

Dhuli muli biyadaima biu raakhna jāu

Pāchai muri viu liyie bioei raakhna jāu

Let's move for ploughing to make nursery for paddy rice

Let's take the bullocks to plough in the field of King

Let's move to plough the dusty nursery

Let's take four quintal paddy rice to sow in the nursery

They sing all the verses of the song. After a certain time, they sing a song of sowing the paddy rice on the bed to rooting out the paddy plants, and planting them in the field. The dancers enact the planting paddy which is a very appealing spectacle. A few lines of song are presented below. The song creates a humour:

Chhupu chhupu ropa raani kathe marasi

Jhatta kaina ropa raani dudhe marasi

Chisoma pani mulai phutyo simali

Gharima

Kotali gudaima layo bauseko dahrma

Transplant the paddy rice plants

In the muddy field

Queen, trasplant the *kathe*

Rice (species of rice) instantly

Water source is generated from the *simali* plants

Bird wove a nest in the men's beard who resurface field



Fig. 14 Planting paddy plants

This verse of song is interesting that it creates humour among the audiences. The dancers enact planting the paddy as shown in the picture. There are other actors who are not ritually selected as the assigned dancers, they are just meant for this activity. They enact from ploughing the field to transplanting the paddy plants at the side of main performance as a sub-performance which makes the environment interesting. These characters can be considered as shadow characters. Two boys pull the yoke together as the bullocks and a tiller behind them enact tilling in the field. This episode symbolizes the agricultural activities as such are major occupation.

Shikar Parva (Hunting Episode)

This episode is also exciting because the side-characters play the role of how the king hunted. In this episode, the dancers enact the hunting with the bow and arrows (figure 15), whereas the actors or the side-characters enact hunting with a real gun (figure 16). When the hunter fires the gun, the environment turns hotter and excited.



Fig. 15 The enactment of hunting

The dancers enact the hunting as shown in the (figure 15). On the other hand, the gun is fired for hunting a deer in the forest. The songs are as follows:

Patthar koila bandukaile haana raajai jyu

Jhattai kana haana raja harina bagaala

Taakima tuki haana raajai harina

Bagaala harina bagaalalai maaraila

The gun loaded with bullet of coal, fire!

Flock of deer, hurry up!

Your Excellency, fire!

Flock of deer, Your Excellency

Aim well and fire!

Flock of deer, to kill them, fire!

This episode reflects the hunting age when hunting was the only main occupation.



Fig. 16 Mimin of firing a gun

Bhikh Maagne Parva (Begging Episode)

The performing girls enact begging alms which indicates the royal couple's deteriorated situation. They enact begging for survival. This episode is lively acted out by the dancing girls. The verses of song are as follows:

Ha . . . re kabolale haryeu raja bhayeu bidesha

Karamaiko lekhantarle bhayeu bidesaha

Karamaiko lekhantarle jogiyako bhesha

Charai disha chaleu raja jogiyako bhesha

King, you are defeated due to your bet

Because of your bad luck, the country you left

Because of your bad luck, now you are a beggar

You wander around the world, now you are a beggar

The song says the king and queen gamble. The king promises to go away from the country if he is defeated. According to bet, he leaves the country when he is defeated. The fall of the royal couple makes the audiences feel bitter. The king deserts



Fig. 17 Collecting alms from public

the country and plays the flute sitting on a branch of a tree, and the queen goes to bring him back. This episode reflects the possible condition of anyone when either

misfortune takes place or he commits a blunder. Even the king can become a beggar (figure 17). This reality is projected by this episode.

Bibaha Parva (Marriage Episode)



Fig. 18 Wedding of the king, enacted by the artists not by the dancers

Marriage episode is also one of the very interesting parts of *Ghãtu*. On the context of marriage of king and queen, the mime marriage is acted out by other characters. How the king gets married is acted out. A number of people participate in this mime marriage (figure 18) as in the real marriage procession. A well dressed up bride and bridegroom play their roles there on the other side of the performance. They enact this wedding ceremony with the verses of song in the performance. Two separate shows take place where the real dancers go on enacting the marriage. Other artists enact how the king and the queen celebrated their marriage ceremony. The musical band lively supports the theme. The bride and bridegroom with appropriate attire are carried in the palanquins. The song goes as follows:

Ramma jhamma baja bajnai lahyo

Rajai jyuko bariyat chale laskara

Aghi aghi naumati baja pachhi pachhi paltana

Hare afno afno bidhipurbak soyambara gara

Afno afno kannyako kanya daana garoun

Musical band for the marriage was played
 The marriage procession of the king moved
 Musical band in the front row latter the army battalion
 On the Gorkha palace reached the marriage procession
 Welcome the bridegroom with the garland
 Bridegroom is here to ask your maid's hand

The song is about all the preparation of king's marriage. The song consists of details of how the marriage procession set out for Gorkha, invitees of the ceremony, outfits and ornaments procured to ornate the bride and bridegroom.

After the marriage, the king has to wage the war with the neighbouring kings as it is the usual activity of a king. His queen is pregnant, the king participates in war but unfortunately he is slain there in the battlefield by the *Kasapeli* king. The king, who is killed in the war field, is the protagonist of *Ghãtu*. His name is *Jaisinghé* king. When the king dies in the war, the queen gets ready for self-immolation along with the king's dead body on the funeral pyre. Anyway, this marriage episode projects the king's marital relation with Yemphawati. But king's death symbolizes as death is inevitable.

Sati Parva (Immolation Episode)

The posture of dancers is similar to the posture of the beginning of the performance (figure 7). Sati procedure is much longer than other episodes of the performance. *Sati* part is the major theme of this performance. Now, the dance masters ask the dancers to sit on the mat as they do in the invitation episode.

There is a plot of war in which the king is killed. The plot is about how the king takes part in war and where and how he is killed. After his death, how the parrot, crow and the head messenger inform the queen about her lord's death has also been

mentioned in the verses of the song. The context of newly born baby son and queen's decision of self-immolation is moving. The verses of the song are as follows:

Charai dishako raajajyu le haatai misayo

Ha re Gorkhako maidanama haatai misayo

Jaisinghé raajai jyu lai thaharai paryo

Ha re Jaisinghé raajai jyu lai thaharai paryo

Kasapeli raajai jyu le thaharai paryo

All the kings from four directions started war

In the battlefield of Gorkha they started war

King *Jaisinghé* was suddenly slain there

Oh! God! King *Jaisinghé* was suddenly slain there

King Kasapeli slew the King *Jaisinghé* over there

The verses, in which how the queen immolated, move the audiences. The queen manages everything before she departs. She decides to do so for her safety rather than to live hateful life because she has to get married with the triumphant king as a trend. *Sati* symbolizes chastity. Queen Yemaphawati deserves the chastity. The following verses of the songs tell how the queen hands her baby son to her relatives, especially to her parents and brothers. The dance masters sing the songs as follows:

Yina yina balaka ta maitiko sarana

Hami ta janchhu swamiko satha maitiko sarana

[. . .] *oolto oolto bajai bajaranai lagyo*

Rajai jyuiko malami ta chale laskara

Hare Bhagirathi jamunaima bhaye dakhila

[. . .] *Ranima Yamaiwati solai chadhau*

Dahine barta ghumi ghumi solai chadhau

[. . .] *Ranima Yamaiwati bhasmai kharani*

Rajai jyi le janmai liye kyamorako bhesha

Rani jyi le janmai liye potaliko bhesha

[. . .] *Hare kyamorako bheshai gari oodi chali jau*

Potaliko pheshai gari oodi chali jau

This baby son is left behind in charge of my parents

I am going to go with my lord, take charge! my parents

[. . .] the reverse music is played

The funeral procession of the king is queued

All the king's men reach in Bhagarathi River

[. . .] Oh! Queen Yemaiwati, climb up the pyre

Go round the pyre from the right side and climb up the pyre

[. . .] Queen Yemaiwati is burnt down and turned into ash

The king has been guised as the male butterfly

The queen has been guised as the female butterfly

As in a guise form of male butterfly, fly away

As in a disguise form of female butterfly, fly away

In this way, they finish the performance by midnight, and *Deurali* parva is performed as the last episode, the disposal part. The organizers dispose all the paraphernalia, tools and equipment used in performance in the *Deurali*, the last phase of *Ghãtu*.

Deurali Parva (Ending Episode)

Deurali parva is the last episode of this performance. *Deurali* means the disposal place of this performance. In this stage, the dancers offer the cock and hen to the goddesses of *Deurali*, as shown in the picture.



Fig.19 The dancers disposing all the tools and objects used in the performance

This episode (figure 19) is significant as the ending point is always very important. The gurus bid good bye to all the gods and goddesses that they were invited at the beginning of the performance. The gurus now sing verses of songs as follows:

Hiudai bhanau mangsira mahina barshalai bhanau jetha

Namari banche kushalai rahe agaun hola bheta

Hami ta janchau indraloka bhalai bida deu

Bhalai bida bhalai sida bhalai ashisha

November is in winter May is in summer

If we survive we will surely meet next year

We go to heavenly world say bye, oh! Dear

Good bye! Good alms! Good blessing!

Rajai jyiuko birpatta chadhawaila, Ranijyiuko birpatta chadhawaila.

Dispose the king's headgear, dispose the queen's headgear

Dispose the headgears of both the king and queen at *Deurali*.

This is how the organizers accomplish the performance. They perform all the eleven episodes in a proper manner. At first four parvas, *Nimantraila*, *Samjhaila*, *Pujaila* and *Juharaila* are accomplished for invoking the *Ghātu* gods. The performers have a

short break after every episode, and they perform out the local songs to refresh the dancers. *Ghaila parva* is performed by pouring water from the jugs so that the water god Indra sees this signal for need of water. The villagers symbolically demand water as it has been the farming time. If the water god becomes happy and bestows rainfall, the farmers perform the plantation in the paddy field.

This *Ropai parva* is performed in a grand way that mime characters enact paddy planting in the king's paddy field (figure 14). Some boys play role of bullocks to pull the plough and plough man behind them enact plowing the paddy field. This episode entertains the audience much. *Shikar parva* is also interesting episode in which mime characters enact how king set out for hunting, how he used to perform hunting activities. But this episode reflects the image of hunting age when this present development was beyond human imagination. *Bhikh Maagne parva* episode enables man to learn that the fall of a man is possible from any elevated status. This part of *Ghãtu* performance makes it clear that a king can become a beggar. *Bibah parva* episode suggests that marriage as such activity relates male and female into such a relation that this is universally accepted. The mime characters get well dressed as if they are king and queen in a marriage ceremony. The mime performance gives the image of real marriage celebration of a king and queen.

Sati parva is the major part of the performance and it tells how the queen immolates in her deceased husband's funeral pyre. There are three kinds of *sati*: one who immediately dies as soon as she hears her lord's death, and another woman who is ready to die after her husband's death is the second type of *sati* because of insecurity and her life is hatred life. The third type of *sati* is that which is instigated by the relatives or they forcefully throw the widow woman into the funeral pyre's burning flame to die even if the queen is reluctant.

In this part, the king participates in an unwanted war and he is slain in the battlefield. The queen decides to immolate after her lord's death but she does not do it because she is pregnant at the moment. This sensitizes the audience much. *Duerali parva* is the last disposal episode in which all the appurtenances are dispatched there in *Deurali* by offering the cock and hen. *Ghãtu* gurus bid good-bye to all the gods and goddesses and request them to go back to their respective residences, as they are invited in the beginning of the performance. This is all about the textual dimensions of *Ghãtu* site as the stories of Nalma *Ghãtu* and Nuwakot *Ghãtu* have been presented. This chapter comprises all the methods and natures of *Ghãtu* in these villages. Now the discussion focuses on the symbolic analysis in which phrases of narrative songs have been interpreted. The phrases of narrative songs of *Ghãtu* are decoded significantly in the next chapter. This is an analysis and reading of symbols in the *Ghãtu* songs.

CHAPTER V

GHĀTU SONGS: DECODING THE SIGNIFICANCE

Ghātu narrates in a slow motion lamentations of the bereaved queen in an elegiac tone. In *Gandakika Suseli*, Dharma Raj Thapa illustrates this folk drama in details. Similarly, Keshar Jung Baral Magar elucidates different forms of *Ghātu* performances in central and mid-western parts of Nepal. Likewise, Bernard Pignède has briefly explained procedures and methods of the *Ghātu* performance in Nepal. The researcher analyses the verses of the Khasa-kshetri *Ghātu* based on his personal observation. However, Lalbihari Mishra interprets the verses of *Hanuman* dance in line with the *Ghātu* performance. What do the phrases of songs symbolize? The chapter concentrates on the symbolic interpretation of selected phrases of *Ghātu* relevant to the narrative of the royal couple.

Ghātu begins with an invocation of gods and goddesses with different phrases of songs. There are nine sequences of the performance with nine phrases but sequence number differs from village to village. Khasa-ksetri *Ghātu* performance has twelve sequences. Every phrase is symbolic with meaningful connotations. While singing, the Gurungs pronounce the dung of black and spotted cows to smear the *Ghātu* spot, whereas Magar and Darai in a slightly different ways pronounce the dung of she-yak. Precisely, these different procedures, including phrases and symbols replicate varying adaptations of the folk drama in respective contexts.

The following section deals with images of *Ghātu* performance in terms of songs, dances, and cultural objects. The dances represent the bereaved queen's emotional states, and dancers' slow motions replicate her tragedy. Similarly, the objects related with ritual are the ones that metonymically represent the king himself as well as other social and cultural facts of the past. The crown symbolizes the king as

well as traditional headgear. These three things—songs, dances and objects—together are not literal manifestations; they embody the entire ethnic cultures that represent the whole of the general cultural semiotics. Most ethnic cultural activities are of similar nature of *Ghãtu*. The oral tradition of *Ghãtu* is meant for the protection from evil spirits and the pleasure purpose of the people in groups. Considering similar objectives, dancers in *Charitra*, *Sorathi*, and *Kaura* consistently perpetuate the aura in their performances.

When one interprets *Ghãtu* songs, dances and objects in terms of the cultural semiotics of the indigenous groups, they turn out to signify different cultural symbols than the ones materialized by their surface meanings. When such meanings emerge, moreover, the *Ghãtu* performance turns to take on a universal nature, an archetypal form. The songs, for instance, symbolize the narratology of *Ghãtu* because there is entire storyline in the phrases of songs. However, a close scrutiny of the *Ghãtu* performance is needed for a survey and its cultural symbols. The performing queen is the narratrix—a female narrator—in *Ghãtu* that she tells her story through the songs.

Harsu Rana Magar, the son of main *Ghãtu* guru from Ramche village of Syangja, believes that the queen is born at *Shripanchami*. It is only according to the Magars but the starting date of other indigenous group is different so this claim does not apply in all the *Ghãtu* practitioners. According to the Gurungs methods, the Guruba⁶ establishes the *Ghãtu* on the lawn of the house of the *Ghãtu* guru, observing certain rituals. The organizer collects the required things like bows and arrows, deer and hens, dresses of the dancers, and all the necessary props for the performance together. All these objects are to be considered as symbols that they are to be thrown out at the end of the *Ghãtu* performance (Thapa 19).

⁶ The dance master, but in some villages, there are gurumas—the dance mistresses.

According to the narrative songs of Khasa-kshetri, the *Ghãtu* narrative begins with certain rules and methods. The narrative begins with the verses of songs as “*chamari gaiko gobarle lipaila. . . . afano-afano than lipaila. . .*” which means smear the spot with the she-yak’s dung so that it becomes clean. The dancing girls sit before the team of gurus in cross-legged sitting posture. When song reverberates in the air melodiously, the performing queen and king start swaying left and right slowly. This is called the possession of *Ghãtu* aura. After the first round of singing of *Ghãtu* phrases according to ritual, the dancers stand up to dance in slow movements. All the movements of the dancers are symbolically presented.

Narrative Tradition

Ghãtu has the narrative tradition which imparts to it the nature of a melodious tragic folk drama that attracts the audience. The *Ghãtu* song sounds like a ballad song in its nature. There are nine sequences in the Gurung methods but there are eleven sequences in the Khasa-kshetri methods. Every sequence has meaningful message which the symbolic interpretation disseminates. Some verses of songs, which have been presented in this section, are partly similar to the ones presented in Chapter IV in a descriptive way. But this section of the study symbolically interprets the songs in detail. The narrative song begins with the following chanting, sung by the Gurubas:

Chamari gaiko gobarle lipailã, afanu-afanu thanma lipailã

Lipailã Yemai rani lipailã, Ganga jalko panile lipailã

lipaila Yamairani lipaila [. . .] (Appendix⁷ C: 324)

Smear oh brother! Smear!

With the she-yak dung, smear!

Smear your own spots individually, smear!

⁷ The verses of Khasa-kshetri *Ghãtu* songs in Nepali written in Roman in the discussion are underlined in the Appendix C.

With the water from the Sea, smear!

This is the first verse of the *Ghãtu* song that Khasa-kshetri sings. It displays a certain method of smearing the *Ghãtu* stage. The dancing girls enact smearing with the instruction of songs. The verse is a chanting which is very powerful to send the dancers into a trance state. The dancing girls come up with different poses to signify various states of significations and this is the main focus of the study. Pignède points out, “the dance is extremely graceful, twisting, rising, and sinking, then turning in a squatting position with the hands just touching the ground. Especially important are the hand movements, particularly the flicking of the second and third finger” (466). Unlike that of Pignède, Chandra Bahadur Gurung (Appendix A.3: 297) explains that the Gurungs establish the *Ghãtu* more often in the main guru’s house at midnight. The *Ghãtu* organizers do it very sacredly and secretly by transposing the used clothes with the new ones. Gurung further says that the dance masters chant the beginning phrase of songs ritually. The effect of which is that the dancing girls get possessed by the *Ghãtu* aura after some time. As a result, the performing girls start enacting the mythical Queen Yemphawati’s dance that occurred about over five hundred years back. This is how the dance performance begins.

Moreover, he points out that the songs are almost universally similar insofar as their tragic notes are concerned even if there are dissimilarities. As spatiotemporal dimensions change, there are some differences in the wordings of the songs. The difference is notified by the audience that the dancers enact in a different way. The narrative songs themselves are substantial to produce sadness, as the tragedy becomes the essence of the performance. When the performing queens internalize the storyline they get initiated by the *Ghãtu* god. According to Gurung’s methods, the maids are placed on the banana leaves. This highlights their being cut off the mundane world so

as to signify their being associated with the primordial natural state in one of such initiations, whereas this method does not apply to every *Ghātu* village. Instead of the banana leaves, the Khasa-ksetri uses the straw mat for the maids, whereas the Nalma village uses small wooden planks to sit on. There are some changes of such materials which signify modern intervention or projection into what is otherwise a purely traditional representation presented in this local folk drama.

In the interview, Gurung also reports a mythical anecdote to the researcher. He claims that Pashramu is the king of Shrikrishna Gandaki of Syangja. He explains the meaning of the initiating dance and ritual, and he adds that Yemphawati, who is from the Rajput lineage of Gadwal, India, settled in Nawalpur. Pashramu met her while hunting, and they fell in love (Appendix A.3: 297). The love changed into their marriage and a baby son, Balkrishna, was born to add to their conjugal happiness. However, the enemies of King Pashramu got envious of Balkrishna's birth and consequently they waged a war against him. This war takes away the king's life. This suggests that one's envious activities ruin others life.

Gurung mentions nine sequences of *Ghātu* performance to enrich such narrative details. Every sequence is symbolic of human activities. The smearing sequence symbolizes the sanitation that is a must for good health; learning sequence highlights that knowledge is crucial and important process in human life and the re-plantation sequence reflects the agricultural activities, one of the main occupations of everyman. Planting of paddy sequence has the similar impact. The combing episode represents the woman's make-up and beauty that has always mattered in a patriarchal society of third world countries like Nepal and India. The beggar sequence here represents the lowest level of human in terms of job which determines the socio-economic status of a person when his situation gets deteriorated. Similarly, hunting

episode denotes the forest life, thereby pointing to the most elemental aspect of humanity. Marriage is a sacred relation between man and woman that is for the continuum of progeny that is universal. *Sati* sequence—immolation with the corpse of a spouse—consumes much time that it takes a whole night to perform in contrast to other sequences. This reflects the variation in the presentation of *Ghãtu* performance. The variation brings the beauty of this cultural activity.

Lyrics Variation

The lyrics vary from village to village. Ram Bahadur Gurung presents the following wordings for the chanting of *gurubas* to affect the initiation of *Ghãtu* performance. These phrases of song are also sung to invoke the *Ghãtu* god. The verses of song differ from one indigenous group to another. This verse is sung by the Gurungs, Sildhunga of Taghring, Lamjung:

Ha. . . ha. . . hiwachuli devta, varachuli devta aavailã

Ha. . . ha. . . dharai paani jai ye, kuwai paani jai ye chailaha

Hare Sitarani sukhiya, Sitarani sukhiya ha.. pugaila ha. . .⁸

(R. Gurung 24)

Oh! Hiwachuli god! Varchuli god! Come on!

Go and fetch the water from public tap and well and clean

Queen Sita is happy and may god make her happy [. . .]

The dance masters chant this verse of *Ghãtu* song to invoke the *Ghãtu* aura so as to have the maids possessed. The *Ghãtu* aura's possession is realized by the audience. This is when the dancers hear the phrases of songs, which makes them internalize the instruction of songs into their self psychologically and they gradually enter the spiritual world. It is because of reverberation of music and song in the air, the dancers

⁸ Some phrases of song are used repeatedly in the discussion are for description and interpretation

are hypnotized. This is how the *Ghãtu* god, who possesses the maids, is invoked. The gurus invoke all the gods from underground, sky, air, land, and water. The dance masters, who can be considered as the shaman and animism in a sense, invite all the gods and request them to possess the maids. In this way the gurus invoke the nature gods. After all, *Ghãtu* observation is nothing but worshipping of nature.

As the dance masters chant the verse of narrative song, the performing girls enact smearing the *Ghãtu* stage sacredly with the cow dung and clean water from several sources. The dance masters confirm the *Ghãtu* god that all the selected girls ritually fit and fine for the performance. The dancing girls who sit on the banana leaves now stand for dancing when they are possessed by the *Ghãtu* god. Now they start the ritualistic performance after the guru's call for the *Ghãtu* gods.

Significance of Nine Sequences

There are nine sequences of *Ghãtu* that every sequence is significant. The nine sequences represent the nine months of gestation periods and of the cycle of human life that the majority of people are born after this period of time. It does not address all because some people are born after seven months of gestation periods but they are nominal. This mythico-cultural spectrum represents the whole of humanity. *Ghãtu* is a local performance but it has the universal signification. This cultural activity is a complex site to be revisited because its cultural signification does not limit only in a particular locality.

There are two types of queens: mythical queen and performing queen. The dancing girl, who is a performing queen, enacts the mythical queen. Dharma Raj Thapa talks about the mythical Queen Yemphawati, who gets dressed herself up and gets ready to go to crematorium when King Pashramu is slain in the battlefield (29).

During the course of later enactment, however, no such cosmic overtone is imparted to the mega-journey of the queen.

The Gurung method of *Sati Ghātu* is to select only the girls of pre-pubertal stage. *Sati Ghātu* is the ritualistic performance in which all age group of women cannot take part. But it is not strictly followed in *Bahramasé* and *Kusundā Ghātu* even in Gurung methods. The method resembles with Dura, Darai and Khasa-kshetri but all the Gurungs and Magars do not select the girls of pubertal stage. Age old women and young girls or little girls can participate in the performance. The neutral observer can see with ease the dichotomy created in between myth and contemporaneity of this folk drama. For in the mythical canvas Ambawati is the widow of the king, but contemporary semiotic of the same myth deprives the girls of post-pubertal age to take on the role of the same performing girl. At this point *Ghātu* reflects both the liberality and strictness.

The following phrases of song reflect Queen Yamairani's beauty imparted with an aesthetic overtone. It describes her physical beauty, as she moves ahead with determination to meet her deceased spouse:

Sirai suhai sinduraai ta Yamairanilai

Lilai suhai chandanai ta Yamairanilai

Ankhai suhai gajalu ta Yamairanilai

Nakai suhai besori ta Yamairanilai

Dantai suhai biriya ta Yamairanilai

Hare, kanai suhai kundalu ta Yamairanilai

Galai suhai potiya ta Yamairanilai

Hare, bahuli suhai churiya ta Yamairanilai

Kumai suhai choliya ta Yamairanilai [. . .] (Appendix C: 333)

Vermillion in the hair-joints, well suited to the Queen Yamai
 The sandal paste on the forehead, well suited to the Queen Yamai
 The eye-shade on the eyes, well suited to the Queen Yamai
 The nose ring on the nose, well suited to the Queen Yamai
 The tooth plate on the tooth, well suited to the Queen Yamai
 The earring on the ears, well suited to the Queen Yamai
 The crystal garland on the neck, well suited to the Queen Yamai
 The bangles on the wrists, well suited to the Queen Yamai
 The blouse on the body, well suited to the Queen Yamai [. . .]

Queen Yamai, wearing the vermilion on her hair joints, sandal paste on her forehead, eye-shade on her eyes and nose ring on her nose, looks so beautiful. The vermilion symbolizes the stage of a married life of a woman with her living husband; sandal paste does the Hinduism and the eye-shade and nose ring suggest that ornaments and cosmetics are another necessary aspect of women life. So are the earring, crystal garlands and bangles. They stand for the femininity and the cult of womanhood.

Women's vermilion and their bangles also symbolize their lifelong make up. The cosmetic goods still determine their longevity of happy conjugal life in several societies of Asian countries. There is an integral relation between women and cosmetic goods. *Ghãtu* makes it clear that beauty is the necessary evil, especially for women in the third world countries, as well as for all the humans. *Ghãtu* shows that man is ready to spend a lot of money to acquire beauty.

This phrase of a song, however, brings about a situation of the need for survival that involves the earthly needs of food, water, plant and the nature which indicates the agrarian activities:

Rajai jiuko chapai sero byadai maarna jaun

Halai goru liyera byadai maarna jaun

Dhuli muli biyadaima biu rakhana jaun

Panchai muri biu liyi biyoi rakhana jaun (Appendix C: 328)

Let's go to sow the paddy rice in the king's farm

Let's take the bullocks to plow the king's farm

Let's go to sow the paddy rice in dusty farm

Let's carry the five quintal paddy rice to sow in the farm

The agricultural activities have been well explained in the verse that the area of king's farm is very large for which the paddy rice is sown. This verse of song indicates that the farm life and agriculture is a main occupation.

The following lines of song denote the importance of rainfall for all the farmers even if canal facility is available. The dancers perform the water pot breaking enactments which symbolizes the rainfall:

Bhui kyare ghaila ta bahulima leu

Subarnako ghail ta bahulima leu

Hare bahuliko ghaila ta kammaraima leu

Subarnako ghaila ta kammaraima leu

Hare kammaraiiko ghaila ta kumaima leu

[. . .] *Subaranako ghaila ta shiraima leu*

Gahiro jo talauma garajaila megha

[. . .] *Sorai Ghana badalule parshaila bunda*

Ghaila ta ghaila shirai ghaila phuti ghaila (Appendix C: 327-8)

Take the water pot from the ground on your hand

Take the golden water pot on your hand

Take the water pot from your hand on the waist

Take the water pot from the waist to the shoulder

Take the water pot from the shoulder to head

The cloud makes the rainfall as if the water pots break

The dancers' enactment is symbolic of rainfall. Taking the water pot by the dancers from the ground to their hands, and from their hands to their waist, shoulder, head and falling it from the head to the ground which then breaks into pieces is the symbolic of cloud raised in the sky and then the rainfall. The king's workers go to the farmland to transplant the paddy rice. The following song is about how the workers transplant the paddy rice:

Rajai jiuko ropailai nimto bolau

Rajai jiuko chapai sero bholi ropai ta chha [. .]

Chupu chupu ropa rani kathe marshi

Jhatakaina ropa rani dudhe marshi (Appendix C:329)

For the paddy planting of the king, invite all workers!

To plant the paddy for tomorrow, call all the workers!

Start planting the paddy plants of special rice!

The dancers enact all these activities which symbolize the mythical people's state of being farmers linked to nature. The enactments of planting of crops, caring and harvesting them all receive their due weight. *Ghãtu* thus can be interpreted both in its mythical, social, cultural, psychological, historical and agrarian significances. This expands the geography of *Ghãtu*.

Marriage and War Sequences

Ghãtu is a simple cultural activity which discloses several human aspects that marriage sequence holds a specific place in cultural construct. To consummate life to its fullest, king's marriage is the most elemental incident which appears to be part of

one's attempt. King's marriage discloses some historical facts about trade and commerce as the shopping for marriage. *Ghātu* thus conglomerates a number of human realities.

All the king's men manage the necessary goods for the marriage without fail. The preparation of marriage is symbolic of the marriage between the sky and the earth for thriving of life's progeny. The pieces of cloths like cotton and cosmetic goods are cultural signs. The expressions of narrative song bring such details to their most concrete level. The king's shopping for his marriage is symbolic of everyday life of a mankind. The song is about selling and buying that this process is the eternal process of every human society:

Rajaijiuko kumaraiko juryo lagana

Bandipure jyasalama sunai molau

Yinai-yinai gahanako kati parla mola

Yinai-yinai gahanako lakha parla mola

Bandipure hatiyama kapada molau

Yinai-yinai kapadako kati parla mola

Yinai-yinai kapadako hajar parla mola

Aina batta chura dhago kati parla mola

Hare Yinai-yinai samanko saya parla mola

Rajaijiuko kumaraiko vivahama patai tipna jaun

Bhali-bhali maya baina tapari gāsa

Didi bahini duijanale tapari gāsa (Appendix C: 331)

It is a good time for the king's marriage

Let's go to jewelry shop to buy the gold

What's the price of the gold ornaments?

Million is the price of the gold ornaments

What's the price of the cloths?

Thousand is the price of the cloths

What's the price of make-up box?

Hundred is the price of make-up box

Now let's go to collect the leaves for making the plates

Oh sisters! Make the plates from the leaves

The amount "one million for gold" brings with it the whole spectrum of economic life that the king was financially sound. This fact suggests that the ruler family is more often financially sound than the general public that it denotes contemporary associations as it is reflected in this folk drama.

After the marriage, the queen bears the king the baby boy. With the elaborate description of the royal couple's consummation of their marriage, the following song presents the whole idea of virginity, pregnancy, and birth of their baby boy:

Ek ra mahina duba ra masa garavai rahayo

Garava bādhaima rahaila rani garava rahayo

Dubai mahina tinai masa garava rahayo

Hare tinai mahina charai masa garava rahayo

Garava bādhaima rahaila rani garava rahayo

[. . .] Nawai mahina dashai masa garava rahayo

Garava bādhaima rahaila rani garava rahayo

Dashai mahina pugaila rani kastai lagyo [. . .] (Appendix C: 336)

It has been one month the queen is impregnated

It has been now two months the queen is impregnated

Oh, it has been three months the queen is impregnated

[. . .] It has been nine months queen is impregnated

Now it has been ten months queen is feeling pain

Now the queen is going to bear a baby and she has a pain

The verse of song is about the elaboration of life cycle that it suggests the everyman's stay in womb. It also indicates the sign of sex itself. While sexual intercourse is a taboo in many manifestations of cultural semiotics, the same taboo receives almost a sacred treatment in the song. The song suggests the nine months gestation period.

Ghãtu's theme is too life-like that its language poses complexity as it is neither of Gurung nor of Magar, Darai, Dura, Tamang and Baram but is specifically of *Ghãtu*. The language belongs to none of them. The mimes of the queen do express her mourning and agonies with words. The audiences cannot easily understand the *Ghãtu*'s wordings, especially of the indigenous groups that come to them through the interpretations of the gurus. The audiences can understand the Khasa-kshetri *Ghãtu*'s wordings if they listen to it attentively. Mere effort is almost useless to try to understand the indigenous *Ghãtu*'s wordings. The gurus convey the meanings of words through a complex set of languages that are more than a simple one associated with the indigenous dialects. It thus enables the gurus to take on a position where they are privileged to interpret the cultural signs as they prefer. For instance, a term *bhaiya* means "brother" in Maithili or Tharu; and the term, *besori* means "nose ring" in old form of Nepali. All these linguistic variations enable the *Ghãtu* to take on the role of a site where the blends of multilingual history, myth and contemporaneity occur. *Ghãtu* has the intermingling of such linguistic diversities. Such a marginalized cultural activity makes for the heightening of such a culture.

King's participation in war makes the *Ghãtu*'s theme tragic. He is so arrogant that he does not follow his relatives' suggestions. His enthusiasm indicates that the king was guided with the principle of "*hato wa prapsysasi swarga . . .*" (see page no.

154 of this study). And his arrogant nature and his compulsion put him to death. This is indicative of the generality of other humans.

Tragic Scene

When the king is slain in the battlefield, the queen, however, does not believe the messenger until she sees a sign, that is, the king's image, in the gash of cow dung balls. The gashes are filled with cow milk and water separately. That looks like the toy wells. The performing queens look into the king's image in the gash balls of cow dung just before the queen's self-immolation (Figure 37). The queen's relatives ask her to look into her lord's image there to confirm her lord's death. The performing queen does the same as the mythical queen did. This is a ritualistic enactment:

Ranima Yamaiwati⁹ ghu chāya herana

Ranima Yamawati tela chāya herana

Ranima Yamaiwati dudha chāya herana

Hare ranima Yamaiwati pani chāya herana (Appendix C: 336)

Oh, Queen Yemaiwati! Please look at the ghee shadow

Queen Yemaiwati! Look at the oil shadow

Queen Yemaiwati! Look at the milk shadow

Queen Yemaiwati! Look at the water shadow

The image looking activity represents a ritualistic episode that again is what attributes the *Ghātu* with a universal cultural sign. There is some particularity as to seeing the dead person's face in the milk gash means he has ascended to heaven. Seeing the dead person's face in the gash of oil, ghee and water means he has gone to hell (Appendix B.1.v: 316). The above verse of song suggests all these small incidents which add up to cultural significations and interpretive qualities of *Ghātu* performance.

⁹ Gurung pronounces Queen Yemphawati as Yemaiwati and Yemphawati are the same.

The queen does not believe when the messenger tells her about king's death in war. The mythologizing capacity of all such incidents gets enhanced when the queen inquires the Rama god for the last confirmation of her lord's death in the following song. The mythical queen ascends to the pyre and she has been cremated into the ash. All the performing girls enact the mythical queen's self-immolation lively:

Ranima Yamaiwati Rama bolana, Ranima Yamaiwati solai chadhau

Hare dahine barta ghumi-ghumi solai chadau

Ranima Yamaiwati bhashamai kharani

Hare Ranima Yamaiwati bhashamai kharani (Appendix C:336-7)

Oh Queen Yamaiwati! Speak Rama!

Queen Yamaiwati! Ascend to the pyre!

Go round from the right and ascend to the pyre

Queen Yamaiwati has been turned into the ash

The queen starts quivering as soon as she inquires, *Rama bolana*, "speak Ram," and then she is shocked and gets fainted on the spot immediately after she pronounces this phrase. The particularity is made to touch with mythological generality that the Rāma god is the symbol of truth in Hinduism. The queen's self-immolation thus reflects a status of the most general Hindu structurality as this cultural activity suggests the historical fact.

All such ritualistic activities prepare the protagonist, Yemphawati, for uniting her soul with her husband's soul in heaven, (App.C. 3.4). The way she manages everything before her departure is worthwhile, which one can perceive through the song: Such ritualistic activities are Yamaiwati's preparation for uniting her soul with her husband's soul in heaven. The queen manages everything sincerely after the birth

of her baby boy. This particularity, which is worthwhile, is perceived through the following song:

Rajai jiuko ragatelo janmiyo naalai bedau

Hare rajai jiuko ragatelo janmyo

Sunaaiko syangiyale naalai bedau

Hare sunaiko ayangiyale naalai bedau

Balaklai nuhai dhuwai kapadai lagau

Hare ghara bana kapada jo kapadai lagau

Yina-yina balaka ta maitiko sarana

Hami ta janchu swamiko saatha maitiko sarana

Hare yina-yina balaka ta maitiko sarana

Paalema punne marema hatte maitiko sarana

Hami ta janchu swamiko saatha maitiko sarana (Appendix C: 336)

King's baby boy is born, cut off the umbilical cord

With a golden sickle

Bath the baby boy and wrap him in cloths

Wrap up the baby boy in home-made cloths

Now the baby boy is left behind in charge of his maternal uncle

I am going away with my lord

And baby boy is left behind in charge of his maternal uncle

The baby boy is left behind in charge of his maternal uncle

It will be your crime, if you kill him,

It will be good for you, if you look after him

The baby boy is left behind in charge of yours

I am going away with my lord

The baby boy is left behind in charge of yours

After the birth of a baby boy of the king, the queen gets ready to self-immolate. The queen as a mother bids farewell to her relatives, which again informs the general human concern of life. The mythical queen presents herself like all other mothers of the world. She manages for the safety of her newly born baby boy before she self-immolates. She does it for her safety and to save her chastity in spite of her privileged position. Her invoking to the deities for the well-being of her baby boy and other loved ones is a symptomatic of her love for life on earth. The mythical queen's preparation to depart from the earth is the sole reality of life's mystery which one can perceive through this folk drama. She requests her brothers and parents to give her newly born baby boy a good care. Then she ascends to the pyre alive thereby exemplifying this mystery in a concrete manner. This suggests that some can pay the sincerity until the last breath.

Now the queen's men and her relatives transport her to the crematorium according to her requests. This image provokes the funeral process of a life person. This *Sati* episode is much sensitizing that it makes the audiences sad. The reverse music is another factor to add tragic feeling. Queen's farewell moves all the attendants in a lively way. This is the unique presentation of the *Ghātu* performance. The following verse of narrative song is about how the mythical queen departs from earth to heaven:

Hami ta janchaun Indraloka bhalai bida deu

Bhalai bida bahalai sida bhalai aashisha

Tamu ta baitha maya baina hami ta chali jau

[. . .] Rajai jiuko virpatta chadhawaila

Ranijiuko virpatta chadhawaila (Appendix C: 337)

Bid me a goodbye, oh my relatives, I go to heaven

Grant me the blessing I go to heaven

You all stay here on earth, I go to heaven

Offer the king's headgear on to the crematorium

Offer the queen's headgear on to the crematorium

The verse conveys the extremity of the tragic anecdote. However, in spite of itself, the uniqueness is also related to the general in that such crying informs itself in all cultural manifestations. Thus the *Ghā̃tu* takes on a nature of most universal kind that death is inevitable.

The queen's relatives transport her to the crematorium and they take off her headgear. They hang this headgear at the top of a bamboo pole which they stand by the pyre (Figure 29). This bamboo pole is a symbol of a link in between the mundane and the heavenly worlds. The headgear at the top of bamboo pole indicates the queen's heavenward mega-journey. This local performance, *Ghā̃tu*, shows human concern not only for life, but also for a post-death situation that pyre is not the ending of a person, it is a beginning.

Moreover, Thapa presents a different anecdote about the mythical queen's cremation. He claims that her baby son, Balkrishna, of two and half years puts a fire on the pyre. His putting a fire on the pyre is symptomatic of all cultural activities that believe on the cremation of human body. The following song is about how Balkrishna puts a fire on the pyre:

Chakma thosi-thosi agani jalāyo

Āphmuya Baliyakrishnalé agani jalāyo (46)

To make a fire, a blunt knife strikes to the stone

Balkrishna puts a fire on the pyre and she is gone.

Balkrishna's action is a cultural concern that takes on a universal nature. The fire striking ceremony in the *Ghātu* in which the blunt knife strikes against the stone is important only for its performative action. The general human interpretive tendency may take it as an action that is symbolic of the Stone Age. "A society that in the late nineteenth century used stone tools was not simply a society without metal tools" (Taylor 13).

King's untimely death becomes the cause of sadness in the country and all his men weep. And crying and exclaiming of all the attendants symbolizes agony as something to unite humans. Not only the men but also the animals and birds cry when the king is slain in the war. The following verse highlights the theme:

Ragatale muchiyeko shirai pagari

Rajai jiuko chino dekhi dhuru-dhuru royi

Hare rajai jiulai samjhi-samjhi dhuru-dhuru royi

Rajai jiuko chino dekhi dhuru-dhuru royi

Ranima Yamaiwati dhuru-dhuru royi

Hare Ranima Yamaiwati dhuru-dhuru royi

Gaungharka bhaibhardar dhuru-dhuru royi

Hare tabelaka hattighoda dhuru-dhuru royi

Saari suga kali maina dhuru-dhuru royi

There is a king's blood stained headgear

This evidence provokes king's men tear

Remembering the king the queen weeps

Seeing the king's evidence the queen weeps

With Queen Yamaiwati, all the villagers weep

The horses and elephants all weep

Black parrot and black speaking bird weep

The song reflects the image of sad moment. The dancing girls come out of a trance when the symbolic death of the performing queen is over. The dance masters invoke the deities with a reverse song that releases the tranced girls from the trance state.

Khasa-kshetri verse different from the Gurung *Ghãtu* verse for the same purpose:

Aafno-aafno medialai parsaila, fulpaati axetale parsaila

Aafno-aafno media ta chadhawaila

Devi ra deuralilai chadhawaila

Devi ra deurali lai chadhawaila (Appendix C: 337)

Sprinkle the water on to the offering cocks and hens!

Offer the cocks and hens to the deities!

With an open heart, offer them to the deities!

The Khasa-kshetri *Ghãtu* dancers are released from the *Ghãtu* aura after they offer the cocks and hens to the deities. Now the Gurung *Ghãtu* verse is as follows:

Himchuli devatã jharailã! [. . .] *Deuchuli devatã jharailã* (51)

Release the damsels! Oh *Himchuli* deity!

Release the damsels! Oh *Deuchuli* deity.

The tranced girls are released from the *Ghãtu* gods by chanting the above song. This release is like a new birth, and so it is associated with rituals after birth, part of which makes the virtuous girls mandatory to open their eyes and mouths only after splashing the water on their faces for several times (figure 38). The beginning of a new life is also symbolized by the visual of a small girl going through a nursery book as shown in figure 20.



Fig. 20 Starting a new life

The Kusunda *Ghãtu* amalgamates in it both romance and tragedy. This part of *Ghãtu* highlights the tragi-comic aspects of life. The royal couples set out for the forest life, where they live a life full of primitive romance and savagery. It thus symbolizes how savagery as a primitive impulse has been part of every way of human life.

Living in the Seclusion of Forest

The royal couples do not only live in the palace that they set out to live a bohemian life. The royal couples are both happy and sorrow living in the seclusion of forest which represents the habitat of *Kusundā*, that is, the nomadic people. The king is ever in a festive mood due to his association with the damsels. The king and queen are sent to a state of trance, which is supposed to be a transitional period in between the life in mundane and a life in spiritual worlds, which simultaneously represents both the seclusion of hell and the freedom of heaven.

The royal couples' journey from the palace to the forest and to and across this revelation is worth-taking, however, for it is what enables them to live a tension-free life. With this freedom seeking nature of a man, there is another message in *Ghãtu*. There is an image of rebirth that there are some who still believe the life after death in almost all the religions like Hindu, Christianity, Muslim and Buddhism. "Some hold that dead persons somehow continue to live as spiritual beings in an invisible world, while others' assume that death is the end of you" (Eriksen 20). Death is not the end of any human which the *Ghãtu* projects.

The tradition bearers perform *Ghãtu* with the real sense of enactment which again links it to its basic nature of being a cultural sign. As the hunting age is symbolized by the hounds and gun in the following song:

Laxman ko piche-picche donai kukura

Madhuvanko jangalaima harinai bagala

Harinalai dekhikana base dandaima

Ramachandra Laxmana base dandaima

Harina lai dekhikana chode kukura

Hansule ra pandule lai chode kukura [. . .]

Ollo danda Ramachandra paari Laxman

Taakima tuki haana rajai harina bagala

Patthar koila bandukaile haana rajaijiu

Jhattaikana haana raja harina bagala

Taakima tuki haana rajai harina bagala (Appendix C: 330)

Two hounds behind Laxman

Flock of deer the forest of Madhuvan

Seeing the deer, sat both Ramachandra and Laxman

On one hill Ramachandra on the other hill Laxman

Fire the deer, oh king with a good aim

Fire the gun loaded with coal bullet and aim

The hunter and the hounds always chase the deer to kill. The deer run away as fast as he can but he has to die for the survival of hunter and hounds. The hunter symbolizes human desire that is chasing every human all the times. On the other everyman is running away like a deer from the hunter but he has no escape. *Ghātu* suggests that everyman is a prey and his desire is a predator. Such a view, however, may equally be interpreted to mean that our senses are the hunters that prey on our own desires. The king and queen, similarly, are the ones running after their own desires, rather than the deer their hounds are after. It gives the image a hawk and a pigeon.

In pursue of freedom, the royal couples go to forest. The royal couples' journey from the palace to the forest reflects this reality that everyman's desire is hunting him. Their desires lead them to the forest to have the bohemian tension-free life. In a most figurative sense, the king and queen, similarly, are the ones running after their own desires, rather than the deer their hounds are after.

Ghātu has another image of *Kusundā* couples: the King *Kājuli* and the Queen *Kājuli*. *Kājuli* refers to a kind of rebirth, a shedding off of musty coverings (Figure 35) when time so requires. Nature involves itself in such shedding off. When spring comes, the resurrection in nature is as natural as nature itself. The *Kusundā* king and queen adopt the role of *Kājuli* king and queen with the same spontaneity that one can perceive through *Ghātu*. This makes *Ghātu* a complex site.

The *hāsule* and *pādule* hounds are supposed to run after the deer to hunt them. The deer run fast to save their life, and the hounds run fast to hunt them; and to extend the analogy, the king and queen run fast to outwit the grasp of the limitation of life. However, it has already hunted them as does the hound with regard to the deer. The king's hounds chase the deer as fast as his own sensory organs do it. Those organs, symbolically, are the predators that feed on the site that comes to be in front of them.

Harmonic Relation of *Ghātu* with Other Groups

The range of *Ghātu* is up to Dura, Magar, Darai, Tamang, Gurung, Barama, Kumal and Khas-kshetri. Keshar Jang Baral Magar presents the additional information that Newar and Limbu also used to observe *Ghātu*. He further clarifies, “*Ghātu* is mentioned in *The Mundhum*, the scripture of Limbu, but it is no more in practice at present” (Baral Magar 97-8). He illustrates that the Newar king stopped the tradition of *Ghātu* performance in 1822 BS. It is written in the very old hand-written

hymnal in Newar dialects. He says that this book is in the adoration, psalm hermitage in Kathmandu at Paknajol, Nepal (Baral Magar 98). This entire thing proves that *Ghãtu* represents the blends of multi-ethnic groups and its range is wide.

Like the Gurungs, the Magars also have three types of *Ghãtu*: Rãchya (*Sati*) *Ghãtu*, Bahramasé *Ghãtu* and Marãchya (*Kusundã*) *Ghãtu*. According Baral Magar, there is not so much difference in the ways the Gurungs do it, except in the dialects. The *Ghãtu* performances have several myths about they began. But there are different myths of the Gurungs and the Magars. The way how the tradition bearers observe *Ghãtu* differs from one village to the next.

The methods of the Gurungs and the Duras are akin (Appendix A.6: 303) although there are some similarities between the Gurungs and the Magars as well. There is only one King Pashramu in the Gurungs and only one King Jaisinghe in the Khasa-kshetri, whereas there are several names of the royal couples in the Magars: Rituvarna, Nareshor, Devai and Kailas for the king and Satyawati, Viddyawati and Resvishwar for the queen (Baral Magar 103). With this difference, there is difference in language. For instance, the Gurungs pronounce *Åwailã*, whereas the Magars pronounce *chali åu* for “come” and the the Gurungs use general cows’ dung to smear the *Ghãtu* stage, whereas the Magars use the she-yak’s dung for the same. There is similarity in dissimilarities and harmony-in-diversity and diversity-in-harmony because, “[t]here is how the popular term ‘unity in diversity’ was coined to explain the nature of Nepali culture” (Khatry 125). This comparison reflects the beauty in varieties.

It means *Ghãtu* has a harmonic relation to tie up at least six indigenous groups or more and one Khasa-kshetri community in central parts of Nepal. It has a long range from local to global impact that there are several universal human realities. The

mythical queen's tragedy suggests the same. *Ghātu* disseminates another crucial message that the Magars and the Gurungs have the relation with the ruling class. The logic of Hamilton, "[t]he Khas Ranas, there is no doubt, were originally Magars; [. . .] all now considered as Hindus of the Khas tribe, were branches of the Magar race or Jariyas, or Gurung" (27), is convincing because there is harmonic relation from one community to other and one group to other. This logic makes King Pashramu Aryan as Moreover, there are certain signs and symbols in this *Ghātu* performance: verbal (wording), visual (dance) and auditory (song) or sound, sight and sense disseminate several crucial messages.

There are several trance dances in practice within and across Nepal. The Hanuman dance in Balan folk drama, which is performed by the Brahmans, is a trance dance. As when the *Ghātu* dancers go into a trance after the dance master chants, the Hanuman dancer also goes into a trance after the Balan dance master, *vyasa*, chants. The *Ghātu* dancers should be possessed by the *Ghātu* aura. Similarly, the Hanuman dancer should also be possessed by the Hanuman aura. Both the *Ghātu* dancers and Hanuman dancer perform the dance almost in unconscious state. The difference is that the pre-pubertal girls take part in *Ghātu* dance, whereas any young or old man by way of hypnotism participates in Hanuman dance. Hanuman dance lasts for a short period of about half an hour or so, whereas the *Ghātu* dance lasts for two days or three or about a week.

Mishra presents the verse of song as, *Ādou Rāma tapodipodipa* [. . .] *yétadibha Ramayanam* which sends the Hanuman dancer into a trance (Appendix B.14: 323). The Hanuman dancer instantly starts behaving like a monkey when the Balan dance master, *vyasa*, chants this verse. Hanuman dance is considered as a kind of monkey dance. The Hanuman means monkey. The verse means, "Rama was exiled; a deer was

killed; Sita was kidnapped; the eagle was killed. Rama made Sugriv, a powerful monkey, his friend. This is what Ramayana is.” As the story goes ahead, “Rama killed Bāli, another powerful monkey. The Hanuman put fire on Lanka and Rama also killed Rawan and Kumbhakarna.” This is a brief story of Ramayana. The Balan dace master, the *vyasa*, chants this story and the dancer internalizes it. This makes him go into a trance state and he starts enacting the activities of a monkey. Now he is a performing monkey. He climbs up the coconut tree so easily that he cannot do this work when he is in a normal state. What makes him do such adventurous work? This is Hanuman aura as the *Ghātu* aura makes the dancers perform different activities.

Like in *Ghātu*, there is a reverse song in this Hanuman dance, too. To release the dancer from the Hanuman aura, the *vyasa* sings this reverse song or the counter rhythm of Krishna’s story time and again. According to the verse, “Shrikrishna was born in the house of Vasudev and Devaki. After the birth of Shrikrishna, Devil Maya and Putanakha were burnt down. Similarly, the heredity and property of Kangsa was delved.” The *vyasa* sings this verse repeatedly like the *Ghātu* gurus do in the time of freeing the maids from the grip of *Ghātu* deities. Only then the dancer comes back into the normal state. This entire thing shows that there is a strong imprint of Hinduism and the link between the *Ghātu* practitioners and Balan practitioners.

Similarly, as like *Ghātu* dance performance, the Somali people perform a *Zar* dance. Singapadu people do a *Barong* dance. A *Zar* dance (Appendix B.11: 321) is performed in Somalia, as a healing music. The groups of the nomadic women from northern Somalia sing and perform this dance. The dance is primarily used for healing purposes, but it also serves as a community event. As Chandibhanjyang people believe that *Ghātu* cures any kind of disease. A *Barong* dance, which is of a similar nature, is performed in Singapadu, Bali (Appendix.B.10: 309). This shows that *Ghātu*

is a local folk dance but there are a number of such trance dances in and across the country. Hanuman dance is one which resembles to *Ghãtu* dance, is in Nepal. A Zar dance and a Barong dance, which slightly resemble to *Ghãtu* are practised in the foreign countries. *Ghãtu* is similar to several other folk dramas.

Thus, *Ghãtu* metonymically represents the performative cultural semiotics of the whole of the humankind. It creates a truth which transcends literary and ethnic categories and broadens the horizon of cultural heritage. At the same time, there is an inspiring life to its highest idealism of human world. The study interprets the phrases of songs which have been extracted from the Khasa-kshetri *Ghãtu* of Nuwakot, the books of Baral Magar, Hamilton, Pignède and Mishra. Moreover, the phrases of *Ghãtu* song have also been extracted from researcher's live observation. This is the decoding of *Ghãtu* songs. Interpretation of images and symbols, which are generated from postures, gestures, dresses and ornaments, movements of the dancers, objects and tools, and space and time, is the major concern of the study. The following chapter analyses the cultural semiotics and symbolic interpretation of the selected images and symbols.

CHAPTER VI

SIGNIFICATION OF *GHĀTU* IMAGES AND SYMBOLS

Images and symbols in *Ghātu* performance suggest multiple representations. This section of the dissertation amplifies cultural embodiments of *Ghātu* images. Yet there has not been enough symbolic interpretation of appurtenances—the regalia—such as headgears, sceptres, robes, swords, bows, arrows and flutes in the *Ghātu* text. Similarly, there are wooden lions, elephants and horses as the tools in the performance. The lion image represents the king, a common symbol of the king and so does the elephant. The horse and elephant represent power and pelf. The image of horse stands for beauty and potentiality and “the horses are the life-force” (Cirlot 43). King Pashramu embodies beauty, splendor and power of these species in the animal world. There are natural and human made images. Lion, horse and elephant are natural images, and “natural images like ‘dove’ and ‘bumble bee’ have been used for the hero and ‘flower’ and ‘ruddy goose’ for the heroine” (Avasthi 212).

This section aims at explicating these images in the indigenous folk performance. The queen through silence expresses her inner pain which she cannot verbally articulate. The underlying meanings of silence, sounds and sights are more important than the explanation of words. The performing queen does not speak. Her silence signifies her inner pain. Despite her unwillingness, the queen has to immolate herself into the funeral pyre as per the *sati* practice. She wants to live for her baby’s care. Her silence is inexplicable, “silence is a clear sign of rejection” (Schechner 278). She does not speak any more because she rejects the present reality of her loneliness after her lord’s death. The queen’s silence embodies her unwilling immolation.

The study explores the semantics of images and symbols in *Ghātu*. It deals with what the images and symbols stand for and what they symbolize, as “the

symbols and imagery are appropriated either to support or reject another” (Haboush 84). The sceptre, which the performing kings and queens carry in *Ghãtu*, is appropriated to signify the authority. The *mandap*¹⁰, which is constructed at *Deurali*¹¹ in *Ghãtu* performance, is a symbol of a death bed. Imagery and symbols in *Ghãtu* thus signify several meanings. The imagery and symbols as the stage decoration, some photographs and sounds and sights that disseminate important messages. The images in *Ghãtu* like dresses and ornaments reflect the traditional dresses of ethnic groups, and the objects stand for the past handicrafts.

Dresses and Ornaments



Fig. 21 Cloaks and ornaments of the dancers

Dresses and ornaments of the dancing girls in *Ghãtu* symbolize the old fashion. The dancers wear turbans on their heads. “Dress also conveys people’s beliefs, feelings, and general approach to life” (Danesi 183). The turban is known as the headgear. The headgear stands for a king and power. The headgear metonymically represents the king. This is equivalent to crown and crown as such is not for the common wears. It is a symbol of power that the king dies but a crown never dies which means the governance does not die, it passes from one person to the next. It is handed to the next king after the death of a present king. The headgear with trident and uncombed hair

¹⁰ *Mandap* is the place which is constructed at the ending phase of the performance in the Gurung *Ghãtu* villages but it is a dancing stage in the Magar *Ghãtu* villages.

¹¹ *Deurali* means the place where the hill is naturally lowered down from where the path for pedestrian is constructed as it is a gorge.

symbolizes Shiva. It implies that King Pashramu had some versatile qualities of Lord Shiva. The study thus interprets the trident as a symbol of Lord Shiva, the metonymic representation because Lord Shiva carries this trident either as a weapon or as his identity in it. It also gives the sense that Lord Shiva is the representative of all, Brahma, Bishnu and Mahesh. In the trident, “[t]he third point might well correspond to the third eye of Shiva (or Siva) the Destroyer [. . .].

The triple character of the trident is an ‘infernal replica of the Trinity’, comparable with the three heads of Cerberus” (Cirlot 351).

The trident in a headgear of the king is not interpreted in general writing of *Ghātu*. This creates



Fig. 22 Performing queen possessed

obscurity and ambiguity about what trident stands for. The obscurity and ambiguity stand for the power and asset of the ethnic groups because they are the rich secrets. The white colour of *birpatta* symbolizes the strength and cleanliness. It implies that Pashramu was strong and clean because “image is used to present the theme [. . .] in an artistic way” (Avasthi 194). So there is lack of clarity. Whatever the questions regarding such images the researcher puts before the participants, they link this to the cultural methods. But most participants do not know the underlying meanings.

As shown in the picture (figure 21), the dancers wear attractive jewelry, cloaks and ornaments of several kinds. They wear earrings on ears, *besori* on nose, *jantar*, *kantha*, *muga* and *pote*, the coral garland with gold, precious stones, velvet pies on neck, rings on fingers and colorful bangles, gold bangles on the wrist. This makes them look divine which represents the then ornaments. Performing queen’s new dresses and ornaments represent her last dress-up because she is going to immolate herself. The queen’s green colour garland of crystal that is woven in the threads

symbolizes the love of life but she is compelled to immolate for her safety. All these represent the symbolism in *Ghātu*.

Symbolism shows meanings through metaphors, and imagery through careful setup and execution. An image can consist of similes, metaphors, allegories and symbols. However, the function of imagery is not that of mere illustration. It is always purposeful. Imagery is what the writer makes you see, hear, smell, feel, touch—by the power of their words. Symbolism—symbols stand in for something—such as an apple that symbolizes knowledge.



Fig. 23 Ready to self-immolate



Fig. 24 Symbolic pyre

The symbolic pyre is the last bed of man that is decorated with colourful cloths, as *Ghātu* suggests the image of *Ghāt* “the crematorium.” The actor performs the activities of funeral ritual in Sati episode. Performing queen in ethnic dresses is transported to the crematorium (figures 23 and 24) in her request as she expresses her desire to be with her lord. This ethnic dress symbolizes the last dress-up.

Headgear is a main symbolic ornament of this tribal festival. The construct of headgear is different from one ethnic group to other as well as one *Ghātu* village to the next. People from Rainaskot and Nalma villages use the small bamboo strips,

flowers and parched rice to make the headgear, whereas people from Saylyantar and Majhitar villages use only cloth straps and flowers for the same. There is not any uniformity in making the headgear. This is the characteristics of traditional performing arts like *Ghãtu*.

Asian Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO argues that tribal culture is indeed a major component of traditional performing arts. It highlights that each tribe has its own distinctive performance with peculiar instruments made of wood, bamboo, horn, or similar common items easily available to them (61). So are the tools and equipment used in *Ghãtu* performance. How headgear is worn and the dancers dance is shown in the following pictures (figures 25 and 26). The variation and peculiarity are the symbols of beauty as, “Peirce has said that only symbols (not icons and indices) are interpretable” (qtd. in Eco, *The Role of the Reader* 178).



Fig. 25 The way of wearing the headgear and dancing



Fig. 26 The way the performing girls dance

Mostly, two types of headgears are used in several *Ghātu* villages but there is not uniformity in its look and make. The make of headgear differs from village to village. The use of ingredients of headgear, styles, height also differs from village to village. This suggests that varieties are the universal characteristics. In Nalma and Majhitar villages, red and white turbans are used. *Ghātu* gurus say that the dancing girls, who play the role of queen, wear red turbans and the dancing girl who plays the role of the king wears white one. White colour indicates that the state head should be clean white and it also indicates power, whereas red represents weak although red colour always does not stand for the same. Red turbans of the performing queens indicate the beauty and so do the black turbans in Salyantar. “In all societies, colors play a critical function in the realm of symbolism” (Danesi 34).



Fig. 27 The girls making the headgear

The dancers wear the crown like turban on their heads (figures 26 and 28). It has different names like *birpatta*, *birkot*, *birbat* and *Jhariya Pagari* or “*Jhariwal Pagari*” in Kaski (Thapa 35). In Nalma, it is called *birkot*, whereas it is called *birpatta* in Rainaskot. The Darais call this as *birpat* and the Gurungs of Chandibhanjyang call this *birbat*. In general, whether it is called a *birpatta* or *birkot* or *birpat* or *birbat*, it is a headgear, the symbolic crown image. But the *birpatta*, which is worn by the king has separate name, *Jhariya Pagari*. This headgear is a bit more special than other

ones, as it contains the trident as mentioned earlier and is constructed more beautifully thus it looks distinct. White parched rice and colourful combination of the headgear glows like glitter. *Ghãtu* gives the image of “mica ornaments that glitter in the half-light” (Geertz 114). Culturally, *Ghãtu* is considered as the mica ornament in terms of its performances and its cultural semiotics. Because of changing tastes and preferences along with colonial infiltration, it has almost lost its significance. *Ghãtu* glitters even in the half-light means this cultural activity does not require a very heavy budget as the professional films do. *Ghãtu* can be performed even by the amateur performers but its impact is crucial. This is how *Ghãtu* glitters in the domain of Nepali culture. As shown in the picture (figure 28), the look of headgear differs from village to village. Despite the differences, ultimate meaning is the same. These headgears denote the crown image.



Fig. 28 Headgears: Rainaskot, Lamjung Salyantar, Dhading Majhitar, Nuwakot
Nalma, Lamjung



Chandivanjyang Ramche Dulegauda Kuncha From the internet

As shown in the images, the looks of headgears vary. The caption mentions the names of the villages. Such variants have significances that different people have different skills of making the headgear. Whatever the name is given, the purpose of headgear is to denote the king and power.

The appurtenances, regalia, used in the performance embody cultural meanings. Tools and equipment represent the arts and handicrafts and primitive life style: toy lion and elephant stand for the haughty and arrogant king, toy hen and bow for hunting. The bamboo pole (figure 29) is used at the last phase of the performance to represent the ladder between heaven and the material world. It is the bridge between the



Fig. 29 Headgear hung

celestial and the terrestrial spheres. One cannot say that there is not any relation between these two different worlds. The *Ghãtu* practitioner simply hangs the headgear at the top of a bamboo pole as a part of ritual without much understanding why they do as they do it.

Besides, the bamboo pole signifies the ladder to heaven and suggests the royal couple's ascendance to heaven, an unquestionable local belief. On the other, it is interesting to observe Pierce's explanation concerning the signs: he "established three different trichotomies of the sign [. . .] the sign itself, the sign in relation to its object, and the sign in relation to its interpretant" (qtd. in Mittelberg 124). Trident in *Ghãtu* performance functions as a sign weapon, as the object, and to such meaning unfolded in relation to the interpretive mind. A number of cultural activities related to *Ghãtu* are practised as per the local people's necessity. The local people follow what they feel easy to follow and what they know. For instance, turbans are hung, as shown in the picture. In Nalma, the villagers do not place the turbans only on the bamboo, they place the bamboos with the turbans on the top of the tree. The height of the tree also signifies the ladder to heaven. For example, people in some places believe, as

Pritchett argues, “[t]he bamboo pole with which kites are captured is a metaphor for the tall sugarcane” (“A Long . . .” 901).

As people take tall sugarcane to represent the bamboo pole metaphorically, so the bamboo pole that stands by the crematorium supposedly represents the ladder between the mundane and spiritual worlds. Perhaps no ladder is as tall as the bamboo pole; nevertheless, the bamboo is a metaphor for a long ladder. Kites, which are flown in the sky, metonymically represent the height and heaven. To capture the kites is to capture heaven symbolically. The bamboo pole in the performance also seems to capture the space in the heaven for the royal couples: the King Pashramu, and his Queen Yemphawati. Therefore, the crown image is hung over at the top of the bamboo pole and is stood by the symbolic crematorium which is a socio-cultural act. As “the pole is also identified with the zenith” (Cirlot 260). Thus, the *Ghãtu* practitioners believe that their much beloved king and queen reside in the heaven.

With the parched grain, the turban makers weave white and red flowers alternatively in the bamboo strips. Colourful flowers—objects—used in the ritual stand for colourful life which indicates a happy life. “There is a power in symbolic object that leads the readers into the depth of implied/hidden meaning through its medium [. . .]. The function of symbol in literature is to establish relation awareness between the writer and readers” (D. Shrestha 173). Particular blouses and saris, the dancers wear, symbolize their traditional fashion, identity and recognition of particular ethnic groups. Particular necklace of gold and red velvet worn by the dancers determines how the particular family is economically sound, and importance of ornaments among indigenous groups, especially, indigenous women. In this respect, *Ghãtu*, as a replica, reflects the past life styles of particular ethnic groups and *Aryal Kshetri* community.

Postures and Gestures

The postures and gestures, and movements of the dancers indicate several qualities of universality as accepted cultural performances. The dancers tilt their bodies left and right in such an interesting ways that the audiences get spellbound. As Umberto Eco underscores connection between signs and meanings, “In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects [. . .] [s]emiotics is concerned with meaning making” (qtd. in Chandler 2). Image of



Fig. 30 The dancer about to go in a trance mode, and when in trance



Fig. 31 The dancers in standing postures with different hand gestures

gestures, postures, slow movements of the body with closed eyes is meant something beyond general prediction and is concerned with meaning making. Specially, slow movements and closed eyes suggest something deeply grieved state. This indicates

queen's mourning because she is in a very difficult condition that her lord is recently killed in the battlefield. Gestures as facial expressions, bodily movements of the dancers, convey the tragic theme of the royal couples. Because facial expression, as "actions performed more globally (e.g. a shrug), and even factors like posture and body language" tell more than the storyline/plot (Langacker 250). Posture and body language is non verbal communication and non-verbal communication is abstract. There is possibly multiple layers of meaning in abstract thing. Words are weak means of communication although it is easy way. "“Meaning” is what a word gives us to understand, [. . .] starting with action and tense and ending with word-meaning and sentence-meaning” (Pullock 45). But only the words are not sufficient to disseminate all sorts of messages. The dancing girl strolls back and forth. This movement tells that she is bereaved. She strolls slowly flicking the second and third fingers as hand gestures that reflect her grief as “[h]and gestures were experimentally studied during truth telling” in particular condition like that of the queen who is about to immolate (Gibbs 298). The flicking of fingers symbolizes her repressed pains. The gestural codes and the bodily and facial expressions of the dancers broaden the horizon of the cultural semiotics. The postures and gestures of the dancers tell about the human nature and cultural significance that the Queen Yemphawati was in the same gesture and posture. Alan Cienki highlights, “In a broad sense, “gesture” can refer to any willful bodily movement, however the focus [. . .] is on gestures of the hands” (6). The postures and gestures reflect the inner pain of the queen. The performing girls play the queen's role.

Moreover, like the postures and gestures, the cloaks and ornaments of the dancers signify the historical values. It is deeply linked with history, culture,

economy, primitive social life and space and time. The entire sign system of *Ghātu*, thus, evokes multiple meanings, cultural and metaphysical.

The images in *Ghātu* lead to multiple meanings practised in different cultural settings having their respective cultural significances. The images stand for several meaningful stages. The slow movements of dancers indicate the confused state of mind of a person, and slow rhythm of song does the queen's laments. In descriptive writings, song is only the song and dance is only the dance but in an analytical writing, the narrative songs of *Ghātu*, for instance, reflect the storyline of the text as well along with the lamentation. The pragmatic writings of *Ghātu* do not serve the intended meanings and relative truths. Therefore, symbolic interpretation unravels the meaning in depth. Because, "Symbol is a kind of language that tells a special meaning. Symbolization is a kind of linguistic art; it tells a deeper meaning" (D. Shrestha179).

The dance masters sing songs in a slow rhythm and the dancers dance accordingly. The movements of the dancers are slow and their slow movements symbolize the queen's inner pains because when man is in a painful condition his movement slows down. Every movement of dancer's hands, legs, head is slow which represents the Yemphawati's repressed pains. Every gesture such as dancer's closed eyes, mood off face, and so suggests the unhappy moments respectively. The dancer flickers her fingers and touches the ground swaying her body left and right "express the meaning [. . .] with her hand gestures," (Schechner 357) in *Ghātu* that the queen is feeling so sorry. Flickering of her fingers indicates her uneasy condition. It is Queen Yemphawati's painful condition of her widowhood in her early teens. There are number of images, symbols and other signs, related with the ritual, signify multiple meanings. The image like "ghāt" (crematorium) means the place where dead bodies

are cremated. How do these images, symbols and signs signify multiple meanings?

The images, symbols and signs signify multiple meanings that depend on the cultural settings. Symbols suggest meanings. Because “it is still the case that for many persons the word “symbol” suggests meanings of a more permanent kind than those transient wisps of suggestiveness” (Wheelwright 68). The bow and arrow used in *Ghātu* are the symbols to suggest the meanings of hunting age.

All the signs stand for certain meanings. It depends on the interpretation skill. For example, capital ‘H’ stands for “hospital” and “helipad” and small ‘h’ stands for “water tap” and “rifle.” Tank and missile suggest war, as it is a universal concept, but in *Ghātu* a sword symbolizes war. This seems controversial. Therefore, sign systems differ from place to place. Similarly, thumb up gesture and Ok gesture are controversial, as “American “OK” gesture, made with thumb and forefinger forming a ring shape by touching the fingertips together [. . .] or the “thumbs up” gesture, indicating a positive evaluation with the thumb extended upward vertically and the remaining fingers curled closed” do not resemble (Cienki and Müller 6). To respond someone’s performance positively, the audience may give the “thumbs up” to indicate something is good because that is the convention s/he is familiar with from the surrounding culture (Cienki and Müller 11), whereas it is vulgar in some parts of Nepal as it indicates male organ, and “thumbs up” is given to someone in angry mood.

Among various gestures and postures, closing of the eyes and mouths of the dancers in *sati* and *Kusundā* parts create confusion in the audience. The audience may not be able to know the meanings of such gestures and activities which signify deep mourning of the queen. When the dance masters start singing, the dancing girls get possessed by *Ghātu* aura. It is easily noticeable because dancers’ eyes are closed and

their bodies start slowly swaying either clockwise or anti-clockwise. What makes them act like that? Is it magical power which governs the dancers? Or is it just the acting? The researcher asked the dancers individually after the performance. But they said that something inexpressible power governs them and they are bound to act accordingly. What is this inexpressible power? Schechner calls this inexpressible power a spirit (40) that governs the dancing girls. The dancers stand and move their bodies slowly and gradually with different hand gestures flickering their ring fingers and middle fingers together. They dance as if they are not dancing by their will. The unconsciously swaying back and forth movement of the dancers indicates a great shock, slow motioned dance does grievous situation and bereaved condition of the queen. Dancers' swaying of the top half of body round and round reflects the gyre and the dancers' unconsciously sleep for two hours or more indicates death.

The dancers in the trance mode in the *Kusundā* episode see a kind of dream. This dream represents the dream of whole human kind. Jung argues, "Our dreams are continually saying things beyond our conscious comprehension" (178). Dream is the expression of repressed desires that are fossilized under unconscious mind. Jung claims that our conscious comprehension is less important than our unconscious comprehension. The gestures and postures, which are confusing, reflect these symbolic meanings that help clarify some obscurities and ambiguities of this cultural activity. Language and theme confuse in different ways.

Language and Theme

Both the language and theme are not from those *Ghātu* practitioners except Aryal Kshetri. *Ghātu* language is mixed up of several other languages. So, language symbolizes the diverse linguistic groups and theme the cross culture. For instance, *katima saya rupaiya*, that is in Nepali, [. . .] means "what is the price?" *nahima nahi*,

that is in Hindi, [. . .] means “No! No!” (Thapa 34). In an interview, Chandra Bahadur Gurung reports, “there are twenty seven languages in *Ghāṭu*” (Appendix A.3 ii: 298). The researcher has gathered the information from several participants about this site regarding the language. Most of them reply that they are unknown about the mix-ups of diverse languages in this site. Although the participants are ignorant of languages, this makes *Ghāṭu* performance as the representative of indigenous culture with multicultural imagery. The use of myth with its narrative, similarity with other cultures, the borrowing of words and phrases from diverse linguistic groups, and the mixture of tragic and comic makes it a complete performance.

Activities of Dancers

With the language and theme, dancers’ activities are suggestive. There are onstage and offstage activities. The onstage activities mean the activities the actors perform on the stage, and offstage activities mean the activities which the audience cannot view on the stage. The onstage activities are the means through which the message is disseminated to the audience. The offstage activities have the importance to enhance the performance. The pre-performance and post-performance activities are offstage activities. The villagers prepare for the performance and they call a meeting. This meeting decides to select the appropriate dancing girls. After the selection, the former dancers train the new ones on the know-how of the performance. Thus both the offstage and onstage activities represent the back-up force and contributory roles of the performance.

The performers’ activities create certain images which suggest the general human activities, as, “[m]eanings occur through actions and gestures” of the dancers (Green and Lesbian 121). The weeping activities of the *Ghāṭu* dancers suggest the queen’s pains and grievous situation. Fighting activity, which is a performance,

symbolizes the war instinct of a man. This is how every performing activity in *Ghãtu* is symbolically presented.

The *Ghãtu* performer wears the headgear which can be considered as a mask. Performance theory deals with the masks, the performers wear. Only the difference is that mask covers the face of a performer, whereas the headgear does not do so, but there is no significant difference in their functions. The mask builds up the confidence in the performers and it stimulates them and so does the headgear, but it is not as the same as the mask. For instance, the performers wear the mask for protection in cricket game. *Ghãtu* dancers' headgear is not for that. There is a kind of unseen power in a mask (Schechner 40) or in a headgear in *Ghãtu* performance even if effect of headgear is not like that of visor. Without visors, cricketers cannot perform the game, whereas the *Ghãtu* dancers can perform the dance although the headgear unties as shown in the figure 32.



Fig. 32 The dancers' headgears untied while dancing

Ghãtu performance is different from this perspective that it is not only the headgear which captivates the dancers, but there is an unseen power of *Ghãtu* aura that seems to envelop them. The dancers transcend in the spiritual world. The researcher observes that the headgear is of secondary importance when the dancers are possessed by the *Ghãtu* aura—spirited mind, divine light, perception level but not

actual—in this performance. The headgear gets squeezed and broken off while dancing. It is untied and falls down from the dancers' heads when the performance is in full swing, but it does not reduce the level of performance. The dancer goes on dancing in the similar way as before because of *Ghātu* aura. This unseen power is analysed by the performance theorist, Richard Schechner, as the spirit in the context of other cultural enactments.



Fig. 33 The dancing girls fighting to snatch the hubble-bubble

According to Raju Gurung (Appendix A.2: 291), one *Ghātu* guru, the dancers fight as “energy is spent on fighting, fleeing, hunting, mating, maintaining dominance, and defining and/or protecting turf” (Schechner 104) because they have their personal guru to whom they want to serve the hubble-bubble as a high respect. They have only one hubble-bubble with them but all the dancing girls want to serve only to their personal guru. This selfish nature of humans creates the conflict. This conflict turns into a fight, actual fight. It indicates that man has no patience or less patience. If the dancers served their gurus turn by turn, they would not fight. This symbolizes that man suffers in the lack of civic sense. It shows that man is over selfish animal and he is ready to harm other at any rate to fulfill his desire. After all, there is animal instinct in man because, “Men without culture would not be the clever savages of Golding's

Lord of the Flies thrown back upon the cruel wisdom of their animal instincts; nor would they be the nature's noblemen of Enlightenment primitivism or even, as classical anthropological theory would imply" (Geertz 49). It is a culture that shapes man in many respects, and in the lack of cultural and civic senses, man is distracted.

Conflict starts in and among humans in a nominal reason. However, dancers' fight reflects real human behaviours. As, "The concept of "conflict" has come to be connected with the concept of "social structure," since the differentiation of parts becomes opposition between parts, and scarce status becomes the object of struggles between persons and groups who lay claim to it" (Turner 126). This fighting stands for warring in the world, no peace, and everlasting conflict in the world.

When the dancers enact the *Kusundā*, the nomadic man, they do a real fight. It symbolizes that man is instinctively a fighting animal. The peer dancer gets injured when other dancer pushes her down. This fighting activity symbolizes the war instinct of a man because he "might thus acquire a passion for war" (Frazer 40). This suggests that man entertains the war game as many people are war mongering. This indicates that man is sado-masochistic and is guided by emotion. "The most famous example of the exploitation of sado-masochistic sexual practices in a prison context, we find consistent understanding of the pleasures" (Soussloff 172). A man enjoys in other's pain if situation is favourable. This image symbolizes the universality of humans' darker side of a certain psychic aspect. This area of interpretation is very often overlooked or neglected in other such field of studies. "Since the beginning of time man, with his wholesome animal instinct, has been engaged in combat with his soul and its demonism. If the soul were uniformly dark it would be a simple matter. Unfortunately, this is not so, for the anima can appear also as an angel of light" in man time and again (Jung 29).

The image (figure 33) of a fight in *Ghãtu* is common, it is just the starting point. *Ghãtu* symbolizes the common human nature of war monger, and mindless destruction. The same man is a prey and the predator in turn. This gives the image of hunters and hunted. Thus *Ghãtu* metonymically represents the performative cultural semiotics of the humankind.



Fig. 34 The dancers gyrating for two hours or more and they collapse one after another.

There is another activity of collapse of the dancers. The dancers' gyrate symbolizes Buddha's wheel in a sense. The researcher observes the performance in Nalma village that the dancers go on swaying top half of their bodies round and round in a sitting pose for about two hours as shown in figure 34 and they collapse, but who collapse first cannot be predicted even by the gurus. This activity is almost impossible to be performed by the person in a conscious state because swaying their body round and round non-stop for two hours is not possible in a conscious state. If anyone who practices this will vomit or leaves in a half way through but dancing girls do not vomit nor do they leave half way through. This is the unique performance of *Ghãtu*.

When the dance masters start singing the phrases of song, "*Machhai ra muchhaiko devata . . .*" Oh god of fish! . . . (Appendix A.2. vii: 293), the dancers start slowly moving top half of their bodies. The motion of movement speeds up gradually and they go on moving unless they collapse. The participants claim that this activity

must be performed. This gives the image of a gyre. Thus the gyrating movements of the dancers suggest the life cycle, the wheel, of human world as “the Wheel can symbolize in the West the hazardous play of fortune, and in the East the persistent cycle of deaths and rebirths from which release is sought” (Wheelwright 126). *Ghãtu*, which is an image of funeral ritual as well as death and birth, denotes the cycle of deaths and rebirths. As all the dancers collapse, the dance masters suspend the performance just for some time and start singing reverse songs. This is symbolic of human activity that man performs his activity turn by turn.

The dance masters sing the reverse songs repeatedly until all the collapsed dancers come out of trance mode. How long after do the dancers come out of a trance mode? Even the dance masters cannot predict how long after the tranced dancers come out of a trance mode, but they go on singing nonstop until the dancers come back to a normal state. The dancers see a somewhat wonderful and a bit fearful dream in this state. When the dancers come out of a trance mode, some dancers start quivering and some start weeping. Quivering of dancers suggests the shaman tradition and weeping does as every man weeps. As the dancers apply the mustard oil to the gurus after they come out of a trance, this activity is symbolic of being obedience and disciplined before the seniors that “a symbol is the best possible expression for an unconscious content whose nature can only be guessed, because it is still unknown” (Jung 6). All the symbolic interpretations are not cent percent truths, but they are close to realities.

The other activities of *Ghãtu* embody the importance of teamwork. The villagers work together to accomplish this tribal festival. They help both physically and financially to perform the *Ghãtu* dance. This image symbolizes the importance of social force, as it is a way of “problem analysis, problem solving, project completion,

responsibility” (Stucky and Wimmer 221) in any society. To accomplish the *Ghãtu* performance is the social responsibility. On this occasion, *Ghãtu* patches up the broken up relation of some members in the society because without the cooperation of all the villagers, this cultural activity cannot be organized and accomplished.

“Working improvisationally allows groups to present numerous resolutions in a playful, interactive, provisional manner that encourages spontaneity and teamwork among group members” (Park-Fuller 212). Thus, this tribal festival gives the image of importance of teamwork (*Nalma Ghãtu Dance Performance 7 May 2009*).

Among several activities, the helpers transport the dancers to the *Deurali* because the latter’s eyes get closed. *Deurali*, which is the last stage of the performance, is usually situated slightly away in the gorge from the performance spot. As a ritual, the organizers should go to dancing girls’ houses to ask for permission with their parents. Transporting the dancers to *Deurali* by the helpers gives the image of funeral procession, and organizers’ going to girls’ house for asking the permission to participate in *Ghãtu* dance gives the image of marriage procession. The images of funeral procession and marriage procession stand for two major aspects of human life.

The immolation image is one inevitable aspect of human life. The performers enact immolation activities. Moving back and forth by the dancers indicates queen’s dilemma. Queen’s dilemma is every man’s dilemma. Why queen decided to immolate suggests that a person chooses death at last if s/he is in last critical condition. Therefore, she decides to immolate. Queen’s relatives do not advise her to immolate but her decision of immolation symbolizes the stubborn nature of patriarchy as well as of a woman as, “men are stubborn and never back down” (Eco, Foucauld’s . . . 121).

The dancing girls perform several enactments that they are symbolic of peasant life. Enactments of planting the rice paddy indicate agrarian life, smearing the

Ghātu spot, the last stage of the performance, with cow dung symbolizes the separation and demarcation line between the mundane and spiritual worlds.

Enactments of nomadic man by the dancers when they come out of trance indicate general angry nature of mankind. The dancers perform all the activities in accordance with the rhythm of songs. These songs vary according to the episodes.

Among various activities, gambling is a much symbolic. King *Kājuli* and Queen *Kājuli* come to gamble with the Queen Yemphawati at night hoping to get their conquered states back, in the disguise form of ascetics. A gambling is symbolic of life as a risky game and it signifies the royal activities. The general public also participates in it and many of them have been bankrupted. Presence of King *Kājuli* and Queen *Kājuli* is realized in two ways. Either they have come to ask the alms or to gamble. The queen doesn't accept their visit there for alms when the gurus inquire them although the king *Kājuli* agrees. It shows that woman does not want to show their inner realities and pains to others.

The dancers perform the dance with uncombed hair. The symbolic meaning of uncombed hair is indicative of the lord Shiva and queen's mourning. Lord Shiva has the get up of uncombed hair with the tiger skin wrapped on his waist. Another image of uncombed hair is of the widow woman. According to Hindu custom, the woman should not bind her hair during the death ritual, especially, when her husband is currently dead. She leaves her hair uncombed that indicates her bereaved condition as well. After her husband's death, the wife has also to wash her vermilion and break her bangles. Washing of her vermilion and breaking her bangles suggests the broader Hindu cultural rituals. Women's vermilion and their bangles on their wrists symbolize their living husbands and their lifelong make up. *Ghātu* reflects this aspect of immolation system.



Fig. 35 The image of funeral procession

There are other activities that reflect the belief system. The performing queens, the dancers, enact looking at in the gash of cow dung balls by the end of performance. This is the action of Queen Yemphawati that she had performed this to confirm about her lord's death before she ascended to funeral pyre. As shown in the figure 36, the cow dung balls are made and on the top, a small gash is made, and water and milk is poured in them separately. The dancers look at an image of demised Pashramu there in the reflection and the gurus interpret the signs the dancers see. The gurus represent the fortunetellers. In an interview, a former dancer, Sunkashi Gurung, clarifies that the future of the villagers is predicted through the images and signs in the gash of cow dung (Appendix A.15: 313). According to her, the image is dim if mishap is about to occur in the village; the image is so clear if a good thing is about to happen in the village; and the image is mixed with blood and pus if someone from the village is going to die that year. She makes it clear that a person, who is going to die that year, is clearly seen there in the cow dung balls. A person, whose face is seen in reflection, is not informed but he is made aware of this possible adversity. After some time during that year that person dies. Sunkashi claims that it has never been missed.

This suggests a ritualistic episode that again is what attributes the *Ghãtu* with a universal cultural sign.

In the time of immolation—culturally suicidal case by jumping into the burning pyre of the husband as a great sacrificial submission of the woman—of the queen before she ascends to pyre, the queen sees omen about the auspicious and



Fig. 36 The dancers watching the image dead king in gash balls of cow dung

inauspicious time of the whole villagers in the gashes (figure 36). One of the *Ghãtu* participants, Ram Bahadur Gurung shares his experience with the researcher that the dancers tell their helpers whatever the signs they see there because the helper goes on asking them frequently about what they see in the toy ponds. Then the helpers share it with the public. The *Ghãtu* village fully believes on the signs that the dancers see in the symbolic ponds. Other people do not see what the dancing girls see in the gashes although dancers' eyes are closed. If the bad thing is going to happen in the village or to the villager, the dancers see that sign as well. This is the belief in the *Ghãtu* villages. If someone is about to die that year, his/her image is seen by the dancing girls the *Ghãtu* gurus claim. In an interview, the participants



Fig. 37 Splashing water on her eyes to open after performance

claim that they believe because they have experienced for several times. And the one whose bad omen is seen by the dancing girls, some prevention is performed against the bad evils. People believe that even the evil eyes can be warded off observing this cultural performance.

The dancers perform this image looking activity (figure 36) by the end of performance. The real pyre is stood by the river bank but in the *Ghātu* performance, a symbolic pyre is stood in the *Mandap*. The pyre is surrounded by white cotton thread for sixteen times. Sixteen times rounding by the cotton thread symbolizes sixteen make-up items to represent lipstick, bangles, garlands, thread, and so on.

Like the number sixteen, number nine in the nine episodes of *Ghātu* represents the nine months of gestation periods and of the life cycle of human being. And while selecting the dancing girls, only the girls of pre-pubertal stage are chosen. This enigmatic tribal festival thus metonymically represents the performative cultural semiotics of the humankind.

Pashramu's marriage with Indian girl symbolizes the socio-cultural relation between Nepal and India. There are several other examples that the royal families of Nepal have the marital relation with India for a long time. This relation is not only between royal families but it is also in between general public. These two countries thus are socially, culturally and politically linked. A journey to India for shopping indicates economic link and marriage between a Nepalese and an Indian the cross cultural link.

Narrative Songs

As the activities are symbolic of various realities, narrative songs also symbolize some realities. The narratives of *Ghātu* are associated with the multilingual oral literature. The songs of the ritual are heart rendering because of sentimental

presentation. Songs symbolize the lamentation of the queen and the slow rhythm song—slow motion—indicates agonies of lament. Neither slow nor fast rhythm song denotes in between or balances, and fast rhythm song indicates fast motion. All these motions are universal facts. Apart from this, time and place also play vital roles to indicate the indirect meanings. Time and place are also symbolically presented. Time of performance in general is spring—January to May—which symbolizes the heralding of newness. It is a spring season, which represents the resurrection of nature starting of something new, heralding of newness “heralding the arrival of spring” (Harlan 71) as it is the want of every human being. Place means the *Thātighar*, the stage that symbolizes the cultural geographical boundary. Also place means the *Ghātu* villages which represent the geography of this performing art. Every culture has its boundary.

Appurtenances and Other Objects Used in the Performance

There are several kinds of tools and equipment used in the performance. The villagers make bow and arrow, sceptre, toy hen and deer, toy lion and toy elephant. After the performance, all the tools and equipment are abandoned in one particular place that is called *Mandap* or *Deurali* in *Ghātu* language. In Lamjung, the *Ghātu* practitioners construct a small fake pyre there by the *Deurali* and they kindle the fire as if they cremate the dead bodies of the royal couple. After the husbands’ death, widow wives had to immolate. *Ghātu*’s theme symbolizes the male chauvinism that females were treated as the material property.

The other tools like, the flute, wooden horse and elephants, bows and arrows or arch and sticks suggest the king’s romance and entertainments, and weapons the hunting age. It indicates that the king plays the flute to get refreshed from stresses. Music has a power to soothe human tensions and it moves both audiences and

performers. And “[t]he flute in form is phallic and masculine, whereas its sound is feminine” (Cirlot XXXVIII). So, flute can be considered as the combine force of masculine and feminine. The horse and elephants symbolize the royal family and their luxurious life because, “Indian tradition has it that elephants are [. . .] the bearers of kings and queens (Cirlot 96). The bows and arrows embody the people’s weapons for survival. Ancient people used bows and arrows as their major weapons to wage wars. This suggests that ancient people did not start farming yet.

The organizers construct the turbans from the bamboo strips. They split the bamboo into small twigs that are a bit smaller than the size of pencil but longer in size. Every individual stick is slightly sharpened at the ends so that they weave flowers and parched grains with it (figure 27). Then they weave parched grain/rice in the small bamboo strips alternatively with the flowers. The villagers prepare bamboo strips of about three feet long. They curve the bamboo strips to entangle in the cloth straps that is tied around the heads of the dancers just above the ears in a crisscross way. This is how turban is constructed. The bamboo strips are woven with the parched rice and flowers to attach into the seams on the strap. It denotes the local knowledge. All these activities suggest that ancient people were expert in such handicrafts, and parched grain symbolizes purity because parched grain is used to purify on the occasions of worships. It is also used in death ritual.

The arch and arrows, which the performing girls dance with, signify hunting age. Then they dance with toy combs which indicate make-up as the most essential aspects of human life. Dancing with brass plates, offering blessings, denotes blessing as a culture. The language variety of *Ghãtu* indicates the blends of multilingual history and contemporaneity. This blessing is of the Queen Yemphawati to her baby son, Balkrishna, in the time of her departure for immolation.

One of the semioticians, Roland Barthes states that semiotics could help us to realize differences as well as similarities between various media. He argues:

While all verbal language is communication, most communication is non-verbal [. . .] semiotics could help us to realize differences as well as similarities between various media. It could help us to avoid the routine privileging of one semiotic mode over another, such as the spoken over the written or the verbal over the non-verbal. (qtd. in Chandler 218-9)

So far as communication is concerned, mostly it is non-verbal. The images and symbols speak more than the words do even if spoken and verbal modes are dominant.

The study takes into account the semiotics of indigenous culture in relation to *Ghãtu*. The signs of *Ghãtu* are also concerned with meaning making. For instance, ‘awaila’ (come) means the old form of Nepali; images, “ghāt” (crematorium) means the place where dead bodies are cremated; gestures, the slow movements of the body with closed eyes, mean the mourning of the queen. And the objects like the golden lion is symbolic of the king, bow and arrow mean the *Kusundā* (nomadic man) and a hen means the hunting, that is, the object of prey, respectively.

All the signs and symbols convey various primitive realities that man practised such shaman traditions for healing process. To avoid any kind of disasters and to have the good fortunes to the villagers, primitive man observed cultural activities. Tools and methods, wordings and get-ups, music and literature have been associated with the past, the then human behaviours, social constructions, and so on. The gestures as facial expressions, body movements of the dancers, convey the tragic theme of the royal couples. The toy lion, horse, elephant, pigeon, dog, and bow and arrow signify

the ethnography of the indigenous groups and *Aryal-Kshetri*. And all these indicate that hunting and farming were their main occupation. The lion represents the brave king and so on.

This is how the study dwells upon the ethno-semiotics of *Ghãtu* in indigenous groups and *Aryal-Kshetri* to interpret the signs and symbols related to this cultural performance. As every sign is meaning making, both symbol and sign manifest depth-meaning. It is because “[t]he meaning of the symbols can never, in principle, be exhausted. Instead, the movement of interpretation moves outward into larger and larger circles of connection in which the personal and the social shape each other” (Corrington 78). There are some images to depict the primitiveness. As quivering of the dancer gives an image of shaman tradition that it was in practice and was much common in the past. This is not out of practice at present even in city area. All the actions, tools and objects are semiotically interpreted to construe as *Ghãtu* is the goldmine for the researchers.

With the tools and objects, the slow motioned dance represents the queen’s grief. The crown image, for instance, not only represents the power, but is also associated with the myths of birth, death and regeneration indicating wider universal myths and their implications. This meaning is emphasized by the erection of bamboo pole that is derived from the symbolic crematorium; this expresses the idea that death is not a final end of someone as the bamboo pole also suggests that the souls pass from one person to another eternally. The crown on the pole also suggests the idea of the permanence of power because the king’s dead body is cremated but the headgear is hung, not cremated. Why? The height of a long bamboo pole represents the height or expanse of power itself, which by its very nature of always ascending upward imparts the meaning of its own continuation.

Following the directions of the dance masters and other practitioners, the villagers construct this headgear artistically with the flat stick like small bamboos, plain white cloths and various red and white colour flowers. The dancers wear two types of turbans on their heads although the custom differs from one *Ghãtu* village to another *Ghãtu* village. The turban metonymically represents the kingship and monarchism because it is equivalent to crown.

The girl with the white turban plays the king's role and the girls with black turbans do the queens' in Dhading. The white and black turbans suggest the hemispheric difference between men and women, and the king and the queen respectively. Although there is difference between male and female, there are several commonalities. The semiotics of headgear is further known as *Jhariya Pagari*, the turban, which is only worn by the king.

There is no similarity in colour combination of the turbans in various local performances of *Ghãtu*. In Nalma and Majitar villages, the performing queens wear red turbans. "The red colour of the *pottu* has both a literal and metaphorical significance. [. . .] red also symbolizes the potential and actual power of sexuality. [. . .] the dot being a symbol of the seed, the source of life" (Nagarajan 91). *Pottu* is a red substance worn as an ornament in the centre of forehead and at hairline of woman. The white turban represents the king and red turbans the queens although there is no water tight rule of wearing of a particular colour of turbans. In Dulegauda, Tanahu, all the dancing girls wear red colour turbans evoking Fry's statement in a slightly different context:

The red and white symbolize the two aspects of the risen body, flesh and blood, bread and wine, and in Spenser, they have a historical connection with the union of red and white roses in the reigning head

of the church. The link between the sacramental and the sexual aspects of the red and white symbolism is indicated in alchemy (Frye 195). The colours, red and white, stand for two aspects of the risen body, flesh and body, bread and wine. Flesh and body are symbolized by bread and wine. So do represent the red and white colours of the turbans in *Ghãtu* performance.

Except colour, make of headgears for the queen and the king is different. There is not a trident attached to the headgears of the queens, whereas the king's headgear has a trident attached to it. However, in the villages of Magar, there are three to five kings but they do not attach a trident to their headgears like that of Gurung. Magar's headgears also look similar but they are not. A long white strap is attached in the hair of the dancing girls who play the kings' role. Similar look of the turbans suggests that male and female are equal to each other.

Human/Natural Characters

With the dresses, tools and equipment, the characters are symbolic of some ideal personalities. Women's participation in *Ghãtu* performance is considered as a matter of concern. Without women, this performance is impossible. Dancers, dance masters and helpers are all women in several *Ghãtu* villages, whereas there are male dance masters in some villages. They are known as the characters who help contribute the storyline. As the researcher observes, characters of *Ghãtu* are almost all females, and male participation too is considerable in Nalma and Rainaskot. Kusumakar Neupane claims that only the male characters partake in folk drama and male plays the female roles (4) but in *Ghãtu* folk drama, female plays both the roles of male and female. This reflects the reality that females are highly respected in indigenous group.

With the major characters, there are helpers assigned to help the dancers in the critical time because the dancers may fall down while performing as it is a kind of

tedious job. Most of the dancers in several villages perform the dance closing their eyes in a half trance mode. But the dancers do not dance with their eyes closed in Nalma village. There is a possibility of colliding among dancers and with other people. The helpers save the dancers from accidents. According to the traditional belief system, the evil spirits also trouble the dancers. The gurus claim that anything can happen to the dancers, even death. So, regular care is necessary for the dancers. For this, the individual helpers are assigned. This method of assigning the helpers is similar in all the *Ghãtu* villages. The helpers serve the dancers with food and water in the intervals. They also help the dancers to set the dresses, make up and to go to toilet. This suggests that one man helps others in crisis and men live by men.



Fig. 38 Kusunda make-ups in Nalma, Lamjung

The protagonist, king, symbolizes the arrogance and the queen symbolizes the Hindu ideal woman and a dutiful mother. It is as “every character is symbolic and his/her existence is not based on mundane world but based on ideals or imaginations” (Singh 33). The king’s decision to wage war symbolizes the arrogant nature of such rulers and the queen’s wish of self-immolating symbolizes stubborn nature of females. The artists who play the roles of King *Kãjuli* and Queen *Kãjuli* represent the nomadic

people who live a bohemian life style. And this bohemian life is also represented by the activities of sleeping in bed of grass and straw, and smoking of the hemp.

The *Ghãtu* attendants represent the social force and the unity as they work together to accomplish the performance. When they attend the funeral ritual they represent the funeral mass, and they attend the marriage ceremony, they represent marriage procession. Erotic enactments of *Kãjuli* couples suggest sexual connotation as the universal facts. Sexuality contrast is well enough to represent the dichotomy that exists in between myth and its modern reception. King *Kãjuli* and Queen *Kãjuli* perform the begging enactment which symbolizes the probable realities of any human as the impoverish phase of a man. Riding on the toy horse by the King *Kãjuli* symbolizes that king is king wherever he is. King *Kãjuli* and Queen *Kãjuli* symbolize the deteriorating phase of man. *Ghãtu* thus shows that the highest degree of a man is a king and lowest is the beggar (Appendix A.3 iv: 298). Both poles are possible poles of a man. It is because of a person's blunder or his/her misfortune.

The attendants (figure 35), who are audiences, too, give the image of funeral procession of live persons.

All the dancers are being transported to the *Deurali*.

The former dancers, who are possessed by the *Ghãtu* aura when they happen to listen to the *Ghãtu* song, are also to be transported to the



Fig. 39 The headgears dispatching to symbolic pyre *Deurali*. The ritual of release is performed together with other assigned dancers. This ritual of release reflects the shaman practice. The dancers are asked to sit in a row and

there is another row of the gurus opposite to it. The gurus start singing a release song on and on until the dancers open the eyes. After all the tools and equipment, objects like bow and arrows, flute, headgears are abandoned in the *Deurali*, the symbolic crematorium, the performance is ritually ended until the next round of performance.

Now the dancers go round this symbolic crematorium for three times as a ritual, but the gurus sing some other informal songs to entertain the mass. This environment gives the image of a kind of new birth ceremony as if *Ghãtu* dancers are newly born, re-born. Thus, *Ghãtu* does not only project life and death, it also projects life after death.

Supernatural Characters in the Performance

Ghãtu possesses both natural and supernatural characters. The dance masters, assistant dance masters, who sing songs and play double ended drums, dancers and their helpers are natural characters. The viewers and other attendants can also be considered as the silent performers, the characters. The desperate souls of royal couple, *Ghãtu* aura, spirit and so are the supernatural characters. The deposed souls are considered as cause making elements of good and bad omens to the villagers. The villagers think that they have to perform *Ghãtu* in a proper way to give a high respect to their ancestors' disparate souls so that they will not harm the villagers. The entire performance symbolizes shaman practice. *Ghãtu* thus shows how performances are both the matters of entertainment and healing. Basically, this is a cultural performance as a means and source of entertainment. The followers observe this tribal festival for entertainment. It shows that *Ghãtu* was the source of entertainment in the past. And from the performance perspective, performance originates in entertainment:

Performance doesn't originate in ritual any more than it originates in entertainment. It originates in the binary system efficacy—

entertainment which includes the sub-set ritual—theater. From the beginning, logically as well as historically, both terms of the binary are required. At any historical moment there is movement from one pole toward the other as the efficacy—entertainment braid tightens and loosens. This oscillation is continuous—performance is always in an active state. (Schechner 156)

Against any authentic evident to support this claim, as performance originates in the binary system efficacy, entertainment which includes the sub-set ritual, theatre, the participants just guess the meaning. In several villages, the villagers, who are either the young or children or elderly ones, are excited to observe *Ghãtu* till now. In addition, this festival has not only been for the entertainment purpose it is also for healing purpose. The villagers claim that practicing the *Ghãtu* not only entertains them, they believe, it also heals some of their diseases, avoids mishaps like over-flood as it is the local belief.

***Ghãtu* and Ceremony**

It is not only the *Ghãtu* performance which is observed for healing purpose, there are several other such cultural practices that they are not countable. For example, *Ceremony* is a canonical novel written by Leslie Marmon Silko, whereas *Ghãtu* is a non-canonical oral-base text. *Ghãtu*'s writer is anonymous. In *Ceremony*, the protagonist, Tayo is ill because of war, as he was imprisoned in Japan in World War II, and when he is released, he gets sick and he needs healing. Both the *Ceremony* and *Ghãtu* strongly present the healing process of curative ceremony. In *Ghãtu*, the healing process is different in that King Parshramu, who is afflicted with arrogance of waging war against his enemy, dies in the war. Getting killed is getting healed in a sense. Then his queen suffers from the loneliness and love of her lord, and

she gets sick. Her sickness is also cured when she immolates in her husband's pyre. This suggests that death is the permanent cures of all kinds of sicknesses. The villagers perform this festival for better harvesting, better health, protection from unexpected mishaps and better performances in their days to come. The "[m]an is a weak being; he has to surrender before the larger unseen forces and follow what the experts recommend. [. . .] Man speaks for God, God helps him with cure" (Khatry 152). The deposed souls of the royal couple are ferocious gods and goddesses that are considered as the larger unseen forces. These gods and goddesses are super power. Humans cannot do anything against them except bearing what else dangers take place.

The ills of the *Ghātusaris* and the villagers are not like that of Tayo. *Ceremony* deals with the specific case of an individual, whereas *Ghātu*, which is traditionally handed out till the present since a long time, deals with the collectivity. When compare, there is similarity that Tayo and *Ghātusaris* are marginalized people. The traditional curer in *Ceremony* is Betonie, and in *Ghātu* the *Ghātu* gurus and aura. In *Ceremony*, Tayo gets healed through Indian traditions, beliefs and stories in the process of curative ceremony. In *Ghātu*, the dancer, who is called *Ghātusari*, gets healed after the dance performance. There is not any particular character like that of *Ceremony* in *Ghātu*. There is a legendary king, Parshuram as the protagonist but he is contrary to Tayo. Tayo is fictional character but the main actor, who acts upon his healing process. Therefore, this study throws light on commonalities and differences between these two cultural activities; former is acted out in the fictional world, whereas latter is still being acted out in the real world.

Betonie, who is Navajo medicine man, asks Tayo to narrate the war stories He lives in the foothills of the ceremonial Grounds at the border. He has the knowledge of both within and across the border. Betonie starts healing Tayo in a different way

from Ku'oosh. He takes Tayo to the lava rock foothills and pine of the Cuska Mountains to see them with the hope that that will remind him his past. Tayo sees the painted image of mountains by old Betonie. Then the speaker chants the curative ceremony and spells with prayer sticks. But he also cannot complete the healing because his illness has been a long. "One night or nine nights won't do it anymore," the medicine man said, "the ceremony isn't finished yet" (152). To cure the ills of Tayo, it takes a long. Having repeated for many times will certainly cure the ills of Tayo is a belief. Later, he is cured. But the way, like the medicine man, Betonie, the *Ghãtu* gurus chant the spells, is different. This difference is, maybe, all because of geography, as the geographical boundaries matter the culture. The *Ghãtu* performers, especially the dancers, are supposed to get cured by involving the performance of this cultural activity repeatedly, likely in *Ceremony*. The whole villagers are supposed to have the good luck, good agricultural products, no diseases, and so on, when the performance is acted out. The villagers in *Ghãtu* suppose that the dead souls of the royal couples are suffering as they had early deaths. These souls suffer the villagers if they are not memorized. Performing *Ghãtu* timely means memorizing the royal couple. The villagers believe that they suffer from several kinds of diseases and ills and less agricultural products if *Ghãtu* not performed properly. To ward off the evils, they perform *Ghãtu* for faith healing. So, there is a healing process both in *Ceremony* and in *Ghãtu* but the methods are difference. Thus, there is harmony among the disharmonies.

Ceremony, which is about Native American culture, strongly follows healing process. Similarly, *Ghãtu*, which is about Native Nepalese culture, also follows the healing process. Culture and traditions as such are very powerful that Tayo, the protagonist of *Ceremony*, follows the Indian traditions of narrating the stories of war

as curative ceremony. His “homing in” is the most important thing for him that geography matters him to find the spotted cattle and the woman which help him cure his ills. Similarly, the villagers “believe that dancers’ ills are cured if they perform *Ghãtu* in case they fall sick (Thapa Magar 29). The dancers’ even critical ills are supposed to have been cured after they have performed this cultural dance.

There is an evidence that a *Ghãtu* participant, Kumar Gurung, reported to this researcher that one of the *Ghãtu* dancers viz. Sapana Gurung, daughter of Khadga Bahadur Gurung and Siddhi Maya Gurung, studying in class 10 in Hansabahini Higher Secondary School, Tanahu district in 2011, was the heart patient since 2006, and it could not have been cured by the allopathic treatment for a long although her parents did not leave a single stone unturned for her treatment. Some villagers suggested them their daughter to participate in the *Ghãtu* dance. They did accordingly that Sapana participated in the dance. She experiences a magical result that she has been able to continue her school.

Her ill is partially cured and now she regularly goes to school. Sapana claims that it is not so critical although it has not totally been cured yet. Both the allopathic and cultural treatments are undergoing. She hopes that it will be cured. This type of healing is faith-healing, a psychological healing as “a person, a family, or a community feels better after some specific activity” like *Ghãtu* cultural activity (Walter 137). It is still in practice in such third world countries.

Pre-Pubertal Semiotic Images

Apart from this, there are many other pre-pubertal semiotic images which represent the virginity of the Queen Yemphawati, with overtones of mythical dimensions. Kunti, one of the mothers of the Pandavas in Hindu mythology, was considered to be a virgin even after giving birth to Karna just as Virgin Mary

remained virgin even after giving birth to the Christ. In a similar fashion, only a pre-pubertal girl is selected to enact the role of Queen Yemphawati to highlight her post-marital virginity. This proves *Ghãtu*'s capacity to assume a universal signification.

Therefore, this performing art ranges from a limited locale to the global impacts. The representation of a king by crown image in this local cultural activity, *Ghãtu*, is both local and universal. It is as valuable as the Pyramid of Egypt from cultural perspective in local level. *Ghãtu* as a part contributes to the whole, and helps make the local cultures assume the dignity of the high culture. *Ghãtu* dance is purely local, a part, as “[t]he part stands for whole; but the whole has many facets” (Parish 154). *Ghãtu*, which is really extremely classical and peculiar that it is different from other dance performances, is a part and one of the facets. Every part is significant to contribute to the whole as *Ghãtu* has one of the major roles to contribute in the Nepali cultural domain.

Every culture partakes of some features of other cultures. So does *Ghãtu*. This local cultural activity partakes of some universal features. The dancers move top half of their bodies round and round in a sitting pose crossing their legs. This symbolizes the wheel, a gyre or cosmos. This gyrating movement does not only indicate the gyrating movements of *Ghãtu* practitioners, it also indicates the whole world as the earth rotates on its axis. So, most of the enactments of *Ghãtusari* signify the universality. The principle of “act locally, think globally” applies in *Ghãtu* and it enacts a local cultural activity but rings with universal overtones. The unprecedented tragedy of *Ghãtu*, enacted in a small local area, has a wide-ranging horizon of signification in the domain of cultural manifestations. Tragedy of Queen Yemphawati is not only her personal tragedy as the tragedy of Hamlet is not only his personal tragedy. This tragedy of *Ghãtu* represents the tragedy of entire human kind.

The theme of *Ghāṭu* is based on *Sati* practice that reflects the woman domination and chastity as it has been a burning issue in Asian countries. In south India, the bridegroom ties *tali*, a garland like ornament, around the bride's neck so that she is confined under groom's control from that day onward. "In marriage, the *tali* serves as a sign of the husband's protection, but also often restricts the movement of the bride/wife to staying within the confines of "women's space'" (Flueckiger 40). This is an exploitation of the woman. *Ghāṭu* suggests that equality between male and female is a must in such third world countries like Nepal and India because most women are still badly victimized under several such evil customs. It can be termed as the emotional bankruptcy. In the name of religious and cultural belief systems, the women are being exploited. *Ghāṭu* indicates these issues, too. *Ghāṭu* thus projects these local and universal implications.

Universal Implication of *Ghāṭu*

Ghāṭu is characterized by several local and universal implications. The belief system of faith healing in *Ghāṭu* and *Ceremony* is slightly similar. The trance mode in fire dance, which is performed in Sri Lanka (Schechner 93), and *Ghāṭu* dance is very close. The nature of this dance is like that of *Ghāṭu* dance performance. Such dance performances seem a bit abnormal because performing a dance on glowing fire is not easy, as "the dancer reached into the pot, took a fistful of fire dust, hurled it into the air, and ignited it" (93). *Ghāṭu*, which has some such abnormal activities as there is an actual fight (figure 33: 238), is a purely local dance form but it presents the inevitability of death, and the death symbol is strongly projected in this performance. Inevitability of death is universal.

The oral history of *Ghāṭu* tragedy is locale and it is reenacted. Similarly, much of the oral history of the Karbala tragedy is reenacted in Pakistan (Aghaie 17). This

proves that *Ghãtu* has the universal implications. King Pashramu's untimely death is because of his arrogant nature. His well-wishers had advised him not to wage war but he ignored. King Pashramu thinks that his power defeats others. If a man is in power, he thinks that his opponents are weak. This arrogant nature in man is the universal characteristics. Surrender for any king is a suicidal game. The kings are characterized by patriotic feelings. They choose deaths instead of surrender. *Ghãtu* suggests that there is a lesson of never to undermine the foes.

For Pashramu, death "regards birth as rebirth and holds that, although death is inevitable, every person is "born again" through his children: the individual dies but the community lives on" (Randall 149). *Ghãtu*'s protagonist, King Pashramu, is born again through his children. *Ghãtu* practitioners are considered to be his children or his generation. His death in a battlefield is a sign of bravery. Not only Pashramu, all the kings are characterized by the bravery principle. *Ghãtu* is thus a source of bravery, history, social, cultural and life style of the past.

This bravery principle passes from generation to generation as the crown passes from one king to the next. Performing queen's turban in *Ghãtu* is equivalent to the crown and it is the metonymic representation of the king. Especially, the crown is handed over to the heir "to succeed his father to the throne on the latter's death" (Haboush 90). *Ghãtu* has this universality. Such an eventful cultural heritage, *Ghãtu*, is on the verge of extinction. Changes are ongoing processes but disappearance is challenging. Hari Shrestha argues:

Ghãtu dance of Gurung community is a beautiful performing art that contains many facets of Gurung's history, culture and folk lore and folk life as a whole. Culture is a changing phenomenon. It's not just like a photo frame hanging on the wall...never changed. Changes are

inevitable for the continuity of the culture. Community awareness is the decisive factor for the preservation of cultural artefacts since that is the wealth of particular community so far. (Appendix A.8 iv: 309)

Changes are necessary and changes have taken place in *Ghãtu* performance but it is disappearing from several villages in the lack of community awareness; it is totally out of existence in many villages; it is still in practice in a few villages in the mid-western Nepal, but it has never been performed in the eastern villages of those people of similar groups. Is it because of dominant cultural infiltration or the internal colonialism (*Khas-Brahman* Cultural infiltration), the indigenous groups from the eastern Nepal do not perform any *Ghãtu*, but they observe the national festivals as the Brahmans and Chetris do? Harka Gurung points out that it is because of minority and lack of knowledge, Gurung and Magar do not perform *Ghãtu* in eastern Nepal (Appendix A.11: 311). Why do the indigenous groups from eastern Nepal not perform *Ghãtu*? Jay Bahadur Gurung also agrees with Harka Gurung (Appendix A.10: 310). This suggests that minority people are bound to follow the dominant culture for their survival. The trend of following the dominant culture by the minority people is universal. *Ghãtu* thus employs the several such universal features.

CHAPTER VII

GHĀTU AS A FOLK CULTURAL PERFORMANCE AND ITS
AESTHETIC CONTOURS

Ghātu is a performing art and six ethnic groups and one caste group have been observing this cultural activity in central and mid-western parts of Nepal. The Gurungs claim that they have been observing the *Ghātu* for about over five hundred years. The Magars and the Duras also have similar history of this tribal festival among them. The Tamangs, the Darais and the Aryal *Kshetris* do not know the exact date since when they began it but they claim that they have been observing it for over two hundred years. The history of *Ghātu* in Tharu, Kumal and Baram is about one hundred years or so. Lamjung is supposed to be the origin of *Ghātu* according to the Gurungs, whereas the Magars claim that Nawalparasi is its origin.

There were several writers and scholars who worked on *Ghātu* in a descriptive way. The current study has analysed the *Ghātu* site from the perspectives of performance, semiotics and folk drama as well as anthropological aspect. The future researchers will work on the areas of study that are pointed out later. This information is from the library but the researcher has collected data from four *Ghātu* villages. The fieldworks—carried out in Lamjung, Nuwakot, Tanahu and Dhading—are the main literature of the study. The primary data like researcher's observation, live interviews, visual clips, photos are included in the discussion. The researcher has observed the live performances and gathered the information from these villages. Moreover, he has analysed the data with the theoretical tools of performance, semiotics, (symbolic interpretation) and folk drama perspectives.

The study has interpreted the images and symbols in *Ghātu* performance through the theoretical tool of semiotic theory. The underlying meanings of the *Ghātu*

text of different aspects have been unfolded through symbolic interpretation. With the symbolic interpretation, *Ghãtu* has been analysed from performance perspectives. *Ghãtu* is a cultural performance and it contains several characteristics of performance. Moreover, *Ghãtu* has been analysed from folk drama perspective as well. There are several folk dramas in the field of Nepali cultural society. Nepal is rich in such aboriginal cultural practices as they are the recognition and the cultural assets of undeveloped societies. *Ghãtu* is not in practice in the city area. It is observed only in the villages by the group of less-educated people. There is an inclusion of one *Khasa-Kshetri* community from Nuwakot, which observes *Ghãtu*, but all others to observe are indigenous groups. Not only Gurung, Magar, Dura, Darai, Tamang and Aryal Kshetri observe this tribal festival, Padam Shrish Magar (Appendix B.3: 317) adds that Kumal, Baram, Tharu people also observe it. Who observe this festival is not a major concern, what the images and symbols suggest is the main concern of the study. The study has symbolically interpreted the selected images of this *Ghãtu* folk drama. *Ghãtu* is one of the major genres of folk drama or folk lore. The study can be prominent in Nepal's cultural and literary revival.

Symbolically, *Ghãtu* is a small part of a whole of folklore. *Ghãtu* has the relation with the folk drama from folk lore to folk literature, and folk literature to the literature in totality. Importance of symbols in the field of literature is much. Especially, poets use the symbols for satirical presentation. From the symbolic interpretation of the images, *Ghãtu* has been proved as one of the goldmines for researchers because there are many other areas of narratology, music, myths and so in this cultural activity. The current study has symbolically interpreted the paraphernalia and the tools and equipment of this tribal festival, and related to performance studies. Research shows that *Ghãtu* is under the performance studies but some characteristics

do not resemble to it although there are several common elements of performance in it. And it is characterized with performativity.

Among several cultural practices, *Ghãtu* culture is simply a folk dance performance, a human world is reflected in it if the images are interpreted well:

“Image” is a very forgiving word, even a promiscuous one. In a basic sense, an image means a picture, whether the referent is present as an object, or in the mind. At the same time, a picture, in the sense of a sign that resembles—“a picture is *of* something”—cannot really be in the mind, as a moment’s reflection will show. (Landau 2)

Since *Ghãtu* has not been studied from performance, semiotics and folk drama perspectives, this study can be a new insight for English literature scholars as well as those who are working in the socio-anthropological cultural fields. While literature portrays the aesthetic aspects of the human behaviours, anthropological standpoint deals with the core concepts of humanity, in order “to see the interplay of objective reality with subjective knowledge and experience giving Culture the central role” (Appendix A.7: 304). From this perspective, the current research can contribute to both of these fields. Since there has not been much research in this field of *Ghãtu* from symbolic and socio-anthropological aspects, this study has concentrated on these aspects and interpreted the meanings by analysing the images and symbols of *Ghãtu*.

To acknowledge how *Ghãtu* is related to other local folk dramas, the study has compared and contrasted *Ghãtu* with some Nepali folk dramas. It has analysed the text with the tools of semiotic theory and performance theory, and has discovered some similarities and dissimilarities. While compared *Ghãtu* with *Gaijatra*, for instance, both of these performances are found as the dance dominated but the

difference is that there is narrative songs in *Ghãtu*, whereas narrative song is no more in *Gaijatra*.

And *Ghãtu* is a theatrical performance and cultural specificity associated between and among Gurung, Magar, Dura, Darai, *Khasa-Kshetri* and Tamang. To interpret and analyse the symbolic meanings, semiotic theories have been used as the theoretical tool. A study of this nature helps not only to preserve *Ghãtu* cultures but also to build an intact cultural fabric by prevailing it up to the reach of all the interested ethnic people, the young scholars and the university students.

Every cultural activity is followed according to the need of certain ethnic groups, caste groups or communities and the social parameters. The Gurungs, who are supposed to live in the hills and observe *Ghãtu* and other cultural practices, have already made an epoch on it and a lot of changes have taken place at present. More than half of their population has migrated to the city area and they have stopped performing such cultural activities in the villages.

Nepal is full of multi-ethnic groups and caste groups that they are living in different places with distinct cultural identities. The ethnic groups, who have been practising peculiar rites and rituals, do not resemble to each other. All the caste groups and indigenous groups have their own cultural practices and identities. The culture transmits from generation to generation. In terms of transmission, hundred percent transmission is not possible. Knowingly or unknowingly, some methods and ways of cultural activity are left behind as, “[c]ultural transmission is not simply a replication of an old original, a mechanical transfer of the cultural heritage from generation to generation: as if we were passing along the class banner to each new cohort” (Victor 18). Victor argues that cultural transmission does not always remain the same as “the photo frame hanging on the wall” (Appendix.A.8 iv: 309). Certain changes naturally

take place that is under no grip to take hold on of any society but it is not good to dismiss the existence of cultural practices. The theoretical tool shapes the study and it makes the subject analytical which may harness the young mind.

According to performance theory, performance is an illusion of an illusion (Schechner XIX); performance is a make belief aspect; performance is governed by the spiritual power; performance is for both entertainment and healing of some fatal diseases. Similarly, *Ghãtu* is observed for faith healing in Chandibhanjyang, Chitwan; the Tamangs from Bikuntha village of Makwanpur observes *Ghãtu* for good harvesting; the Darais from Salyantar of Dhading observes *Ghãtu* for protection from evil spirits and the Magars from Syangja observes this tribal festival for culture for culture's sake (Appendix B.8: 320). Entertainment is the major concern of this cultural activity.

Ghãtu has several aspects: historical, mythical, contemporary, musical, lyrical, linguistic along with symbolic and performative perspectives. The current study has concerned symbolic interpretation of images, signs and symbols along with the analysis of the text through semiotic perspective. It also analyses the relations between performers and audiences from performance perspectives. The social, anthropological, psychological, historical, musical, mythical aspects of the text have slightly been discussed as far as they are related to the studied area. Only one aspect might be a very important topic for a new research. There are several performances but the Gurung *Ghãtu* and *Khasa-kshetri Ghãtu* have been included in the argument. Other performances have been used only contextually. All the images and symbols of all the performances have not been interpreted. Although the researcher has collected the information from Chandibhanjyang village of Chitwan, Baikuntha village of

Makawanpur, Kuncha village of Lamjung, he has included some necessary information in the project.

Theoretically, there are major three kinds of images, including literal, perceptual and conceptual. Literal means which appeals to the senses literally, like book is book, perceptual (where words are figuratively used) and conceptual (as the picture or image is conceptualized by the receptor). Symbols are of two kinds—universal (that is universally accepted as the cloud is the symbol of rain) and private (that varies according to race, religion group, gender and so on). For instance, trident is the symbol of Lord Shiva in Hindu, whereas it is just a metallic product in other Islamic and Christian contexts. Sign is a Saussurean concept, and it is divided into signifier (the audio-visual image) and the signified (the concept that arises in mind when we hear or see the signifier). Irene Mittelberg observes, “The signifier is taken to resemble the signified, whether in terms of sound, shape, feel, taste, organization, or some other quality” (124). The study has not discussed this detail that the new research can be extended through this line as well.

Most images and symbols along with the storylines are taken from Nalma *Ghãtu*. The evidence of faith healing has been taken from the Gurung *Ghãtu* of Dulegauda. This *Ghãtu* is also discussed for the post performance. Tamang *Ghãtu* has also not been discussed much. Gurung *Ghãtu* from Chandibhajyang Chitwan has been slightly discussed. Aryal *Ghãtu* and Darai *Ghãtu* have also been slightly discussed in the study.

Gurung *Ghãtu* itself differs from village to village. All the *Ghãtu* performances are different from each other but there are some similarities among them. All the performances end in similar dates although they begin in different days and dates. But the ways and methods, lyrics, episodes, number of dancers, tune of the

songs, use of tools and equipment or appurtenances do not resemble to each other. In many *Ghãtu* villages, name of the king is Pashramu but in Nuwakot, name of the king is Jaisinghé. Likewise, there are four kings and queens with different names in Magar, whereas a name of the king in Chandibhanjyang is Ram and name of the queen is Mayawati. But again the purpose of performance is almost the same. In several villages, for example, in Chandibhanjyang, this performance is observed for healing purpose.

Moreover, *Ghãtu* site has been interpreted symbolically through anthropological perspective which underscores interrelationships between the human beings, and between the similarities and differences of human behaviours and activities based on *Ghãtu* performance. The relation between anthropology and performance is highly considered to be one of the parts of the study. And the *Ghãtu* performance deals with the amalgamation of myth, history and contemporaneity. This makes *Ghãtu* a complex site to be revisited time and again so as to derive from it a complex set of cultural significations. The significance of such a claim justifies itself from the fact of *Ghãtu*'s being transformed with time and place. However, an imperative of a different mythico-cultural significance also emerges from such an assertion. For a while the dancers are to be given the opportunity and trained for giving the continuation to a local culture and the culture's universal connotations should at the same time be given a life to. This process in general is the anthropological aspect.

Such imperatives, moreover, are associated also with the technical aspect of the dance, the complicated nature of which further intensifies the difficulties of *Ghãtu* gurus who may lack expertise for the *Ghãtu* performance. There are only a few of such Gurus to offer such expertise, for example. The technical aspect of the problem

also emerges from the attempt to select the girls to enact the ritual, for there are specific local things, as mentioned above, that hamper the ritual if *Ghãtu* is not duly observed. It means that the factual, mythical, and cultural overtones exist so as to oblige the performers to observe *Ghãtu* with ritualistic decorum.

Ghãtu is significant in ethnic studies, which might contribute to ethnic awareness and national integration of folk cultures and countryside culture, thereby making for the unity and harmony of the country at the same time. And this study can be one of the most appropriate points of departures for the higher education. This research can be significant for overall ethnic studies programmes at Nepali universities as there are many such courses offered in the English departments, as well as many other European and Middle East universities. Universities like Tribhuvan University, Pokhara University, and Kathmanu University have higher educational multicultural interdisciplinary Nepali Studies programs for which this research offers one more possible field of studies from the marginal locations of Nepal. Most of the writings about such cultural activities are descriptive. The present study has analysed the images and symbols of *Ghãtu* performance with the literary tools like symbolism and imagery as well as linguistic semiotic interpretation, and with the anthropological socio-cultural theoretical tools. Performance theory is major analytical tool by means of which it can be easier to locate this cultural performance under performance studies and see how such local performance has the universal implications.

The significance of *Ghãtu* thus is socio-cultural and anthropological. It has some academic importance, too, and this cultural activity has a history of Nepali cultural domain. One can read the history of bravery in this site. How most state heads ruled the nation in the past has been projected in *Ghãtu*. This study makes one read a power in the headgear of dancer; *Ghãtu* songs as the queen's lament, and bow and

arrow the hunting age and so. The cultural images and symbols create obscurity and ambiguity. Analysis and interpretation of images, symbols in *Ghãtu* performance have reduced the obscurity and ambiguity, and clarity has been highlighted.

The significance of *Ghãtu* also comprises of uniqueness in that the former *Ghãtu* dancers get possessed by *Ghãtu* aura anywhere in the world, although it is not applicable to all the former dancers of all the ethnic groups. The unique features of *Ghãtu* can be enumerated as follows: a funeral pyre of live person, cure of fatal diseases and protection from evil spirits, placating of the ferocious gods and goddesses and protection from natural calamities.

The research shows that five indigenous groups and only one *Aryal Kshetry* community, a caste group, have been observing *Ghãtu* for a long time in Nepal. This performance is fading away from many *Ghãtu* villages due to the lack of artists, demotivating trend of youths for various reasons like cultural infiltration although some villages are still continuing it. Performing it has the entertainment purposes and sources of knowledge. The practitioners claim that they are observing this festival to maintain their recognition and identity. Some say that they are conserving the cultural heritage of Nepal. In many villages, *Ghãtu* “culture is now irremediably tarnished by” cultural infiltration and internal colonialism (Ridout 15). Similarly, several cultural practices have disappeared from several villages of Nepal by the name of changes and modernization.

Ghãtu plays a vital role to make for understanding the concerned indigenous groups and one non-indigenous group, *Aryal*. The *Ghãtu* practitioners have somehow managed to conserve the *Ghãtu* till now. The study has also concerned how *Ghãtu* culture is established for giving the continuation to *Ghãtu*, and how it has been a popular culture in some villages. According to Rajendra Aryal (Appendix B.1: 315),

one of the *Ghātu* gurus from Nuwakot, long ago in Majhitar village, the whole villagers suffered from such a plague that they began to die getting lean and thin as well as by vomiting blood. The villagers were badly terrified and they thought that the plague occurred because they had suspended this festival for some years. There is no reason why they stopped observing *Ghātu*. Aryal further reports to the researcher that the villagers began to suffer from an unknown fatal disease. It was a kind of plague that was called *Khabaté* in Nepali. *Khabaté* literally means “being bony,” seemingly very thin, when the person was attacked by the disease. Consequently, people suffered much from this plague and they would lose the weight and become lean and thin and die later. Many people died of this plague. But when the villagers resumed this cultural dance, they felt easier or refreshed, and the plague was slowly controlled. From that year onward, which is unknown specifically, the Majhitar village of Nuwakot has been observing this *Ghātu* performance every year until now.

People perform the cultural activity when they feel that they have some kind of benefits from the performance. Prem Kumar Khatri (Appendix A.7.vi: 308) points out that everyone calculates loss and profits before hand. In some *Ghātu* villages, the performers are benefitted from taking part in the performance. There is an example of Sapana Gurung.¹²

Ghātu is a unique cultural show and full of mysticism, a storehouse of images and symbols, and it is a goldmine for the researcher. S/he can interpret this performance from various aspects of music, myths, history, lyrics, language, linguistics, and so on. The current study does not analyse all of these areas in detail but it interprets images and symbols. This performing art has been analysed as how performers and audiences are linked. According to performance perspectives,

¹² See page 259 of this dissertation

kinesthetic impact matters much to link the performers and audiences. Cultural performance like *Ghãtu* moves the audience because of its performativity. The anthropological perspective deals with the human relation, as it is another major concern of the study.

Ghãtu performance is about the cultural evolution of those who observe this cultural activity. But the new generation is deviated from such cultural activities. For the new generation, *Ghãtu* as such is the old stuff because they think it is old fashioned out dated cultural practice for them. This is a generation gap problem. The old generation should exercise much to make the new generation aware of cultural losses. Similarly, the new generation should also be ready to embrace their cultural past. There should be a kind of good understanding between two generations so that the communication gap would not take place. The generation gap turns to emerge as a problem because of misunderstanding. The old generation should take the initiative to dispel the misunderstanding by way of convincing the new generation regarding the significance of *Ghãtu* as their cultural edifice. The problem, however, lies in the fact that the old and new generations try to underestimate rather than trying to understand each other.

The new generation people are the future of every cultural unit, and so it is the youths, who should be ready to safeguard their cultural activities. The new generation must be aware of cultural losses “to maintain their cultural heritage,” (Geertz 182). The impacts of the imitation of European models of life style have been cancerous to the detriment of many cultures. In the name of replacing the old models, the new-generation people have forgotten many of their important cultures.

This love for foreign models has perhaps been the reason of why some Gurungs and Magars have stopped performing *Ghãtu* folk drama now. Although the

elders in such communities point to the lack of performers and other requirements as the cessation of *Ghãtu* performance, the young generation's craze for newness in the manners of life has been the paramount reason for *Ghãtu*'s disappearance. Taylor points out native languages are disappearing at an alarming rate. The country people need to know colonial languages in order to survive. There are a few countries which offer education in Native languages. The speakers who are in minority have to endure discrimination if they speak their language (101). As Taylor observes, the minority people need to know and follow colonial languages or cultures in order to survive instead of observing their own cultural activities such as *Ghãtu* and/or similar other cultural practices.

Ghãtu is a cultural heritage of Nepal kingdom as well as an archive full of mystery and awesome. Most of the activities performed by the dancers are not believable for the viewers who witness this performance for the first time. Most ethnic groups, who have begun to settle in the urban areas, have fewer ideas about their cultural activities because they have stopped observing their cultural activities like *Ghãtu*. The Gurungs and Magars, for example, of the eastern Nepal are much unaware of their cultural activities. They do not know their language, culture and dresses for ages. Morley observes that we should be aware "in preserving the best of our cultural heritage" (339). Cultural-social practices as such are the heritages of a nation, and culturally and socially aware people are the nation's assets. So, conserving and preserving people's cultural activities mean conserving the civilization. There is an integral relation between culture and civilization. Philip Auslander argues that culture is not comprised exclusively of those ideas and achievements deemed to be the high points of civilization. He further clarifies that culture rather includes all products of

human activity, including language, social, political, and religious ideas and institutions, and other conceptual and material expressions (160).

Ghātu performance is entertainment-oriented as performance perspective claims. There is a kinesthetic presentation in any performance according to performance ethics. The kinesthetic presentation makes the performance effective. Foster analyses that body movements and sensation with different gestures in different postures are all part of this kinesthesia. Without kinetic energy almost no performance, either sports or religious or cultural, is possible. The kinetic energy bridges the performers and the spectators by way of sensationalizing both of them. Here, the sixth sense governs the performance in ways that lead the performance to the climatic aura. The movements of dancers' bodies create a sensation in the audience when a cultural activity is performed. All cultural performances sensitize the mass people in different ways. According to performance theory:

The kinetic activity of the audience encouraged a detachment, a critical attitude. Each spectator was self-conscious enough to move to where the action was, station herself in an advantageous position to see, and decide what her relationship to the theater was to be. (Schechner, "Drama, script . . ." 85)

The audience gets sensitized when performance begins. It is because of kinesthetic impact, the movements and sensation of body.

The research has interpreted different images, among which a dream image has also been discussed. The discussion opens a "new research on dreaming, an intrapersonal visual activity, [and] indicates that humans use dreams to explore the problems of the previous day and to work out strategies for living" (Newton 31). In *Ghātu*, the ethnic groups seem to use the dreams to explore their problems of the

previous day. They want to see how King Pashramu was like but they cannot. They see him only in the dream. They want to be as brave as the king. The king faces death in the battlefield. He wages war on his opponents in spite of his family members' advice to the contrary. However, it behooves a king to go on a war, which brings about a doom on both, him and his kingdom. The lessons the performers have for working out strategies for their better future lie here as they learn that the past mistakes bred of King Pashramu's arrogance are to be re-corrected for their normal kind of living. This suggests that "every king must be a learned king" (Pollock 86).

Sunkashi Gurung, one of the former dancers (Appendix A.15: 313), contributes to signify that *Ghātu* performance is full of images, and dream image is one. She shares her dream experience with the researcher that she has had a kind of dream in the trance mode in *Kusundā* episode. Why does Sunkashi have this dream? Is it because so many other members of the marginalized groups have had a similar kind of dream? Does it indicate that their dream occurs as a way of exploring their repressed desires? Carl Jung argues, "nobody can say anything against Freud's theory of repression and wish fulfillment as apparent causes of dream symbolism" (27). A number of desires, either luxurious or basic ones, are repressed in the subconscious mind of a person, and such desires do not get fulfilled for several reasons. The unfulfilled desires get exposed through dreams. The dream of Sunkashi also symbolizes the repressed desire.

Dreams represent universal human yearnings. However, dreams of an individual may appear to be not common and universal. Campbell opines:

Dream is the personalized myth, myth the depersonalized dream; both myth and dream are symbolic in the same general way of the dynamics of the psyche. But in the dream the forms are quirked by the peculiar

troubles of the dreamer, whereas in myth the problems and solutions shown are directly valid for all mankind. (19)

Sunkashi's dream also represents personalized myth because it points to a signification that may be relevant to the dream of other dancers insofar as they are part of Sunkashi's group. Sunkashi claims that she sees the deceased gurus and other people of her village in her dream. What she sees is what she has in her subconscious mind. This is exposed in the form of dream as dream is the exposition of repressed desires. This dream symbol—together with images, dresses and ornaments, gestures and postures, activities, songs, time and place, characters, King *Kājuli* and Queen *Kājuli*—typifies the various meanings the performers of *Ghātu* bring forth by way of their cultural enactments.

The signs, images and symbols of this tribal festival have special references. For example, red colour blouse of the dancers symbolizes the queen's beauty; the term, *Ghātu* itself symbolizes the crematorium, and the headgears the crowns. The interpretation of symbols helps one unfold the underlying meanings. Northrope Frye observes, "A word, a phrase, or an image used with some kind of special reference (which is what a symbol is usually taken to mean) are all symbols when they are distinguishable elements in critical analysis" (71).

Ghātu's cultural power is universal in that its aura prevails upon the former dancers anywhere in the world. This fact shows the spiritual power of a cultural enactment like *Ghātu*. In most villages, when the former dancers hear the *Ghātu* songs, *Ghātu* aura sets in to possess them. The dancers start quivering on the spot. Some even feel uneasy whenever they hear *Ghātu* songs. Whether or not the former performers are among the members of their group, the performers get possessed by *Ghātu* aura from January to May, the period when *Ghātu* is performed. However,

such a situation of aura does not apply to every former dancer in all the *Ghãtu* villages. One former dancer, Maya Gurung, from Thalajung, Gorkha, in an interview, states that the gurus release them from *Ghãtu* aura after their performance round is completed. And no former dancers are possessed by the *Ghãtu* aura of her time after they have been released for the last time by the gurus. Perhaps this is an exceptional case because most former dancers are possessed by *Ghãtu* aura in Lamjung, Tanahu, Makawanpur, Dhading, Ramche, Nuwakot. This suggests that *Ghãtu* is beyond human control and this is how its nature is peculiar.

History and common sense says that *Ghãtu* is being practised by the Gurungs for over five centuries or so. It is supposed to have begun from the time of Kulmandan Shah or by fourteenth century. Was *Ghãtu* out of existence before this Shah King? There is no strong supportive evidence to prove this hypothesis. It is possible that *Ghãtu* dance existed prior to Kulmandan's time. It means there is no any historical record since when *Ghãtu* culture came into existence. When did the *Ghãtu* come into existence? According to subject matter of immolation system, this seemed to have been practised since Lichhavi dynasty. Jayaraj Acharya (Appendix B.13: 322) writes, "Sati (also popularly spelled as *suttee* and defined as the ancient custom in the Hindu religion of a wife being burnt with her dead husband) does not seem to have been enforced in ancient Nepal, i.e. during the rule of the Licchavi dynasty (ca. 300-879 A.D.)." Acharya mentions the record of a stone inscription that is placed at the Changu Narayana temple in the north-eastern corner of the Kathmandu valley in the time of Manadeva I. But Orr mentions that this awkward system came into practice when Gangamadeviyar entered the fire in India in tenth century.

History says that *Sati* practice was in practice until the time of Chandra Shamsher, the Rana prime minister in Nepal. It shows that *Sati* practice has come

from India (Orr 112), whereas Gurungs are believed to have come from north. This shows that *Ghãtu* does not belong to the cultures of Gurungs and Magars. The fact that the Gurungs come from north can also be seen when one examines the language of Gurungs. From their language, which is classified as a variant of Chinese and Tibetan, and from the physical characteristics—the short stature, upturned eyes, flat noses, and general mongoloid features—it is also supposed that many thousands of years ago, their ancestors lived in the high mountains of western China. The course of their long migration over forested mountain ridges is remembered in myths and legends. This tribal festival has been influenced by Aryan culture as sati practice was practised in *Khasa-Kshetri* community during Lichhabi dynasty in Nepal.

How do the images of *Ghãtu* performance lead toward symbolisms which ultimately have universal implications? How? Why has not *Ghãtu* been a popular subject in both history and literature even if it has the historical and literary qualities? How did the practitioners start observing *Ghãtu* in contrary to the language and theme? The images of *Ghãtu* symbolize the human world in the sense that crown image stands for power. As crown passes from one person to the next, the power also passes from one king to the next. This trend is in practice in most of the countries where there is monarchism. *Ghãtu* has not been a subject in history and literature because of changing interest in the public and lack of its approach to them. *Ghãtu* should also be a cultural icon because it is still under eraser. The indigenous groups seem to have started practising *Ghãtu* in contrary to the language and the theme because of interest in music. From subaltern to indigenous group and even a ruling class—*Khasa-kshetri*—observe *Ghãtu* which has a wider horizon.

Jagaman Gurung points out that this *Ghãtu* culture is adopted culture and it is a cultural transformation. He claims that it was adopted and transformed from *Khasa-*

Kshetri by 14th century. There has not been the research of how *Ghãtu* contributes to Nepali folk drama and folk literature. Present study is only about symbolic interpretation of this tribal festival and how it is related with performance studies. *Ghãtu* contributes to the Nepali folk lore and folk music by enhancing the musical aspect. The lyrics are very complex. A simple practice is not sufficient to sing the *Ghãtu* songs, as it is classical. Similarly, the dance steps are also classical because simple steps and simple movements do not meet the *Ghãtu*'s requirements. Both the dance masters and dancers must be good at singing and dancing. They need a long practice to perform this cultural activity. This suggests that *Ghãtu* is the prism of not only cultural confluence but also the hub of varied music.

The symbolic interpretation may help unfold the meanings and broaden the horizon of *Ghãtu* performance because some underlying and indirect meanings cannot be addressed by the simple explanation. And major objective of the study is to disseminate the significance of *Ghãtu* information to the mass especially, to make the youths and young researchers aware about the importance of such cultural performances. If the new generation realizes its importance there will not be difficulty in conserving, enhancing and promoting such ritual practices.

The interpretive writing may attract the modern readers as this type work of art, which can be a landmark work, is more interesting than descriptive writings. The underlying meanings have been analysed and identified through symbolic interpretation. For example, *Ghãtu* song is just a song in a descriptive writing but it is queen's lament and musicology in symbolic interpretation. The dancers' body language, postures and gestures, and their physical relationship to the world are formed by the culture they grow up in (Deagon). Understanding of gesture like the thumb up is for "good" in European culture but it gives some vulgar meaning in some

part of Nepal because it indicates a male organ. A man shows the “thumb up” sign to his opponent if he gets enraged.

Moreover, there is some confusion about *Ghãtu*. Who composed *Ghãtu* for and what is its significance? Why was it composed? Since when did it start? And who is the pioneer? Padam Shrish Magar writes that it is Bhadu Gurung who composed *Ghãtu* (7). But there is not any strong evidence to support this claim. When, how and why? There is confusion of the pioneer of this tribal festival because Rama Bahadur Gurung argues that “*Ghãtu* is not composed by Gurung as the scholars are not ready to agree that it is a Gurung culture because the language is from diverse linguistic groups like Sanskrit, Hindi and Maithili” (26). Its significance is cultural, mythical, historical and contemporaneous. It proves that *Ghãtu* has been composed for entertainment and healing purposes because entertainment itself is a kind of healing. The villagers claim that several diseases have been cured by participating in *Ghãtu*.

The practitioners begin *Ghãtu* in different dates with different rhythms, lyrics, number of dancers, appurtenances as cloaks and ornaments, dresses, make ups, tools and equipment, objects or different ways and methods of observing *Ghãtu*. When the *Ghãtu* participants are inquired about these confusions, they say they are doing how their forefathers began it to do. There is no change as the practitioners claim.

The study has concerned that the cultures and its ideologies are reflected in it, and folk forms of the rituals are the codes or grammars of ideologies. The performances are both the matters of entertainment and healing in the sense that there were not as many sources of entertainment in the past as there are now. In a sense, this tribal festival is entertainment oriented although “[n]o performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment” (“From Ritual . . .” Schechner 130) that some cultural performances are for performance as art for art’s sake. To entertain music is one of

the old cultures or traditions of those practitioners. To be brave and wage war upon enemies are considered to be the Kshetriya ideologies as well as the qualities and characteristics of the indigenous groups.

Cultural performances like *Ghãtu* are for entertainment. *Ghãtu* is after all a dance performance and it is a kind of celebration even if it is also considered as a song, and “the chief entertainments of the celebrations are dances” (Schechner 112). *Ghãtu* is a means of entertainment. It was, and is still, being practised for healing of some diseases. The *Ghãtu* performers (Sapana Gurung, page 259 of this dissertation) claim her heart disease, which could not have been cured by the allopathic treatment, has been mostly cured by performing this tribal festival.

On the other hand, the culture and *Ghãtu*'s ideologies are reflected in the practitioners who have been brought up in this cultural setting. They seem to have been influenced by the characters of King Pashramu and his consort that males want to be as brave as the king and females want to be as devoted as the queen is. In this way, folk forms of the rituals are the codes or grammars of ideologies that “ideology is the one in which the relationship between symbolic structures and collective behavior is at once the most conspicuous and the least clear” (Geertz 251).

In a sense, *Ghãtu* is the source of inspiration, information and enlightenment. And it is also a source of the way of life, as customs and rites are guided by it. Moreover *Ghãtu* also provides the insight into the inner complexity of the indigenous groups in the Nepali folk cultural and literary genres. *Ghãtu* is collective form of a legend, a folk drama, folklore, prehistoric account, sermons, shaman, moral and cultural trait in which “cultural traits are essential to human existence” (Geertz 38).

In addition, *Ghãtu* performance has various truths of human behaviours and activities but it has been ignored for several reasons as the innocence and negligence

of responsible groups and concerned sectors. It has been treated as outdated cultural phenomenon by the new generation. This performance can be seen as the breathing art because several human realities are depicted in it. The compelling power of *Ghātu* dance is the vital connection with a network of mythic and symbolic images that go beyond time and place and into the eternal. The rhythm of *Ghātu* song hypnotizes the dancer to go in trance mode. What is vast and cosmic is made comprehensible by the dancer who imbues it with specific meanings. From the *Ghātu* performance what one can learn is body language, the communicative sub-texture of our world. In one sense, by absorbing nuances of stance and gesture s/he learns what gestures and attitudes are praised as, “Some performances are so culturally specific that activists argue that they have evidentiary power. Indigenous communities, for example, support their claims to lands by demonstrating that the practices they engage in are historically continuous with those enacted by their ancestors” (Taylor 92).

Ghātu, which is preserved by minimal educated and relatively unsophisticated people and group, is only observed in limited places with limited indigenous people and ethnic people who are underprivileged. They follow such shaman tradition and supernatural practices in the hope of socio-economic upliftments. Usually, the sophisticated and facilitated people do not participate in such cultural practices. There is not a direct impact of this cultural practice to the villagers but they have the belief of positive impact of this performance. For whatever the reason or purposes *Ghātu* is performed, the villagers do it annually.

But in the lack of preservation and cultural awareness in those practitioners, *Ghātu* has been marginalized in the lack of conscious safeguards that “culture supposedly passes through the groups and communities, conferring on them a sense of identity and continuity” (95). In general survey, it is not only because of unawareness

of the indigenous groups, *Ghãtu* has been a marginalized cultural activity, but it is also because of transformation and assimilation of cultures of ruling class. Most indigenous groups seem to follow the dominant culture rather than their own cultures in the lack of awareness and compulsion as they do not know much about their originality of language and culture. For instance, the new generation is not even aware of language, culture and religion. As a result, the real identity of most of the indigenous people and ethnic groups of Nepal has been in question. Some cultural activities are on the verge of extinction. Indifferent nature of youths is the most responsible factor in the marginalization of *Ghãtu*. It is necessary to “become aware of their needs and priorities related to their intangible cultural heritage and to formulate and implement safeguarding actions” (96).

This cultural performance has been ignored even if a lot of messages are there in this text. Most of the indigenous cultures of Nepal have been marginalized because of cultural infiltration and internal colonialism. The ethnic identity has been questioned by such infiltration and colonialism, which motivate the ethnic groups practice the dominant culture. To practice the indigenous cultural activities by them is supposed to be a hatred thing and an out-dated fashion. The indigenous groups as well as any ethnic community—who are culturally sound—are the asset of the nation.

It is necessary “to appeal for the safeguarding and necessity of international cooperation in conserving and preserving both cultural heritage sites” (ACCU 57). *Rodhi* and *Sorathi* cultures have already been the history and *Ghãtu* is on the verge of the same path of disappearance. As there are various systems in this cultural activity, the system of beginning phase is one and different other systems are followed in the mid-sessions as well as the finale of this dance performance. The techniques and ways of dancing are different according to phrases of the songs and episodes, which they do

not match to each other. So *Ghãtu* is a system of systems, in which the whole human kinds are subsumed.

All the writers, who are mostly Nepali and a few of them are foreigner, have contributed the researcher by disseminating the necessary information to interpret and analyse the text. It is sure that the research would not have been in the present form if those writers had not worked on this site. Most of them have pragmatic writing and they are from anthropological perspectives. The underlying meanings, as evidenced in this research, will enlighten the young researchers.

This study will make for the sustainability of such cultural activity for the new generation. For the question of history and origin of a person and a community is deeply characterized with this cultural trait. The elderly people analyse the *Ghãtu* as the source of learning and they find the natural part of everyday life in it, whereas for the youths, *Ghãtu* as such is almost meaningless and irrelevant because they do not like to understand anything significant about it. They think that it is just a time-wasting, boring, old fashioned activity.

This cultural activity has some unique presentations. Lay readers may not be able understand the *Ghãtu* vocabulary as it is rich with underlying meanings. The dance masters also do not understand the meanings of all the words of songs but they know only how to sing songs. Most words are from diverse linguistic groups. The dance master, Chandra Bahadur Gurung, declares that there are twenty seven languages used in *Ghãtu* performance. There are fusions of most important history of Nepali culture within these confusions. *Ghãtu* is thus characterized by such fusions and confusions. Another unique presentation is the image of funeral. The performing queens, who are in trance mode, are transported to the symbolic crematorium,

Deurali, the last stage of the performance, at the end. It gives the image of funeral procession of live persons. It further adds to the cultural uniqueness and mystery.

Ghãtu is a cultural heritage of Nepal as well as an archive full of mystery and awesome. Most of the activities of the dancers are not believable for the viewers who witness this performance for the first time. One mystery is that the guru and dancers feel too uneasy in performance time irrespective of wherever they live in the world.

Even if all the practitioners begin this cultural activity in different dates with different ways and methods, lyrics, theme, the purpose is almost the same. There is similarity in dissimilarities. This is a unique character and presentation of *Ghãtu*.

The audience doesn't believe the activities of the performers but there is no alternative to disbelieve it. The enactments of *sati* episode and *Kusundã* episode, for example, are much surprising. Funeral procession and funeral pyre of a person who is alive is also unique. The former dancers are possessed by the *Ghãtu* aura anytime and anywhere if they happen to hear the verse of *Ghãtu* song. Therefore, particularly the verses of *Kusundã* episode are strictly prohibited to sing in public places.

Sunkashi Gurung from Nalma has a bitter experience. She says she was mentally as well as physically bothered in the time of this performance in Nepal. But she was in India for some time. She shares her experience that she felt a kind of itching in her body that was too uneasy as if something crawled on the body under her skin. Later, she would have a severe headache and hang. But if she requested the *Ghãtu* god not to bother her that way, by burning the incense, she would feel refreshed. She also adds that she did not eat anything for one week. During the performance period, she did not even go to toilet during this time period. Her dance partner, who was there to play the role of king, also did the same as she did during the performance.

Ghātu suggests that woman exploitation is still going on in different forms of *sati* not only in conservative uneducated families, but also in some ultra-modern educated families that it is under eraser. The domestic violence of women is like the undercurrent of a sea. *Sati* practice is an example of overexploitation perpetrated upon women. The relatives of women would instigate the widows to immolate after their husbands' death by manipulating and alluring them with unnecessary temptations.

Ghātu dance has been disseminating the message of a kind of unity in Nepali society with a special character in diverse culture. The importance of this *Ghātu* culture seems special as the *Khasa kshetri* from Nuwakot, one of the most prominent and dominant communities of Nepal, who has the cultural influence, also observes it as their special cultural festival. This proves that *Ghātu* ranges widely from marginalized and underprivileged groups, indigenous groups to ruling class, *Khasa Kshetri* in Nepali society.

One fact to justify this assertion is that the *Chhaith* festival was popular only among Tarai people a few years back. As time passed, this festival has ranged to other communities as well, and many other non-Tarain people have also started it to observe in Kathmandu for some decades. This shows how other communities are also attracted toward such cultural activities if they are benefitted. *Ghātu* has culturally united the indigenous and non-indigenous groups as the *Chaith* festival has done between Tarain people and non-Tarain people.

To interpret the images of this performing art means to make it speak and listen to it what it speaks. Like *Ghātu*, there are several other such cultural practices, which have been undefined or inexperienced by the mass. To critique such cultural performances means "to let them 'speak for themselves'" (Johnson 171) so that the marginalized groups may know something about their history and origin. The present

study focuses on symbolic interpretation of images and symbols of the site rather than detail study of music, history, mysticism, language, psychoanalysis, mythological aspect, shamanism and animism. The latter aspects of this site have not been included in the discussion. It is possible that the present research will function as methodological guideline and an inspiration to the future researchers. However, the use of myth with *Ghãtu*'s narrative, similarity with other cultures, the borrowing of words and phrases from diverse linguistic groups, and the mixture of tragic and comic make it a complete performance.

Ghãtu is not fully based on facts and experimentations but is based on oral tradition and religious beliefs. Nothing can challenge the socially and culturally set belief system as it is a strong overtone:

[R]eligious beliefs and practices are something more than "grotesque" reflections or expressions of economic, political, and social relationships; rather are they coming to be seen as decisive keys to the understanding of how people think and feel about those relationships, and about the natural and social environments in which they operate.

(Turner 6)

From where and how a person is brought up is very crucial. Not only the natural but also the socio-cultural environments shape him/her. How people think and feel depends on their social and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, only this symbolic interpretation and performativity is not ending, it is just beginning. *Ghãtu* has multi-facets of psychological, historical, political, cultural, social, anthropological phenomena. So, analyse and interpret *Ghãtu*, it has more to say.

APPENDIX A: MAJOR INFORMATION OF *GHĀTU* (PERSONAL INTERVIEWS)

A.1: Interview¹³ with the *Ghātu* Guru, Mr. Rukman Gurung (77 years), the performer of the Sati *Ghātu* in the visual.

(i) What is *Ghātu* and why is it performed, what happens if it is not performed?

- It is the traditional dance of the Gurungs. *Ghātu* has the tragic story of the queen, Ambawati after her lord's slain by the enemies. His name is Pashramu who was not suggested to participate in the war by his parents in the war but because of his haughtiness and arrogant nature he was killed untimely.

(ii) Do you think that *Ghātu* is originated from the Gurungs?

- We have been performing this dance for about over five hundred years. So it is ours.

(iii) Are there any other Gurung personalities who are ready to shoulder this responsibility?

- Yes, but I am 77 years old no one is there though I am trying to hand it over to someone. If I fail to transfer this knowledge to young generation, I will be a sinner.

(iv) How long have you been performing this *Ghātu* dance and what are its types?

- 13 years as a Guru but I have been singing it for 30 years.

(v) Why is the song not in Gurung language?

- I don't have clear idea. My Guru said nothing regarding this.

(vi) Tell me the types of *Ghātu* and where did it originate from?

- *Ghātu* means only one type of *Ghātu* that is *Sati Ghātu* and Barhamasé and Kusunda *Ghātu* are performed from entertainment purposes that tell the additional stories as sub-types of the main type. My seniors said that *Ghātu* came into being in Rainaskot first.

¹³ All the interviews cited here are translated by the researcher from Nepali into English.

(vii) What is the purpose of *Ghãtu* performance?

- *Ghãtu* is performed for the protection and betterment of all the villagers and their surroundings and healing. If not, the dead souls of royal couples may cause harm to the villagers. The villagers believe that *Ghãtu* has a soul and it understands people's demands. *Ghãtu* god also protects the villagers from any kind of natural calamities – over flood, landslide, hailstone fall, plague, good harvest and many more. What not if god is happy?

(viii) What is the meaning of *Ghãtu*?

- I don't know exact meaning of *Ghãtu* but according to Gurung language, *Ghã-* means "wound" and *-tu* or *tubã* means "sew" or "cure." Performing *Ghãtu* dance timely means sewing or curing the wound of Sati's heart. *Ghãtu* is also pronounced as *Ghãdo* according to myth. There are some myths about how the term was coined. *Ghãtu* is not only a dance but also a song that comes from the depth of the *Ghãti* (throat). It is sung with the fricative glottal sound with rhythmic beats. Moreover, *Ghãtu* is also pronounced as *Ghãdo*.

There is another myth that *Ghãtu* is generated from *Ghãdo* (a small log that is hung on the neck of such an animal which destroys others crops again and again to make it difficult to walk) or a kind of harness bell that is tied on the hound dog so as to locate the prey. Most Gurubas from Nalma still pronounce *Ghãdo* instead of *Ghãtu*.

A. 2: Interview with the *Ghãtu* Gurus, Mr. Raju Gurung (38 years) Nalma, Lamjung.

(i) What is the link of Kusunda *Ghãtu* with the Sati *Ghãtu*?

- Oh! Kusunda *Ghãtu* is also a part of Sati *Ghãtu* but some Gurung people observe *Ghãtu* according to their interests and the availabilities of the required things. It is known as the entertainment part. It also plays the vital role that the very king

Pashramu and the queen Ambawati appear here in the guise form of King *Kājuli* and Queen *Kājuli* as the ascetics. It is the story of the very royal couples who spends life in the forest. Or forest life has been mentioned in the Kusunda *Ghātu*.

(ii) Could you please explain the Kusunda *Ghātu*? And what about *Ghātu* language?

- The elderly Gurus (Chandra Bahadur Gurung, 55 Bartaman Gurung, 70 and Junga Bahadur Gurung, 62) say that there are twenty seven languages in *Ghātu*.

Although we don't understand every word, we sing it. Kusunda *Ghātu*, which is treated as Bahramase, is interesting but dangerous. Because this *Ghātu* can possess any former dancers during performance time. All the former dancers run away as soon as the dancing starts because the announcer pre-warns them if anyone is there in the hall. If they don't run away it is sure that they will be possessed by *Ghātu* aura. I have personally experienced this. After then I don't suggest anyone to watch it whenever they like. In 2062 B. S. in Rastriya Shabhagriha while I was singing the song or chanting to send the dancers into a trance, two audiences were possessed by the Kusunda aura. Then I was shocked. I didn't know what to do what not to do. But I went on singing without mistake which helped me to bring them into normal state.

(iii) Do you think that there is the god or divine power?

- I think that there is god or the god power affects men in a great deal.

(iv) What is the impact of this folk dance on its practitioners?

- I cannot surely say the exact influence of this dance but if it is not performed on time, people say, a lot of misfortunes will befall such as plagues, low crop production or not good harvesting and catching of different diseases although I have not experienced myself remarkably.

(v) Can this dance or any primitive culture be preserved for the coming generation?

You are young, and how many other young people have been involved in preserving or shouldering this cultural heritage like you?

There are other young people, who are also interested for the preservation of such primitive culture but everyone cannot easily sing the song because it is very difficult to recite. Because of difficult narrative songs to sing, even the interested people cannot have shouldered yet.

(vi) Please suggest ways to preserve this culture.

- I do not have a lot of experience. I believe that *Ghãtu* is important for the new generation. This cultural activity is the common asset of entire society. The tragic story is not less than the Shakespearean tragedy as *Ghãtu* incorporates the story of human being. All of us who know *Ghãtu* must be aware of it and we should continue it. Moreover, through electronic and print media, *Ghãtu* tradition could be proliferated and preserved.

(vii) Why do you think dancers fight in the performance?

- Yes, the dancers fight because they have their personal guru to whom they want serve the hubble-bubble as a high respect. They have only one hubble-bubble with them but the dancing girls want to serve only to their own guru. As dancers are in fierce competition to serve their gurus, this turns into a fight.

(viii) What verses of song are sung to send the dancers into a trance and what reverse songs are there to revive those comatose dancers?

- To send the dancers into a trance, the following stanza is sung:

<i>Mãchhero Muchheko Dewata</i> ²	<i>Shanishãra Motisãra Tila kãja</i>
<i>Yemphawati</i> ² <i>Maruwako Deshamã</i>	<i>Gurujyulé Jãgailã</i>
<i>Marnu Jasto Bhayoni Babai</i>	<i>Janminu Bhayoni Babai Kauriko</i>
<i>Maruwako Deshaimã</i>	<i>Deshama</i>

<i>Shanishāra Motisāra Tilasāja</i>	With shanisar motisar flowers
<i>Gurujuulé Jāgailā</i>	And white mustard as faith.
Oh! Fishing deity, Oh! Water deity!	Born in the country of Kauri, the
Yemphawati is in the country of Death	Guru brings out of trance
So deadly in the country of Death	[Translation mine]
The Guru brings out of trance	
With shanisar motisar flowers and	
White mustard as fairs.	

When all the dancers collapse one after another, it is called freeing the Kusunda. But it is a sending the dancers into a trance, the Gurus sing these lines of reverse songs to revive them or bring them into normality.

Pachhero Puchheko Dewata

*Yemphawati*² *Maruwako Deshamā*

Oh god! Help Yemphawati to come

Out of the country of Death Oh! Yemphawati, Come!

Out of the country of Death [Translation mine]

(ix) Are there any myths about this performance?

- Yes, I have heard some myths and legends about this cultural activity. When the king is badly injured and he dies in the battle, a parrot, as a messenger, flies to the queen to inform her about the king's death. The queen refuses to believe the parrot. Then the king's blood-stained horse runs to the queen, she does not believe the horse too. After that, when the minister approaches her with the blood-stained crown of the king, she takes it in her hand and invokes to the sun to tell her the truth. As she feels a tremble in her body, she comes to realize that her lord is killed.

I have also heard a myth from Bartaman Gurung. There is a myth to claim, or a legend has it so, that the *Ghãdo*, a harness bell, was given to the Gurung's king by the forest god. This suggests that *Ghãtu* performance is based on myths and there is a whole story behind it.

Once all the Gurung's king's hunters set out for hunting. It had been almost an evening but no one could have targeted a single prey all day long. They were wandering in pursuit of the prey. Luckily one hunter saw the deer far off and he shot it with an arrow. All his fellows followed it. He tried to track it but he could not do it. All the hunters ran after it. They knew that the deer was shot at but the injured prey ran so fast that they could not trace it where it disappeared in the dense forest. The hound dog followed the deer but the hunters could not run as fast as the dog and the deer. They did not know where the dog and the deer went. Sometimes injured deer would have been eaten up by the jackals or hyenas. The hunters had to get back home empty handed. For many days, hunters could not bring the prey home. Consequently, the hunters and their families were hungry for a long. Then the Gurung's king thought hard of all and he prayed the god for a solution. "Oh forest god, please help me; we have been starving for a long; we could not trace the prey although we shot at it; please give me the way how to trace the prey; hunting is only the way of our living." As he finished the prayer, the forest god appeared there and gave him the harness bell. He was asked to tie on the neck of the dog, they did this. From that day onwards, the hunters felt very easy to trace the prey with the hound because they followed the sound of the bell. They ran wherever the hound ran and located the prey.

Now the Gurung's king and his fellow hunters did not have the problem to trace the prey after they had possessed the harness bell from the forest god. The

very harness bell is called *Ghãdo* from which the term *Ghãtu* seems to have been coined.

(x) If you know any other myths, please tell me.

- One day, when the hunting was over, all the Gurungs enjoyed delicious food, and as an entertainment, one of the Gurungs jokingly wore the harness bell and started dancing to the bell's music to have a romance. Unexpectedly, he started quivering and collapsed and was sent into a trance. In agony, the other Gurungs sang a song of lament by composing different wordings haphazardly which revived him. The legend has it that they continued the *Ghãtu* performance that day onwards. They do the dance not only based on a dance and a song but also based on the power of the deities of the forest, that is, Barchuli, Devchuli, Himchuli and Gangachuli.

(xi) Do you have any remarkable and unforgettable event regarding this tribal festival?

- I have firsthand experience in which former dancers were suddenly possessed by the *Ghãtu* god after the performance had just started. It was in 2004 in Rastriya Shabhagriha while I was singing the song or chanting to send the dancers into a trance, two audiences were immediately possessed by the *Kusundã* aura. The audience did not care about the announcement. They were made aware of such possibility, they turned their deaf ears to this notice. The announcer had warned the former *Ghãtu* dancers if they were present among the audiences. The announcer had requested them not to stay in the hall for the time being but it was unheard by them. As the performance began, the former dancers at the hall went into a trance. This shocked me. I didn't know what to do what not to do. But I went on singing without mistake of the verse of the songs which helped me to revive them with other dancers who were participating in the performance.

So, *Kusundā Ghāṭu*, which is regarded as Bahramasé, is interesting but very risky to perform as it can possess any former dancers during the performance. All the former dancers run away as soon as the dance starts. If they ignore and they stay during the performance, they become victims. From that day onward, I never crack joke on this ritual performance. . . I respect it. [Translation mine]

There is another myth. One day after the hunting was over, all the Gurungs enjoyed delicious food, and as an entertainment, one of the Gurungs jokingly wore the harness bell and started dancing to the bell's music to rejoice. Unexpectedly, he was sent into a trance and he suddenly started quivering and collapsed. In agony, the other Gurungs sang a song of lament by composing different wordings haphazardly which revived him. The legend has it that they continued the *Ghāṭu* performance that day onwards. They do the dance not only based on a dance and a song but also based on the power of the deities of the forest, that is, Barchuli, Devchuli, Himchuli and Gangachuli.

A. 3: Interview with Mr. Chandra Bahadur Gurung (55 years), Lamjung.

(i) How is *Ghāṭu* observed? What are the methodologies?

- *Ghāṭu* is observed at midnight changing all the used clothes of the dancers.

Specially, the dancers of four years or five are selected and they don new outfits and ornaments.

Then they are asked to sit on the banana leaves in the first session and the gurus start singing:

Lipa ho re mali gaiko gobarle lipaila, gāngachuliko panile lipaila

Hamara bala kannyako hatai goda chokhi basaila, dharatiko devata awaila

Hamara bala kannyako āgai chadi, jhulima jhuli awaila

Purba pashim uttar dakshin, charai kuna, charai disha, shime, bhume, awaila

Hamara balakannyako āgaima baisaila

Smear with the dung of spotted cow

And the water of Gangachuli, cleaning the hands and legs of the maids

Come on! From all four directions all kinds of Gods come on!

Get the maids possessed, swaying on and on and possess her

Wherever you are, possess my maid [Translation mine]

(ii) How did Pashramu get married with Yemphawati?

- Pashramu is the king of Shreekrishna Gandaki. Once, Yemphawati from Gadwal, India of the Rajput lineage wandered to Nawalpur (Nepal) where she settled. In the process of hunting, Pashramu met her there and they fell in love that turned into the marriage. But after the birth of Balkrishna, he took part in the war and was killed in the battlefield at the border of Lamjung and Gorkha from where *Ghāṭu* started. Then the queen vowed to immolate with her lord's dead body.

(iii) What about the *Ghāṭu* language?

- I heard that there are 27 languages in *Ghāṭu*.

(iv) What do you think about the history of this *Ghāṭu* performance?

Jagman Gurung says this performance started from Kulmandan Shah's time. Do you agree with him?

- I can't disagree with him because he is a learned person and he knows the history of Gurung in many respects. But I think *Ghāṭu* must have longer history than that.

(v) What about the women's participation in the performance?

- I heard that there were only women to perform *Ghāṭu* in the past. Both the gurus and dancers were female. Now-a-days, we male have also participated in it but there are still women performing *Ghāṭu* in many other villages.

(vi) Who is King Kanjuli?

- Pashramu is in the guise form of King Kanjuli.

(vii) What do the wooden horses and elephants symbolize?

- I don't know what horse symbolizes, but I heard, elephant symbolizes the king.

(viii) Could you please tell me the historical background of this cultural activity?

- As I know that Gurung started observing two kinds of festivals: *Ūdhauli* and *Ūbhauli*. *Ghātu* that is observed as *Ūdhauli* festival, and *Shreekrishna Charitra*, character of Lord Krishna, is marked as *Ūbhauli* one. *Ūdhauli* means the descending move of cattle's herd from snow-belt downward the plain to save them from severe cold, and *Ūbhauli* means ascending move of the same to be safe from sweltering hot in Tarai belt. Or *Ghātu* observed as *Ūdhauli* refers to the descending move of the animal herds from higher region to the lower one for their protection from freezing cold in the highlands including snow belts. *Ūbhauli* points to the movement of the livestock and other animal herds to the highlands of hilly and mountainous areas for their protection from heat wave in the lowlands. Migration to the low lying areas begins from the first week of Shrawan which falls in mid-July. Moving down to the plains from highlands takes place at the end of January. Cutting the matter short, *Ghātu* is observed in the winter while *Shreekrishna Charitra* is marked in the summer. While moving the cattle from one place to the next in pursuit of grass, anything can happen. Especially, the tigers or hyenas would kill them and some cattle would disappear or die of falling from the cliffs because of new places. These festivals are observed for the untoward mishaps.

A. 4: Interview with the *Ghātusari*, Miss Shanti Ghale (14 yrs.), Rainaskot, Lamjung, who plays in the visual of Sati *Ghātu*, as a performing girl/queen. (2009/06/18)

(i) I think you are a student. What class do you study in?

- I read in class VIII in a school of Lamjung village, Rainaskot.

(ii) How long have you been performing *Ghãtu*?

- This is my second time.

(iii) What happens actually when you dance? You weep in the dance.

Why? Do you think yourself the Queen Yemphawati?

- No, but the tears burst sudden of all which I cannot control. The song makes me forget everything so I find myself in the void after I start dancing. I hear only the song but nothing about people's shouting or talking.

(iv) Don't you feel tired after the performance?

- No. I don't feel so.

(v) Do you enjoy dancing? And what makes you quiver?

- I don't know what makes me quiver. Maybe it is the god.

(vi) Do you dance in other songs?

What difference do you find between *Ghãtu* dance the normal dance?

- In normal dance, one can feel everything, whereas in *Ghãtu* dance, only the song can be heard. What other people speak is not heard.

(vii) Have you crossed the age to perform *Ghãtu*?

- No, I have one more year to dance. After that another dancer is selected.

A. 5 Interview with Mr. Jagman Gurung, (one Gurung scholar) Yangjakot, Kaski

(i) What is the main source of *Ghãtu*? How did it originate? *Ghãtu* is a tune.

According to Ramsaran Darnal, one of the great musicians, he says that the *Ghãtu* is also in Bengal. Not only Gurung but also among Newar, Tharu of Champaran in India and Tharu of Bara of Nepal also sing *Ghãtu* song in Basant Panchami that falls by the end of January. Including Gurung and Magar, Darai and Kumal also observe it in Salyantar and Damauli. Except the story of Kalu Shaha's son, Pashramu, they have stories of other kings.

(ii) Are Gurungs connected to Aryan?

- No, Gurung is Gurung and Aryan is Aryan. Actually, *Ghãtu* does not seem to be Gurung culture. It has been practising by Gurungs as a cultural transformation. It seems to have transformed to Gurungs from Khasa-Brahman when they came in contact with them by 15th and 16th centuries. So, it is an adopted culture. Aryan maybe its composer that's why there is the influence of ancient Nepali, Sanskrit, Hindi, Maithili as well as *Awadhi* (local) language of the past.

(iii) Why was it performed in the beginning? Did it have any cultural value then?

- Yes. It was and is performed for entertainment and continuum of the tradition and culture. Besides its cultural values, it was performed when anyone in the village committed crime like rape or incest or any other social evil. It is believed that one would be pardoned of crime if this ritual was performed. This practice is fading away. The accused persons were fined certain amount of money. It was funded in the name of *Ghãtu* institute. They would perform only the Barhamase *Ghãtu* in such situations. The alleged offenders had to foot the bills for the food and drinks for the feast.

(iv) Can this dance be called a narrative ritual? How is it performed? Is it performed daily or has it got certain performance time?

- Yes. It is performed very much systematically with the certain methods and methodologies. It is a lyrical or the folk opera. It means the Sati *Ghãtu* is starts on *Basanta Pachami* (the crescent moon, late March) and ends in *Baisakhé Purnima* or *Jestha Purnima* (by the end of May). The dance is performed in three months' timeframe, not performed every day. Especially in Chaitra (from 15 March- 15 April), the Gurungs do the dance every Tuesday though the *Barhamasé Ghãtu* has no time boundary. At this time, no one is allowed to work in the field because it is

not good for the farm works as is a great chance of catching the diseases and possibility of transmission of seasonal diseases. But, people go for fishing and collecting the fire wood. This is called *gāubarné* (banning of going out and coming in, to any member). No one should leave the village nor can anyone enter the village. The dance is good way of their time pass. Singing is banned after *Jestha purnima* as farming time sets in.

(v) What are the symbolic meanings of the things used in the dance and the dresses and get-ups? What do they signify?

- Dance, costumes and get-ups signify the primitive culture.

(vi) What is the authenticity of the story the dance tells?

- It does not matter whether dance story is authentic or fictitious. Instead, it has got tremendous spiritual value. Thus, it is presentation that really matters. So performance entails factuality.

(vii) Is the story fully supernatural?

- Yes, of course. It is fusion of both supernatural and material components.

(viii) Why is *Ghāṭuni*'s hair uncombed and not tied?

- It has symbolic meaning that *Ghāṭuni* means the performing queen. According to Hindu religion, to leave the hair uncombed and untied denotes that the woman is in mourning, and weaving of the hair suggests a make-up. The make-up is strictly prohibited in mourning.

(ix) Has *Ghātu* extended to ethnic group, too?

- *Ghātu* has made inroad to the Magars that they have many things in common. So there is not so difference in between them though it is not exactly the same. The way Magars perform differs that they call the names of different deities and the kings which Gurungs do not do. Gurungs call upon the names of Barchuli,

Deochuli, Himchuli and Gangachuli as deities and places. Deochuli and Barchuli are known as the Devasthal (place of the gods) of Nawalpuré Tharus. Deochuli and Barchuli are also in the area of Magars. So it is very difficult to say who belongs to what.

(x) What are types of *Ghātu*?

- Types vary from place to place. Mainly, there are three types— Bahramasé, Kusundā and the *Sati*. *Ghātu* is also a narrative song (an unwritten epic) divided into three types. They are *Dhilé*, *Chamké* and *Yalala*. *Dhilé* means slow beat and *Chamké* means fast, whereas *Yalala* is in-between. The *Sati Ghātu* is performed in a slow motion clapping the hands far too appropriate tragic theme.

(xi) Could you please explain the nature of *Ghātu*?

- From the day of *Shreepanchami* onwards, the Gurungs begin the performance intermittently on Tuesdays and Saturdays until the Full-Moon day of Baishakh. The former dancers train the new ones on the know-how of the performance. During the whole month of Chaitra (from about March 15 to April 15), no one from other villages is allowed to enter the village neither anyone from the *Ghātu* village is allowed to go out. All such rituals are observed with a belief that the diseases of any other villages may not get transferred to the *Ghātu* village. While the popularity of the festival itself should guarantee its importance for the tribal groups that perform it, the festival has also had its importance psychotherapeutic to make up for their spiritual health [Translation mine] (Gurung, 64-93).

A. 6: An interview with Mr. Indra Bahadur Gurung, Gilung, Lamjung.

(i) Would you please tell me origin and the historical importance of *Ghātu*?

- *Ghātu* culture came into being in Bhalampur in the first place which is called Bhalayokharka now. Despite differing opinions, about *Ghātu*, it is in Rainaskot at

the border of Lamjung and Gorkha where the legendary King Pashramu was slain. It has the history of the Gurungs and all the Nepali. So *Ghãtu* serves as a mirror to reflect the glorious history of Nepalese written with golden letters.

(ii) Why do you think some Gurungs are not ready to accept *Ghãtu* as their own?

- I don't think it is a good symptom. After such a long time, it is unjustifiable to dispute on such issues. If you mean to say that the legendary King Pashramu is Gurung, I do support you, do this.

(iii) Please suggest the ways to preserve such primitive culture?

- *Ghãtu* should be observed regularly. All the Gurungs and the non-Gurungs should know its importance. At first, we Gurung should be aware of its disappearance. Young generation should be made aware about the significance of *Ghãtu*. They have to know that language and culture are their identity. Meanwhile, pitfalls of emulating western culture at the cost of our culture should be taught to the new generation.

(iv) Has this dance spread to any other community?

- It is observed by the Magars and the Duras, with whom Gurungs' resembles much.

(v) How long after this dance performance the picnic programme is organized?

- We do not have a hard and fast rule. It depends on the favourable. Sometime, it may be organized immediately or a week or even a month.

A. 7: An interview with Prof. Prem Kumar Khatri (Ph. D). Kathmandu.

(i) Please tell me about culture in brief.

- Culture as such begins in any society from behavior and attitude of the people. People feel a necessity of observing the cultural ritual when they are in trouble. Water, for instance, is needed for all the people. When there is no rainfall in the village in the time of farming, as it is a common problem, the villagers start

performing some cultural activities like that of worshipping the Indra in Nepal as the god of rain. If rain falls because of performing such ritual, people from other religious groups also start observing the same. Water is a basic requirement for everyone whether they are Christian or Islam or Hindu.

People perform the same activity next year if rainfall does not take place in time again. After a long time, although rainfall takes place in time, people continue observing such activity because they think that timely rainfall is by observing this cultural performance. In this way, a culture is established when the people perform same ritual activities annually or half yearly or in a particular time of the year. This is how culture exists in the villages rather than in the towns. The villagers start following such ritual performance if they are benefitted.

(ii) What is anthropological standpoint?

- Theoretically and methodologically, Anthropology, over the run of the centuries developed ways to look at the phenomenon world in terms of man, nature and the interaction between these two realities. Culture comes as the product of human activities carried out, maintained and handed to the next generation from one transit point to the next in a collective set up. So an anthropological standpoint is to see the interplay of objective reality with subjective knowledge and experience giving Culture the central role. The more energy man puts into his labor, the refined culture would be the outcome.

(iii) What is the importance of cultural artifacts in your view?

- Cultural artifacts represent the byproduct of man's skill to produce tangible and intangible objects and concepts related to these two main aspects of culture. These artifacts carry meaning and identify of a tribe, society, group and such other human organizations. Some tangible items are often considered as 'totem' of

people and they remain object of veneration, worldwide. Some artifacts are given special values and paid special attention to preserve them as cultural identity of a given people. In any case, cultural artifacts explain the nature of a culture, how culture can guide life, sustain life and how they often become effective tools of intercultural communication and cultural harmony across greater networks in a diversified cultural setting like ours. Also, some artifacts are given special religious meaning and values and generate respect and fear.

(iv) How can we preserve the disappearing cultural artifacts?

- It depends on which particular ethnic, religious and social groups you are talking about. For example, there are valid reason for the discontinuation of a culture, a tradition and its products – first, it becomes impossible to hold them with the same kind of status they earlier held due to financial difficulties in the group. Second, new generation gradually lose interest in keeping them as they were due to lack of interest in old things, due to their movement in search of non-traditional life style, away from home and traditional cultural boundaries, and due to resources. Third, artifacts may also be disappearing as they lose common interest and respect as non-effective medium. It is important to note that some customs and traditions will disappear if local people do not come forward with a well-drawn plan. It is important to first of all stop the degeneration process in all the important and useful aspects of culture. Once awareness is created, groups sit down with the help of an expert to draw the salvage plan and discuss among the elders and wise of the community it is not at all impossible to promote the making and using the artifacts in a given culture. If there are rooms for change, such as elimination of evil practices, then followers of a culture must go for that in a way of cleaning a tradition, including artifacts.

(v) Many *Ghãtu* villages have stopped performing *Ghãtu* citing lack of performers like dance masters, the dancers and fund. But I don't think it is only the reason. What do you think of such disappearances of several indigenous cultures? Is it because of European dominant culture and internal colonization (influence of Khasa-Brahman cultural infiltration and question of survival)?

- These days in Nepal we point our finger at someone but we don't much appreciate for our own failures. Culture is a changing phenomenon. Like language, dress, ornaments, rites and rituals. *Ghãtu* dance also saw its downfall. It is primarily because there is less interest among new generation. Why only *Ghãtu*? Our children are now not heeding to us. Their language is different from ours. They speak in a kind of sign language, their dresses are totally different than ours. And cultural heritage just doesn't mean anything special to them.

Sure Khasa influence and westernization of our values could also be reasons for the extinction of our cultural traits. Yet remember, young people leave home, migrate and have education. Those who are left behind do not get any special motivation to continue the old customs and cultures. Is this the responsibility of the villagers left in the villages to carry on the old culture? There are questions asked. All jatis have this lack of carriers of culture or many communities have problem of successors to carry on the old practices. *Ghãtu* has this problem.

Gurung and Magar culture could exist without traditional dances for sure. But there will be a lacuna in the total, compact package that survived over centuries and also delivered well. It gave Gurung one identity. That identity will be lost and losing it will be painful. Once it goes out of sight, it will then go out of mind and that seems to be problem, so government agencies, NGOs, individuals, Gurung and others must work hand in hand to save the local cultural tradition. Cultural

practices will have a wonderful market value once tourism flourishes all over the Kaligandaki region. *Ghãtu* dance is not only performed for entertainment. It also helps to unite the people of Kali Gandaki region.

Ghãtu dance is not only widely constructed, performed and enjoyed, it also brought several aspects of the people of Kali Gandaki region together in the spirit of knowledge and importance of history, need of harmony, role of local rulers, status of women as the force of culture, among other.

(vi) Are there any benefits of observing such cultural activity?

Of course, they have. This world has been selfish. Everyone calculates the loss and profits before venturing for something.

- Attitude and behavior determine someone's character. And a culture plays a vital role to shape his overall characters and his personality. People feel the necessity of observing any cultural activity when they are in trouble. [Translation mine]

A. 8 An email interview with Dr. Hari Shrestha. Kathmandu

(i) What is anthropological stand point?

- The standpoint of anthropology is to study man that includes the study of man feeling, thinking and action patterns.

(ii) What is the importance of cultural performance?

- The cultural performance contains many positive and productive elements that are really invaluable for entire humanity.

(iii) Suggest the ways to preserve the disappearing rituals?

- There are many challenging factors that are quickly bringing permanent changes in the present day world. The urgent need is to formulate common strategy and come up with integrated program for the preservation of cultural activities that are at risk of disappearance.

(iv) I think you know what *Ghãtu* dance is. Many *Ghãtu* villages have stopped performing this for various reasons. What the *Ghãtu* performers say is because of lack of performers like dance masters—*Ghãtu* gurus, the dancers, fund etc. But I don't think it is only the reason. What do you think of such disappearances of various indigenous cultures? Is it because of European dominant culture and internal colonization (influence of Khasa-Brahman cultural infiltration and question of survival)?

- *Ghãtu* dance of Gurung community is a beautiful performing art that contains many facets of Gurung's history, culture and folk lore and folk life as a whole. Such performing arts are at the risk of disappearance because of many factors. Culture is a changing phenomenon. It's not just like a photo frame hanging on the wall...never changed. Changes are inevitable for the continuity of the culture. Community awareness is the decisive factor for the preservation of cultural activities since that is the wealth of particular community so far. But there must be serious concern to preserve all cultures on the part of the government. Apathy and discrimination of the state to certain indigenous cultures are some factors behind its disappearance. Equally noticeable thing is that there is dearth of young generation to take part in the continuity of such performing art. Performing art could not survive without the performers. The need of the time is to identify and categorize some significant arts and be listed as 'national treasure' and a special policy be formulated with yearly budgetary support for the preservation of such cultural activities....

A. 9: An interview with Dr. Krishna Neupane, a university teacher in Saraswati Campus and his Ph. D. Dissertation is *An Analysis of Folk Songs and Folk Lore of Syangja District* from TU, Nepal, 2004.

(i) Dr. Neupne, as far as your research is concerned, what is *Ghãtu* in real?

- Well, in my reading of *Ghãtu*, it is a folk dance which is practised among the Magars in our locality.

(ii) What have you actually done in your research of this folk dance?

- I have only mentioned it in the context of analyzing the folk lore but it is not as detail as you want.

(iii) All right, and haven't you observed of the Gurungs?

- No, but I know that it is also done by them.

(iv) Have you mentioned its taxonomy, too, I mean the types?

- I have not gone in depth which I have earlier told you but what I have analyzed is the Sati *Ghãtu*.

(v) How do the Magars observe *Ghãtu* as you have experienced?

- So far as my understanding is concerned, there is no bar of castes, age and communities. Even so-called Bishowkarma, Brahmins, Pariyar involve in the dance, sixty years old woman can also perform the dance.

(vi) What about the situation of such primitive culture?

- The situation is critical for various reasons but we should preserve this sort of endangering common cultural assets like folk lore, folk songs, folk opera that help to identify us for a long before the world, we have to conserve them.

A.10: Interview with Jay Bahadur Gurung, a social worker, Belbari Morang.

(i) Do you know anything about *Ghãtu*?

- *Ghãtu* is a type of cultural dance but I have never observed it yet. I have seen it on TV and on different occasions like Lohsar.

(ii) Why do the Gurungs of eastern Nepal not perform this ritual performance? Do have you any idea?

- I have never seen the Gurungs of eastern Nepal performing *Ghãtu*. It may be because of lack of knowledge.

A.11: Interview with Harka Gurung, lecturer in Sukuna Multiple Campus, Morang

Do you have any idea why Gurung and Magar do not perform *Ghãtu* in eastern part of Nepal?

- I don't know the exact reason. Perhaps, it is because they are in minority and they have no knowledge on *Ghãtu*.

A.12 Interview with Ghatu guru's son, Harsu Rana Magar, Syangja. (21 Aug. 2013).

(i) What is the purpose of observing the *Ghãtu*?

- *Ghãtu* is observed to give the continuity to the traditional ritual and heal some diseases.

(ii) How can the audiences distinguish character playing the role of king and queen?

- Those who perform as kings have long straps at the back of head and queens have the handkerchiefs to cover their heads.

(iii) When does *Ghãtu* start and end?

- It commences at Shripanchami that falls by the end of January, and ends on Chandipurnima that falls in May.

(iv) Why is *Ghãtu* performed only at Shripanchami?

- I heard the queen was born at this time.

(v) What is the selection process of dancing girls?

- It is a bit lengthy process that the interested girls or selected ones visit the house of the main guru. They receive *tika* on the occasion of Dashara. *Tika* means the substance prepared out of rice curd that is put on the forehead. There is no any age bar for the dancers to participate in the performance.

A.13: Interview with Rana Bahadur Gurung, Nalma, Lamjung. One of the participants

but not a *Ghātu* guru, Rana Bahadur Gurung from Nalma, Lamjung narrates the story about the term, *syai-syai*. Gurung narrates the following story:

Once, a girl was living with her elder sister and her brother-in-law. As time passed, she fell in love with her sister's husband. The girl wanted to drive her sister away so that she would marry with her brother-in-law. She was looking for a way out to wed her brother-in-law. She planned to go to the river with her sister take dip. Her sister agreed. When two sisters reached the river, the younger sister asked her elder one bathe by the river bank close to the water flow. Her sister agreed this, too. As she was preparing to take a bath, younger sister pushed her sister into the river. Now her mission was completed. With dishonesty, the girl told her brother-in-law what happened.

As per her meticulous plan, she got married with her sister's husband. Surprisingly in a few days, the dead sister appeared there as an apparition that bothered the husband time and again. One night, he waited just behind the door with a thread that was dipped into the turmeric flour and water and was coloured yellow. As he garlanded the apparition with the yellow thread, it turned into a human being that the girl's elder sister revived. The husband pronounced the word, *syai-syai* right at the moment. It means he got his wife back, as got the guts, "Eureka." In the same way, the women garland the dancers as soon as they open the eyes after about twenty hours in the performance. The term *syai-syai* has had this myth. Later, the women garland with the yellow threads to all the attendants and serve them liquor as a ritual. The attendants are supposed to be impure by the evil spirits. People believe that this thread helps to ward off the evil spirits. Since then, wearing of the garland of this sacred thread, known as *rakshyabandan* in Sanskrit, has been a cultural practice. [Translation mine]

A.14 An Interview with Kumar Gurung, one *Ghãtu* participant, Dulegauda village, Tanahu.

(i) Will you please tell me how you manage the picnic programme after *Ghãtu* performance?

- First, a meeting is organized the decisions are made. This year, we have collected money from different sources. Some British ex-armies donated for this programme. Some guests and villagers deposit the money in the fund. About one hundred thousand rupees was spent in the programme. In the village, he goats and buffalo are not so expensive. There are sixteen houses in the village and every house should collect sixteen bottles of local liquor. There were 256 bottles altogether. Other necessary materials were managed from the fund that was raised. Even the guests donate some amount of money in this *khoikhane* programme. This is how we manage the picnic programme.

A.15 Interview with Sunkashi Gurung, a former *Ghãtu* dancer, Nalma of Lamnjung.

(i) What happens to you when you go into a trance mode?

- When the gurus sing the verses of song of *Kusundã Ghãtu*, we start swaying our heads round and round clock-wise. The gurus go on singing and we go on swaying. We don't know after how long we collapse. When we collapse, we see a kind of dream in which we reach to an unknown place where people are very strange. We see some children playing but they don't look at us. We also see some domestic animals there. We see some hermits in small cottages and they offer us to have some fruits but we cannot take that because we fear. The hermits request us not to be scared of them but we do not accept what they offer.

(ii) Do you talk to the hermits? And why do you cry when you come out of a trance?

- We don't talk to them. We just hear them. We do not cry. The gods and goddesses cry. The audience sees the dancers weeping in the performance but it is not the dancers who are weeping, it is gods and goddesses who weep as they see off us. The dancers dream their deceased gurus, gods and goddesses in a trance mode. A kind of friendship is established between dancers and gods and goddesses, and they weep in the time of departure.

(iii) Do you have any special experience regarding this cultural activity?

- My husband was an Indian army. So, I lived with him in India for some years I felt uneasy when it was the time (spring) of *Ghãtu* performance in Nepal. I felt something crawling on my body. My headache was too hard. To free from this hang, I burnt some incense to ward it off. As I requested the evil spirits not to irritate me, then I felt a bit refreshed but I did not feel fully fresh until the *Ghãtu* was performed in my village. When I knew that *Ghãtu* was performed there, I felt better.

APPENDIX B: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OF *GHĀTU*

Interviews of *Ghātu* gurus from Majhitar village, Nuwakot, some writers and other tradition bearers.

B.1: Interview with Rajendra Aryal, Khasa Brahman *Ghātu* guru.

(i) How long have you been performing *Ghātu*?

- We have been performing *Ghātu* for more than hundred years.

(ii) Do you know the history of this tribal festival?

- I heard that a Majhi person, who was called Maila Churaute, the bangle seller, came to Majhitar village and settled here. He is supposed to be the pioneer of *Ghātu* as senior people claim.

(iii) Are there any cultural benefits of performing this festival or you are just observing this festival only because your ancestors began it?

Performing the *Ghātu* has not direct advantages to us. It is a belief. I don't know the exact date but this festival started a long time back. It is said that many people died of plague called *Khabate* in Nepali. Suddenly people vomited blood and suffered from diarrhea and they used to die. From that day onward, the villagers realized of performing *Ghātu* for the control of plague. When they started performing this cultural activity although they had stopped it for some years, they felt easy. Then they have been performing this cultural dance continuously.

(iv) Was the plague controlled from that day onward after you started performing *Ghātu*?

- Yes. From that day onward, this plague is supposed to have been controlled.

(v) Okay, how is *Ghātu* performed? What is the meaning of watching the image in the shadows of ghee, oil and water?

- First, we select the dancing girls of pre-pubertal stage. It is not necessary to be a particular caste for the dancer. Sometimes, we select the girls from Majhi or Chetri. This time, both the girls are from Chetri. For the *Ghãtu* fund, we collect some money and rice from every household in the village. This is the way of raising the fund. We begin it on *Panchami* of Baisakh month that falls by 26 April or on the Buddha Day. Generally, we end the carnival there after the performance of three days. According to the ritual, we offer the pig as a sacrifice in the *Chandithan* on the first day of performance. Seeing the dead person's face in the milk gash means he has gone to heaven. Seeing his/her face in the gash of oil, ghee and water means he has gone to hell.

If the dancer is not going to participate in the performance after one round is over. One round of performance is one year, three years or five years from the time the dancing girls begin to dance. We stand the used plough at the crossroad to make a boundary between human world and spirit if the dancer's round of performance is over. It applies only for the dancers but not for the dance masters.

B.2: Interview with Gopal Aryal, Majhitar, Nuwakot.

(i) How long have you been performing *Ghãtu* as a guru?

- I have been performing *Ghãtu* for about eleven years or so.

(ii) Do you know since when the Majhitar people started to perform this ritual?

- I don't know the exact date since when *Ghãtu* started in Majhitar village. But according to my grandmother, who lived for one hundred three years and died just four years back, said it was there since her childhood. It means this ritual performance has the history about two hundred years although Gopal Aryal says that it is only about more than one hundred years.

(iii) What do you think is the main reasons of performing *Ghãtu*?

- I think, one of the main reasons of performing *Ghãtu* is entertainment and the next is healing process.

B.3: Interview with Mr Padam Shrish Magar, a writer

(i) What is *Ghãtu* in your opinion?

- It is a cultural folk dance performed by several indigenous groups in Nepal.

(ii) Who are those indigenous groups?

- There are Magar and Gurung. Other people like Tharu, Baram, Kumal, Darji and Biswakarma also mark this cultural performance.

(iii) Tell me about the history of this cultural activity?

- I have asked this question with many participants but no one told me when exactly Magar started observing *Ghãtu*. I guess it must have begun by the middle age or fifteenth century. It means history of *Ghãtu* in Magar is like that of Gurung. But I am not sure.

B.4: Interview with Ratna Bahadur Darai, the main *Ghãtu* guru, 80 years.

(i) How long have you been observing *Ghãtu*?

- We have been observing *Ghãtu* more than hundred years.

(ii) Why do the *Ghãtu* performers begin it in different day and date?

- We have been doing it what our ancestors practised.

(iii) There are some wooden deer, dogs and lions. What do they imply?

- Lion means the king, deer means wild animal, and lion is the king of the forest and here in *Ghãtu*, it is the symbol of king.

(iv) *Ghãtu* is disappearing from several villages. What do you think is the reason?

- Some gurus died, and living gurus have forgotten the verses of song. There are a few people these days in the village and they do not know to manage the

necessary tools and objects. This is causing to the extinction of this festival from some villages.

(v) What are the names of king and queen? And whose culture is it do you think?

- I do not know the names of king and queen. But this is not a question to ask. We are observing it for more than two hundred years or so. It is purely Darai culture. But I have no idea why people from other ethnic groups perform this.

B.5: Interview with Laxmi Ghishing, a female *Ghãtu* guru (51 years). Baikuntha village

(i) How long have you been a *Ghãtu* guru?

- I have been a *Ghãtu* guru for seven years.

(ii) What is the purpose of performing the *Ghãtu*?

- We perform *Ghãtu* for the protection of all the villagers. But as I know, our ancestors started this dance when there was no rainfall in the village. The prolonged drought had the villagers worried. Then they began to observe the *Ghãtu* as an alternative in crisis because they thought the Gurungs were benefitted by doing this tribal festival.

(iii) Now are you benefitted?

- It is a ritual. Every ritual does not have direct benefit but there has not been a crisis these days. I say that it is a benefit.

B.6: Interview with Mr Biswa Gurung, a headmaster of Shree Secondary School, Dhungre, Chandibhanjyang of Chitwan.

(i) How long have the villagers of Chandibhanjyang been observing *Ghãtu* and why?

- It has been only over a hundred years or so, the villagers have been observing *Ghãtu* especially for the healing of ailments.

(ii) Has there been anyone benefitted from the performance?

- Yes, many people say that they are benefitted after they have attended the performance.

(iii) What is the purpose of observing this festival?

- The main purpose of observing this festival is to get healed from various kinds of diseases.

B.7: Interview with Mr Amrit Gurung, *Ghãtu* film maker and a great pop singer.

(i) Could you please tell me about your reading of the *Ghãtu* in brief?

- In short, it is no more than a ritual but I don't think the importance of rituals. I am not a narrator; I am just a film maker. It is lyric-base and Lalbai Gurung, one elderly *Ghãtu* Guru (89) says that there are 366 phases in *Ghãtu*.

(ii) What is *Ghãtu* in your understanding?

- *Ghãtu* means Sati, Bahramase and Kusunda as many people say. *Sati Ghãtu* and Kusunda *Ghãtus* are to be conducted with full rhythm and counter- rhythm. They have certain beginning, middle and the ending, whereas Bahramase *Ghãtu* has no beginning, no end; it is done whenever one wishes.

(iii) Is there a trance in Bahramase *Ghãtu* or not?

- Yes. It has a trance. *Ghãtu* suggests regular practice of rituals. Bahramase *Ghãtu* has the story of royal couples, Pashramu and Yemphawati. All the processes are the same. The dancers are sent into a trance and they are revived. Only the difference lies in the time of performance.

(iv) Why do the dancers weep too much either in Sati *Ghãtu* or in Kusunda *Ghãtu*?

- Not only the dancers but also the gurus and the audience. The dancers weep because they have to stop dancing after certain time period.

(v) What are the rituals of *Ghãtu*?

- All the activities are performed in a reverse ways except offering of the cow milk and they enact the daily human activities and all the things that are used in *Ghãtu* are offered at the end; it means after June and July, farming starts.

B.8 Interview with Mr Bishnu Singjali, Ph. D. scholar, T. U., Kirtipur, Nepal.

(i) What do you understand by *Ghãtu*?

- I don't know much about this cultural activity because it is not my field. I just went to Ramche village, Syangja to observe this performance to know the healing aspect. The purpose, I think, is for culture for culture's sake, because the villagers express several views against it.

(ii) Please tell me what you observed there?

- Well, I found that there were two teams of this *Ghãtu* performance. One subaltern group was performing in one corner, whereas another group was performing on the other corner of same open ground in front of a house.

(iii) And what else did witness?

- Before I observed the performance, I had heard there is a king and a queen. During my observation, I saw three kings and three queens. It means there were eleven couples and one dancing girl was without couple. There were twenty three dancers, and they were divided into eleven couples. As twenty two dancers were turned into eleven couples under the provision of king-queen dichotomy and one who did not have a spouse. She played the roles of both king and queen. The gurus should not bother for selecting the king and queen because the dancers themselves declare who is a king, who is a queen. The dancers also confirm how long they are going to perform the dance.

(iv) As I heard that Magars start *Ghãtu* performance especially, after the

worship of *younat*. What is this *younaat*?

- *Younaat* is a festival, worship of nature mostly observed by Magars, and it is supposed to be a sign of starting new farming. According to Hirasingsh Thapa, who is about 77 years old, in Magar language, *yahak* means “give” and *naatke* means “not to work in the field on the day of worshipping of the nature.” I have also heard that *you* means “give” and *naat* means “gift.” *Younaat* is a term formed from the Magar word, *yahake* and *naatke*. But I think, former is the most relevant. And it is a hint of the beginning of new farming.

B.9: An interview with Mithila Sharma, one classical dancer as well as an actress.

(Mithila Sharma’s Interview by Bijay Kumar, Kantipur TV)

Music has such hypnotic power that one cannot predict. I don’t know what I am doing while dancing. I don’t feel the presence of any camera crew, audience when I am on the stage. The dance motivates me in such a way that I am completely obsessed by the power of music, song, and its wordings which make me forget even my presence. I feel myself odd when I see my dance in visual. I ask to myself, “Is this performance possible from me?” However, as I ascend to the stage, I feel that it is my beginning, and when I am in the peak level, I feel, I am lost in void. There is no question of space of time when the dancer reaches to its peak. (Translation mine] (“Dishanirdesh Program” Kantipur TV, 03 June 2007)

B.10: A Barong dance (mentioned in Encarta Encyclopedia in South-East Asian Theatre)

A Barong dance is being performed in Singapadu, Bali. The Barong ritually enacts the battle between good and evil. When the witch, Rangda, forces the men of the village to turn their swords on themselves, the Barong, a mythical beast, prevents the blades from piercing their flesh. Bali has a huge variety of dance forms and

dramas, often involving the use of masks and trance states.

B. 11: A zar dance

A zar dance that is performed in Somalia, as a healing music. It is sung and performed by groups of nomadic women from northern Somalia. A woman afflicted by illness or spirit possession dances and enters into a trance. The dance is primarily used for healing purposes, but it also serves as a community event.

B. 12: Keshar Jung Baral Magar presents a separate myth about *Ghātu*.

Dhangrai Lama had nine sisters who were expert in magic power and so was him. Because of conflict, Dhangrai Lama was killed by his sisters and his corpse was buried in the forest that a hunter had suggested them to do so instead of cremating it. They were asked to put all the tools and equipment of magic of him but they fled away burying the corpse. But their dead brother revived and he fought with them and all of them were disappeared from there (maybe they were killed). Later, those nine sisters were turned into the goddesses. It is believed that the women, who were possessed by aura of these goddesses, commenced the *Ghātu* from that day onward. This is well followed in the Gurung areas of Syangja that they don't begin the *Ghātu* unless the dancers are possessed by the nine goddesses. [Translation mine] (99)

B. 13: Jaya Raj Acharya writes:

Sati (also popularly spelled as suttee and defined as the ancient custom in the Hindu religion of a wife being burnt with her dead husband) does not seem to have been enforced in ancient Nepal, i.e. during the rule of the Licchavi dynasty (ca. 300-879 A.D.). We have about 190 stone inscriptions from this period (Vajracharya 1973).¹ The only Licchavi inscription which has a reference to the *sati* system is the inscription of Manadeva I at the Changu Narayana temple in the

north-eastern corner of the Kathmandu valley. This inscription (inscription no. 2) has probably the first reference (in the ancient Indian subcontinent) to this system, although it does not refer to the commitment of sati but abstention from it. In this inscription dated 464 A.D., Queen Rajyavati, mother of King Manadeva I, is depicted as deeply grieved at the death of her husband King Dharmadeva, and was ready to follow the dead husband, that is commit voluntary sati (immolation). The incident is described in verses 6-11 of the inscription, which are reproduced in translation in the following paragraphs:

The last line of the verse 11 not only concludes the story saying that the queen stayed back, but also indicates the essence of sati *vrata* (the vow of a sati). Sati is essentially a woman who is completely faithful or loyal to her husband, as the verse reads: "Observing the vows of a sati, that is, with her husband in her heart, she lived very much like Arundhati." This is an evidence of the fact that loyalty was the essence of a sati, not self-immolation in Nepal under the Licchavi. It is unlikely that King Manadeva, who ruled ca. 464-505 A.D., would have enforced the sati system since he himself stopped his mother from doing so. (Acharya)

B.14 In a Balan of Brahmins to perform the Hanuman dance as Lalbihari Mishra presents the following verse to invoke the Hanuman aura:

Ādou Rāma tapodipodipa bānara, hatwa mrigé kanchanam
 Vaidéhi haranam jatāyu maranam, sugriva sabhasanam
 Vāli nirmanam samundra taranam, Lankāpuri dāhanam
 Pashchāta Kumbhakarnādi hananam, yétadibha Ramayanam (335)

There is a reverse song: Ādou Dévaki déva Gopi griha varajanam/Maya Putan
 sāranam Kanshakshé dhanagouravadi hananam/Shrikrishna Lila mritam (336)

APPENDIX C: DETAIL OF ARYAL GHĀTU SONGS IN NEPALI

अर्याल घाँटु गीतको पूर्णपाठ

(ख) अर्याल (खसक्षेत्री) घाँटु - (माफिटार, नुवाकोट) २०७० जेष्ठ ११ गते दिनको ३ बजे शुभारम्भ भई १३ गते रातको २ बजे सम्पन्न ।

घाँटु गुरुहरु, मूलगुरु - गोपाल अर्याल ।

गर्राहरु - रत्नबहादुर ओझा, कृष्णबहादुर अर्याल, इन्द्रबहादुर अर्याल, राजेन्द्र अर्याल, शम्भु थापा, चन्द्रबहादुर थापा ।

घाँटुनीहरु (नर्तकी कन्याहरु) ।

राजा - रञ्जु माझी, रानी- प्रतिभा खड्का । सुसारेहरु - इश्वरी खड्का र उजेली माझी ।

घाँटुका भागहरु जसलाई घाँटुकै भाषामा भन्नु पर्दा पर्व भनिन्छ । यसमा ११ वटा पर्वहरु छन् ।

१) निमन्त्रैला पर्व २) पुजैला पर्व ३) सम्झैला पर्व ४) जुहारैला पर्व ५) घैला पर्व ६) रोपाइ पर्व ७) शिकार पर्व ८) भीख माने पर्व ९) विवाह पर्व र १०) सती पर्व ११) देउराली पर्व

सर्वप्रथम विशेष गरी घाँटुगुरु, घाँटु नाच्ने कन्याहरु अर्थात सम्पूर्ण गाँउलेहरुको सुरक्षाको दृष्टिकोणले सबै देवदेवीहरुलाई आवाहन गरी पुकार गरिन्छ । पहिले कन्याहरुलाई चोखो नितो गरी कहिले पनि प्रयोग नभएको एकदम चोखो गुंद्रीमा घाँटु नर्तकीहरुलाई यसरी बसाई गीतैबाट घाँटु देवताको भाँक चढाउने गरिन्छ । भाँक चढिसकेपछि गुरुहरुले उठ्ने अनुमति दिन्छन् । सोही अनुसार सुसारेको सहायताले नर्तकीहरु उठ्छन् र गीतको बोल र तालमा नाच्छन् । उक्त नाच अन्य नाचभन्दा अत्यन्तै पृथक ढङ्गको हुन्छ । अन्यत्रको घाँटु नाचमा नर्तकीहरुले लय र ताल मिलाएर नै नाच्ने पाइएपनि यहाँ चाँही उक्त कुराको ख्याल नगरी लय र ताल नमिलाइकनै नाच्ने गरेको पाइयो । यसबारे घाँटु गुरुहरुलाई सोध्दा अनभिज्ञता व्यक्त गरे तापनि एक जना जानकारले भने कन्याहरु अर्घचेतन अवस्थामै नाच्नु पर्ने भएकाले त्यस्तो भएको हो ।

यी कन्याहरुलाई प्रत्येक पर्वमा घाँटु गीतको धुन र लयमा यसैगरी घाँटुको विधिअनुसार भाँक चढाइन्छ । र आँखा बन्द गरेकै अवस्थामा उठेर नाचन लगाइन्छ । यो निमन्त्रैला पर्व बैसाखे पञ्चमीको दिन मात्र कन्याहरुलाई भाँक चढाउन गरिन्छ । यो पर्वमा कन्याहरुलाई वीरपट्टा नलगाइ नचाइन्छ । वीरपट्टा नलगाइ नाच्नु पनि घाँटुको एउटा विधि हो । तर दोश्रो दिनदेखि भने ती कन्याहरु वीरपट्टा लगाएरै नाच्छन् । पर्वअनुसार गीतको बोल यसप्रकार छ ।

१) निमन्त्रैला पर्व

यो पर्वको गीत यस प्रकार छ ।

चमरी गाइको गाबरले लिपैला¹⁴

आफ्नो आफ्नो थानमा लिपैला

लिपैला यामै रानी लिपैला

गंगाजलको पानीले लिपैला

लिपैला यामै रानी लिपैला (used in p. 196¹⁵)

(गाँवै क्यारे सिमेभुमे)^१ निमन्त्रैला

(थानैपट्टि सिमेभुमे)^१ निमन्त्रैला

(गाँवैक्यारे चण्डि माईलाइ)^१ निमन्त्रैला

हा SSSSS रे (गाँवैक्यारे पञ्चकन्ने)^१ निमन्त्रैला

(घाँटै क्यारे देवीमाईलाइ)^१ निमन्त्रैला

¹⁴ The underlined verses are used in the study

¹⁵ The page numbers are of the dissertation

(गाँवै क्यारे भैरवीलाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (रक्तकाली देवतालाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (देवी र देउरालीलाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 हरे (निमन्त्रैला यमैरानी)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (आकाशैको चन्द्र सूर्य)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 हरे (पत्तालैको वासुकीलाई) निमन्त्रैला
 (रिडी घाटकी देवतालाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (बेनी घाटको देवतालाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (सती घाटको देवतालाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 हरे (हिमालै चुली देवतालाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (वरैचुली देवतालाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (देवैचुली देवतालाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (घाँटेस्वरी देवतालाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (नाटेस्वरी देवतालाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (गुरुवावा गुरुआमा)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (चारै पट्टि चारै कुना)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (तेत्तीस कोटी देवतालाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (काहाँ हो तम्रो जन्मभुमी)^२ क्या हो तम्रो नाम ?
 हरे क्या हो तम्रो जात वंशी कहू आफ्नो नाउ
 साँचिलो छौत घाँटेस्वरी कहू आफ्नो नाम
 (उठी जाउन यामैरानी)^२ उठी जाउन
 उठीमा नाच यामै रानी खेहलैला
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी उठी जाउन
 बाबाज्यूको पटाँगीमा खेहलैलाSSSSS
 कण्ठसैको पटाँगीमा खेहलैलाSSSSS
 (आमा बाबु छोडी आयौ)^२ यहि धामैले
 (माया बैना छोडी आयौ)^२ यहि धामैले
 चैत न बैसाख चरकैला घाम
 हरे (छम छम नाच राजै)^२
 छम छम खेल राजै धनै शिरीया
 (दिदैज्युको गोजीयामा)^२ सोनै काँगिया
 हरे (कोरी पनि देउन दिदै बाटी पनि देउन दिदै)^२
 सुनै चुलठी

(सुनै क्यारे चुलठीमा)^२ रुपै धागीया
 (फुलुवा त फुलुवा हा)^२ गोदावरी फुल
 (फुलुवा त फुलुवा हा)^२ कटर चम्पा फुल
 (यतीमा सुन्दर फुलुवा त)^२ फुली गएला
 (डालीमा भरी भरी फुलुवा हा)^२ फुली गएला
 हारे (डालीमा भरी भरी फुलुवा हा)^२ फुली गएला
 (टिपीमा लेउन फुलुवा हा गाँसिमा लेउन
 फुलुवा त माथै भराइलेउ
 यतीमा सुन्दर फुलुवा त फुली गएला
 हरे टिपीमा लेउन फुलुवा गाँसिमा लेउन
 फुलुवा त माथै भराइ लेउ
 (चन्दनै त चन्दनै हो चुवै चन्दन)^२
 (चन्दनै त चन्दनै हो धुपी चन्दन)^२
 (घोटिमा सक्यौ चन्दन त)^२ लाउ चन्दन
 (आरसीमा हेरि हेरि)^२ लाओ चन्दन
 (हलपीमा हेरि हेरि)^२ लाओ चन्दन
 (शिरै सुहाई सिंदुरै त)^२ यामै रानीलाई
 (लिलै सुहाई चन्दनै त)^२ यामै रानीलाई
 (आँखै सुहाई गाजलु त)^२ यामै रानीलाई
 (नाकै सुहाई बेसोरी त)^२ यामै रानीलाई
 (दन्तै सुहाई विरिया त)^२ यामै रानीलाई
 (हरे कानै सुहाई कुण्डलु)^२ त यामै रानीलाई
 (गलै सुहाई पोतिया त)^२ यामै रानीलाई
 (हरे बाहुली सुहाई चुरिया त)^२ यामै रानीलाई
 (कुमै सुहाई चोलिया त)^२ यामै रानीलाई
 (कम्मरै सुहाई पटुकी त)^२ यामै रानीलाई
 (आँग सुहाई पछ्यौरी त)^२ यामै रानीलाई
 (हरे जाँगै सुहाई लोहोंगा त)^२ यामै रानीलाई
 (पावै सुहाई पैँजडु त)^२ यामै रानीलाई
 जुहारैला यामैरानी जुहारैला
 हरे (अँजुली जो बाँधी)^२ जुहारैला
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी^२ जुहारैला
 हरे (चारै पट्टि चारै कुना)^२ जुहारैला
 (तेत्तीस कोटी देवतालाई)^२ जुहारैला

(भुई क्यारे थालिया त)^२ खोजैला
 (भुई क्यारे थालिया त)^२ बाहुलीमा लेउ
 (सुवर्णको थालिया त)^२ बाहुलीमा लेउ
 हरे (बाहुलीको थालिया त)^२ कम्मरैमा लेउ
 (सुवर्णको थालिया त)^२ कुमैमा लेउ
 हरे (कम्मरैको थालिया त)^२ कुमैमा लेउ
 (सुवर्णको थालिया त)^२ कम्मरैमा लेउ
 (कुमै क्यारे थालिया त)^२ शिरैमा लेउ
 (सुवर्णको थालिया त)^२ शिरैमा लेउ
 हरे (शीरै क्यारे थालिया त)^२ कुमैमा लेउ
 (सुवर्णको थालिया त)^२ कुमैमा लेउ
 हरे (कुमै क्यारे थालिया त)^२ कम्मरैमा लेउ
 (सुवर्णको थालिया त)^२ कम्मरैमा लेउ

राजैज्यूलाई वीरपट्ट पहिरैला
 रानीज्यूलाई वीरपट्ट पहिरैला
 (सुवर्णको वीरपट्ट)^२ पहिरैला
 (राजैज्यूको वीरपट्ट)^२ पहिरैला
 (रानीज्यूको वीरपट्ट)^२ पहिरैला
 (सुवर्णको वीरपट्ट)^२ पहिरैला

२) समभैला पर्व

गाँवै क्यारे सिमेभुमे)^२ समभैला
 (थानैपट्ट सिमेभुमे)^२ समभैला
 (गाँवैक्यारे चण्डि माइलाइ)^२ समभैला
 हा SSSSS रे (गाँवैक्यारे पञ्चकन्ने)^२ समभैला
 (घाटै क्यारे देवीमाइलाइ)^२ समभैला
 (गाँवै क्यारे भैरवीलाइ)^२ समभैला
 (रक्तकाली देवतालाइ)^२ समभैला
 हरे (समभैला यमैरानी)^२ समभैला
 (देवी र देउरालीलाइ)^२ समभैला
 (आकाशैको चन्द्र सूर्य)^२ समभैला
 हारे (पत्तलैको बासुकीलाइ) समभैला
 (रिडी घाटकी देवतालाइ)^२ समभैला
 (बेनी घाटको देवतालाइ)^२ समभैला
 (सती घाटको देवतालाइ)^२ समभैला
 हारे (हिमालै चुली देवतालाइ)^२ समभैला

(वरैचुली देवतालाइ)^२ समभैला
 (देवैचुली देवतालाइ)^२ समभैला
 (घाँटेस्वरी देवतालाइ)^२ समभैला
 (नाटेस्वरी देवतालाइ)^२ समभैला
 (गुरुवावा गुरुआमा)^२ समभैला
 (चारै पट्टि चारै कुना)^२ समभैला
 (सम्भैला यामै रानी)^२ समभैला
 (चारै पट्टि चारै कुना)^२ समभैला
 (तेत्तीस कोटी देवतालाइ)^२ समभैला
 (काहाँ हो तम्रो जन्मभुमी)^२ कहू तम्रो नाउ ?
 हरे क्या हो तम्रो जातवंशी कहू तम्रो नाउ ?
 कहू आफ्नो नाउ
 साँचिलो छौत घाँटेस्वरी कहू आफ्नो नाउ
 (उठी जाउन यामैरानी)^२ उठी जाउन

बाबाज्यूको पटाँगीमा खेहलैलाSSSSS
 कण्ठसैको पटाँगीमा खेहलैलाSSSSS

(आमा बाबु छोडी आयौ)^२ यहि धामैले
 (माया बैना छोडी आयौ)^२ यहि धामैले
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमीखेहलैलाSSSSS

३) पुजैला पर्व

मालीमा गाइको दुधै त दधिमा जमाउ
 मारसीको चामलैमा दधिया मुछौं
 (फुलपाती अक्षताले)^२ पुजैला
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी पुजैला
 हरे (धरतीको मातारीलाइ)^२ पुजैला
 आकाशैको चन्द्रसूर्य पुजैला
 हरे पत्तलैको बासुकीलाइ पुजैला
 (गाँवैक्यारे सिमेभुमे पुजैला)^२
 हरे थानै पति सिमेभुमे पुजैला
 गाँवैक्यारे चण्डीमाइलाइ पुजैला
 हरे गाँवैक्यारे पञ्चकन्ने पुजैला
 घाटै क्यारे देवी माइलाइ पुजैला
 गाँवैक्यारे भैरवीलाइ पुजैला
 रक्तकाली देवतालाइ पुजैला

दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी पुजैला
 हरे देवी देउरालीलाई पुजैला
 रिडी घाटकी देवतालाई पुजैला
 हरे बेनी घाटकी देवतालाई पुजैला
 सति घाटकी देवतालाई पुजैला
 हरे हिमालै चुली देवतालाई पुजैला
 वरैचुली देवतालाई पुजैला
 देवैचुली देवतालाई पुजैला
 घाँटेस्वरी देवतालाई पुजैला
 हरे नाटेस्वरी देवतालाई पुजैला
 (पुजैला यामैरानी पुजैला)^२
 (दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी)^२ पुजैला
 चारैपट्टि चारैकुना पुजैला
 तेत्तिसै कोटी देवतालाई पुजैला
 हरे (कम्मरैको थलिया त)^२ बाहुलीमा लेउ
 (सुवर्णको थलिया त)^२ बाहुलीमा लेउ
 हरे (बाहुलीको थलिया त)^२ भुईं राखन
 (सुवर्णको थलिया त)^२ भुईं राखन
 जुहारैला यामै रानी जुहारैला
 हरे अञ्जुली जो बाँधी बाँधी जुहारैला
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी जुहारैला
 हारे (चारै पट्टि चारै कुना) जुहारैला
 तेत्तिस कोटी देवतालाई जुहारैला
४) जुहारैला पर्व
 जुहारैला यामै रानी जुहारैला
 हरे अञ्जुली जो बाँधी बाँधी जुहारैला
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी जुहारैला
 हारे (चारै पट्टि चारै कुना) जुहारैला
 तेत्तिस कोटी देवतालाई जुहारैला
 हरे अञ्जुली जो बाँधी बाँधी जुहारैला
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी जुहारैला
 (गाँवै क्यारे सिमे भुमे) जुहारैला
 गाँवै क्यारे चण्डी माइलाई जुहारैला
 हरे पञ्चैकन्ने देवतालाई जुहारैला

घाटै क्यारे देवीमाइलाई जुहारैला
 जुहारैला यामै रानी जुहारैला
 अञ्जुली जो बाँधी बाँधी जुहारैला
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी जुहारैला
 गाँवैक्यारे सिमेभुम जुहारैला
 हरे थानै पति सिमेभुमे जुहारैला
 घाटै क्यारे देवी माइलाई जुहारैला
 गाँवैक्यारे भैरवीलाई जुहारैला
 रक्तकाली देवतालाई जुहारैला
 देवी र देउरालीलाई जुहारैला
 जुहारैला यामै रानी जुहारैला
 आकाशैको चन्द्रसूर्य जुहारैला
 पात्तालैको बासुकीलाई जुहारैला
 रिडी घाटकी देवतालाई जुहारैला
 हरे बेनी घाटकी देवतालाई जुहारैला
 सति घाटकी देवतालाई जुहारैला
 हरे हिमालै चुली देवतालाई जुहारैला
 वरैचुली देवतालाई जुहारैला
 घाँटेस्वरी देवतालाई जुहारैला
 हरे नाटेस्वरी देवतालाई जुहारैला
 हरे जुहारैला यामै रानी जुहारैला
 अञ्जुली जो बाँधी बाँधी जुहारैला
 चारैपट्टि चारैकुना जुहारैला
 तेत्तिसै कोटी देवतालाई जुहारैला
 (भुईं क्यारे थलिया त खोजैला)^२
 भुईं क्यारे थलिया त बाहुलीमा लेउ
 हरे (बाहुलीको थलिया त)^२ कम्मरैमा लेउ
 (सुवर्णको थलिया त)^२ कम्मरैमा लेउ
 हरे (कम्मरैको थलिया त)^२ कुमैमा लेउ
 (सुवर्णको थलिया त)^२ कुमैमा लेउ
 (कुमैको थलिया त)^२ शिरैमा लेउ
 (सुवर्णको थलिया त)^२ शिरैमा लेउ
 हरे (शिरै क्यारे थलिया त)^२ कुमैमा लेउ
 (सुवर्णको थलिया त)^२ कुमैमा लेउ

हरे (कुमै क्यारे थलिया त)^२ कम्मरैमा लेउ
 (सुवर्णको थलिया त)^२ कम्मरैमा लेउ
 हरे (कम्मरैको थलिया त)^३ बाहुलीमा लेउ
 (सुवर्णको थलिया त)^२ बाहुलीमा लेउ
 हरे (बाहुलीको थलिया त)^३ भुङ्ग राखन

५) घैला पर्व

भुङ्ग क्यारे घैला त खोजैला
भुङ्ग क्यारे घैला त बाहुलीमा लेउ
सुवर्णको घैला त बाहुलीमा लेउ
 हरे बाहुलीको घैला त कम्मरैमा लेउ
सुवर्णको घैला त कम्मरैमा लेउ
 हरे कम्मरैमको घैला त कुमैमा लेउ
 सुवर्णको घैला त कुमैमा लेउ
 कुमै क्यारे घैला त शिरैमा लेउ
सुवर्णको घैला त शिरैमा लेउ
 गहिरो जो तलाउमा गरजैला मेघ
गहिरो जो तलाउमा गरजैला मेघ
सोरै घन बादलुले बर्षैला बुंद
घैला त घैला शिरै घैला फुटी घैला (p. 203)
 सोरै घन बादलुले बर्षैला बुंद
 शिरै क्यारे घैला त फुटी घैला
 सोरै घन बादलुले बर्षैला बुंद
 सोरै घन बादलुले धरती भिज्यो
 धरतीको पानीले पैताला भिज्यो
 पैतालाको पानीले सारी भिजैला
 सारियाको पानी त निचरैला
 शिर क्यारे घैला त कुमैमा लेउ
 सुवर्णको घैला त कुमैमा लेउ
 हरे कुमै क्यारे घैला त कम्मरैमा लेउ
 सुवर्णको घैला त कम्मरैमा लेउ
 हरे कम्मरैको घैला त बाहुलीमा लेउ
 सुवर्णको घैला त बाहुलीमा लेउ
 बाहुलीको घैला त भुङ्ग राखन
 सुवर्णको घैला त भुङ्ग राखन

जुहारैला यामै रानी जुहारैला
 हरे अञ्जुली जो बाँधी बाँधी जुहारैला
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी जुहारैला
 हारे (चारै पट्टि चारै कुना) जुहारैला
 तेत्तिस कोटी देवतालाई जुहारैला

६) रोपाँइ पर्व

राजैज्यूको चापैसेरो ब्याडै मारन जाँउ
हलै गोरु लिएर ब्याडै मारन जाँउ
धुली मुली वियाडैमा वीउ राख्न जाँउ
पाँचै मुरी वीउ लिई वीओइ राख्न जाँउ (p. 202)
 धुली मुली वियाडैमा वीओइ राखियो
 हरे सातै दिनको भयो वीउ वीओइ हरियो
 पन्द्र दिनको भयो वीउ गरौं ठेगाना
 हरे असारैको पन्द्र दिन जाँदै भयो ठेगाना
 राजैज्यूको रोपाँइलाई पातै टिप्न जाँऊ
 हरे भली भली माया बैना बोगतै गाँसौं
 दिदि बहिनी दुई जनाले बोगतै गासौं
 राजैज्यूको रोपाँइलाई चिउरा कुटाऔं
 दिदि बहिनी दुई जनाले चिउरा कुटाऔं
 भली भली माया बैना दधिया जमाऔं
 पन्द्र दिनको भयो वीऊ वीओइ हरियो
 असारैको पन्द्र दिन जाँदै भयो ठेगाना
 राजैज्यूको रोपाँइलाई निम्तो बोलाऔं
 हरे दशौं विसा वियाडैलाई निम्तो बोलाऔं
 दशौं विसा हल गोरु निम्तो बोलाऔं
 हरे विस वाउसेलाई निम्तो बोलाऔं
 सय साथी रोपारलाई निम्तो बोलाऔं
 दशौं विस दर्जीलाई निम्तो बोलाऔं
 हरे जिम्वाल मूखियालाई निम्तो बोलाऔं
राजैज्यूको रोपाँइलाई निम्तो बोलाऔं
राजैज्यूको चापैसेरो भोली रोपाँइ त छ (p. 204)
 हरे राजैज्यूको रोपाँइलाई अचारै साँदौं
 अमिलो अमिलो पिरो पिरो अचारै साँदौं
 भली भली माया बैना अचारै साँदौं

राजैज्यूको चापैसेरो आज रोपाँइ छ
 जाउ न त जाउ कटुवाले डाकी बोलाइ लेउ
 राजैज्यूको खेतलालाई डाकी बोलाइ लेउ
 हरे जाउन मा जाऊ बैना खेतै रोपन जाऊ
 राजैज्यूको खेताला त चल्यो लस्कर
 भागीरथी जमुनामा भए दाखिला
 तारी मा देउन रनजीत मिजार
 भट्टकन तारीदेउ माफी मिजार
 दशै विस वीयाडेलाई तारिमा देउ
 दशै विस हलै गोरु तारिमा देउ
 दशै विस बाउसेलाई तारिमा देउ
 हरे सय साठी रोपारेलाई तारिमा देउ
 दशै विस दरजीलाई तारिमा देउ
 थरि जिम्वाल मूखियालाई तारिमा देउ
 राजैज्यूको खेताला त भयो तयारी
 खेतै जो रोपनलाई भए दाखिला
 दिदि बहिनी दुवै जना भए तयारी
 भली भली माया बैना भयो तयारी
 गहिरो तलाउमा गरजैला मेघ
 सोरै घना बादलुले वरसैला बुंद
 हरे सोरै घना बादलुले वरसैला बुंद
 राजैमाज्यूको गहिरीमा खेत पानी छिरुवा
 हरे राजैमाज्यूको गहिरीमा खेत पानी छिरुवा
 टपक्कै टिपि नाकैमा लाँउने बाबरी विरुवा
 राजैमाज्यूको गहिरीमा खेत पानी टल्कन्छ
 हिराको हार पहेलो गाला मोती भल्कन्छ
 अघि अघि बिच्छे गोरु पछि बाउसे
 भिन छड्के रोप रानी मुठा नहाल
छप् छप् रोप रानी काठे मारसी
भट्टकैन रोप रानी दुधे मारसी (p. 204)
 चिसोमा पानी मूलै फुट्यो सिमली घारीमा
 कोटेराले गुँडेमा लायो बाउसेको दाहीमा
 राजैज्यूको खेतै त रोपी सकियो
 आफ्नो आफ्नो खेतलालाई खाजा बाँडौ

राजैज्यूको खेतालालाई खाजै बाँडौं
 अञ्जुलीले खम्सी खम्सी चिउरै बाँडौं
 बोगतैमा भरी भरी अचारै बाँडौं
 हरे भली भली माया बैना दधिया बाँडौं
 दिदि बहिनी दुई जनाले अचारै बाँडौं
 बोगतमा भरी भरी दधिया बाँडौं
 पालुंगी सागै जो राजै भोजन
 हरे किस्तिमा भरी भरी मेवा मिस्टन राजै भोजन
 गंगाजल पानी त राजै भोजन
 हरे भली भली ल्वाड सुपारी राजै भोजन
 गाइखुरे तमाखु त राजै भोजन
 हरे राजैज्यूको सवारी त दरवारै दाखिला भो
 आठै परिया अगाडि पछाडि दरवारै दाखिला भो
 जुहारैला यामै रानी जुहारैला
 हरे अञ्जुली जो बाँधी बाँधी जुहारैला
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी जुहारैला
 हारे (चारै पट्टि चारै कुना) जुहारैला
 तेत्तिस कोटी देवतालाई जुहारैला
७) शिकार पर्व
 भुंइ क्यारे थिरै बाण खोजैला
 भुंइ क्यारे थिरै बाण बाहुलीमा लेउ
 सुवर्णको थिरै बाण बाहुलीमा लेउ
 बहुलीको थिरै बाण कम्मरैमा लेउ
 सुवर्णको थिरै बाण कम्मरैमा लेउ
 कम्मरैको थिरै बाण कुमैमा लेउ
 सुवर्णको थिरै बाण कुमैमा लेउ
 कुमै क्यारे थिर बाण शिरैमा लेउ
 सुवर्णको थिरै बाण शिरैमा लेउ
 शिरै क्यारे थिर बाण कुमैमा लेउ
 सुवर्णको थिरै बाण कुमैमा लेउ
 कुमै क्यारे थिर बाण कम्मरैमा लेउ
 सुवर्णको थिरै बाण कम्मरैमा लेउ
 कम्मरैको थिरै बाण बाहुलीमा लेउ

सुवर्णको थिरै बाण बाहुलीमा लेउ
 आफ्नो थिर बाण सेपी सेपी लेउ
 धुनै लाग्यो पतलै लाग्यो सेपी सेपी लेउ
 तरुल पातले सेपी सेपी लेउ
 जाउन भैया लक्ष्मण डाकी बोलाइ लेउ
 हाँसुले र पाँडुलेलाई डाकी बोलाइ लेउ
 हरे हाँसुले र पाँडुलेलाई डाकी बोलाइ लेउ

रामचन्द्र लछुमन चले शिकार
 अघि रामचन्द्र पछि लछुमन
 रामचन्द्र लछुमन चले शिकार
 लछुमनको पिछे पिछे दोनो ककुर
 मधुवनै जंगलैमा भए दाखिला
 हरे मधुवनै जंगलैमा भए दाखिला
 रामचन्द्र लछुमन भए दाखिला
 मधुवनै जंगलैमा तितरी बगाल
 तितरीलाई देखिकन बसे डाँडैमा
 रामचन्द्र लछुमन बसे डाँडैमा
 तितरीलाई देखिकन छोडे ककुर
 लहै लहै भनीकन छोडे ककुर
 हाँसुले र पाँडुलेलाई छोडे ककुर

जाँदा जाँदै ककुरले पाइलै पैल्यायो
 हरे जाँदा जाँदै ककुरले पाइलै पैल्यायो
 धुली मुली पाइला सुँगी पाइलै पैल्यायो
 हाँसुले र पाँडुलेले पाइलै पैल्यायो

ओल्लो डाँडा रामचन्द्र पारी लछुमन
 ताकिमा तुकि हान राजै तितरी बगाल
 तारोबाँसे गुलेली त सुनै मटचांग्रा
 भट्टैकन हान राजा तितरी बगाल
 तारो बाँसको गुलेलीले हान राजैज्यू
 तितरी बगालैलाई हान राजैज्यू
 तितरी बगालैलाई मारैला

मधुवन हुँडचो राजै विन्द्रावन जाँऊ
 अघि अघि रामचन्द्र पछि लछुमन

लछुमनको पिछे पिछे दोनै ककुर
मधुवनको जंगलैमा हरिणै बगाल
हरिणलाई देखिकन बसे डाँडैमा
रामचन्द्र लछुमन बसे डाँडैमा
हरिणलाई देखिकन छोडे ककुर
हाँसुले र पाँडुलेलाई छोडे ककुर (p.215)

लहै लहै भनीकन छोडे ककुर
 हरे हाँसुले र पाँडुलेलाई छोडे ककुर
 जाँदा जाँदै ककुरले पाइलै पैल्यायो
 धुली मुली पाइला सुँगी पाइलै पैल्यायो
 हाँसुले र पाँडुलेले पाइलै पैल्यायो

ओल्लो डाँडा रामचन्द्र पारी लछुमन
ताकिमा तुकि हान राजै हरिण बगाल
पत्थर कोइला बन्दुकैले हान राजै ज्यू
भट्टैकन हान राजा हरिण बगाल
ताकिमा तुकि हान राजै हरिण बगाल
हरिण बगाललाई मारैला (p.215)

बहुलीको थिरै बाण भुँड राखन
 सुवर्णको थिरै बाण भुँड राखन
 ठोस भैया चकमक बैसन्ती जगाउ (आगो लगाउ)

हरिणको मासु त भुटुवै लगाउ
 हरिणको मासु त राजै भोजन
 किस्तिमा भरी भरी मेवा मिस्टान राजै भोजन
 गंगाजल पानी त राजै भोजन
 हरे भली भली ल्वाड सुपारी राजै भोजन
 गाइखुरे तमाखु त राजै भोजन
 राजैज्यूको सवारी त दरवारै दाखिला
 आठै पहरिया अघिपछि दरवारै दाखिला
 यिन यिन शिकारीलाई देउ इनाम
 किस्तिमा भरी भरी असरुपी देउ इनाम
 कासपेली राजाले दिएको इनाम लाखै घोडुवा
 हातै मारी कुमै ठेली लाखै घोडुवा

जुहारैला यामै रानी जुहारैला
 हरे अञ्जुली जो बाँधी बाँधी जुहारैला

दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी जुहारैला
 हारे (चारै पट्टि चारै कुना) जुहारैला
 तेत्तिस कोटी देवतालाई जुहारैला

८) भीख माग्ने पर्व

जाउन भैया दुर्योधन थरकी फिंजाउ
 हस्तेनापुरको लाल बैठकमा थरकी फिंजाउ
 जउन भैया दुर्योधन पासा मागौं
 पासै जो खेलनलाई बस राजै ज्यू
 हस्तेनापुरको लाल बैठकमा बस राजै ज्यू
 पासै जो खेलनलाई के के कवोल
 राजैज्यूले जित्यो भने हर्क बढाइ
 रानीज्यूले जित्यो भन राजै विदेश

सत्य सत्य तिनै वाचा यहि कवोल
 ढाल राजा तीरपासा चाल रानी ज्यू
 हस्ति हाड तीरपासा चाल राजै ज्यू

पासै जो खेलनमा रानी जीतल भो
 कवोलले हारे राजा भयो विदेश
 पुर्वे दिशा चल्थो राजा जोगीयाको भेष
 कवोलले हारे राजा भयो विदेश

कपडा जो चिरी चिरी भोलियै सिलाउ
 घर बुनाइ कपडाको भोलिया सिलाउ
 पुर्वे दिशा चल्थो राजा जोगीयाको भेष
 कवोलले हाच्यो राजा भयो विदेश
 करमैको लेखन्तरले जोगीयाको भेष
 पश्चिमै दिशा चल्थो राजा जोगीयाको भेष
 करमैको लेखन्तरले भयो विदेश
 करमैको लेखन्तरले जोगीयाको भेष
 कवोलले हाच्यो राजा भयो विदेश
 उत्तर दिशा चल्थो राजा जोगीयाको भेष
 हरे कवोलले हाच्यो राजा भयो विदेश
 करमैको लेखन्तरले भयो विदेश
 करमैको लेखन्तरले जोगीयाको भेष
 दक्षिण दिशा चल्थो राजा जोगीयाको भेष
 हरे कवोलले हाच्यो राजा भयो विदेश

करमैको लेखन्तरले भयो विदेश
 करमैको लेखन्तरले जोगीयाको भेष
 चारै दिशा चल्थो राजा जोगीयाको भेष
 रानीमा यामै उठी धुरु धुरु रोइ
 कदमैको गाछीमा बसी बाँसिया बजाइ
 हरे बाँसियाको आवजै सुनी धुरु धुरु रोइ
 रानीमा यामै उठी धुरु धुरु रोइ
 राजैज्यूलाई सम्भ्रि सम्भ्रि धुरु धुरु रोइ
 जाउनमा जाउ यामैवती सुभाइ बुभाइ लेउ
 आफ्नो राजालाई सुभाइ बुभाइ लेउ
 जाँउनमा मेरो राजै आफ्नो दरवार जाँउ
 देशै र संसारैमा मागी जोगी खाँउ
 गुरुजीको दरवारमा अलकै जगाओ
 देशै र संसारैमा अलकै जगाओ
 माग हरे भिखिया (भिक्षा) त देउ हरे दान
 कनफट्टा जोगीयालाई देउ हरे दान
 देउन देउ लोक पञ्च देउ हरे दान
 भ्यालमा लामखुट्टे लाग्यो कोठामा उपीयाँ
 आना सुकि लिनै छैन ठचाककै रुपीयाँ

जुहारैला यामै रानी जुहारैला
 हरे अञ्जुली जो बाँधी बाँधी जुहारैला
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी जुहारैला
 हारे (चारै पट्टि चारै कुना) जुहारैला
 तेत्तिस कोटी देवतालाई जुहारैला

९) विवाह पर्व

राजैज्यूको राजकुमारलाई कल्ली हालौं
 गोरखाको दरवारैमा केटी मागन
 आफ्नो आफ्नो राजकुमारलाई केटी मागन
 राजैज्यूको केटी छिनियो

जाउ न जाउ कटुवाल जैसी बोलाइ लेउ
 विवाहको साइत हेर्न जैसी बोलाइ लेउ
 धुलौटो कोरी कोरी हेर जैसी ज्यू
 हेरी सकें जुरे साइत जेठैको १२ गते जुच्यो लगन
 हरे राजैज्यूको कुमारेको जुच्यो लगन

वन्दिपुरे ज्यासलमा सुनै मोलौं
 यीनै यीनै गहनाको कति पर्ला मोल ?
 यीनै यीनै गहनाको लाख पर्ला मोल
 वन्दिपुरे हटियामा कपडा मोलौं
 यीनै यीनै कपडाको कति पर्ला मोल ?
 यीनै यीनै कपडाका हजार पला मोल
 ऐना बट्टा चुरा धागो कति पर्ला मोल ?
 हरे यीन यीन सामानको सय पर्ला मोल
 राजैज्यूको कुमारेको विवाहमा पातै टिपन जाँउ
 भली भली माया बैना टपरी गाँस
 दिदि बहिनी दुइजनाले टपरी गाँस (p. 205)

देशै र देशका रजौटालाई निमन्त्रणा बोलाऊ
 चारै दिशाको रजौटालाई निम्तो बोलाऊ
 थरी जिम्वाल मूखियालाई निमतै बोलाऊ
 गाउँ घरका भाइभारदारलाई निमतै बोलाऊ
 आफ्नो देशको जनतालाई निमतो बोलाऔं
 दशै विस दरजीलाई निमतो बोलाऔं
 भली भली माया बैना दधिया जमाऔं
 हरे दिदि बहिनी दुइजनाले अचार साँदौं
 अमिलो अमिलो पिरो पिरो अचारै साँदौं
 राजैज्यू कुमारेको आजै विहे छ
 रम्म भम्म नौमती बाजा बजनै लाग्यो
 हरे कासपेली राजैको दरवारै बजनै लाग्यो
 रम्म भम्म बाजा बजनै लाग्यो
 राजैज्यूको वरियात चले लस्कर
 अधि अधि नौमती बाजा पछि पछि पल्टन
 गोरखाको दरवारमा भए दाखिला
 हरे आफ्नो आफ्नो विधिपूर्वक स्वयंवर गर
 आफ्नो आफ्नो कन्याको कन्यादान गरौं
 राजैज्यू कुमारेको माडै घुमाँ
 राजैज्यू कुमारेको माउरै चडाऊ
 आफ्नो आफ्नो विधिपूर्वक खाँडो जगाऔं
 हरे विवाहको कर्मकाण्ड गरी सकियो
 अधि अधि नौमति बाजा पछि पल्टन

हरे कासपेली राजैको दरवारैमा भए दाखिला
 बसी जाउ यामै रानी
 हरे थकितले मरनु भयो बसि जाउन
 ठाँउ ठाँउमा शितल पाटी बसि जाउन
 सातै रंगी गुंदरीमा बसि जाउन
 राजैज्यूको वीरपट्टा फुकावैला
 रानीज्यूको वीरपट्टा फुकावैला
 सुवर्णको वीरपट्टा फुकावैला
 गंगा जल पानी त राजै भोजन
 सातै जमुनाको पानी पिउ राजै ज्यू
 सातै जमुनाको पानी पिउ रानी ज्यू
 जुहारैला रानी ज्यू जुहारैला
 अञ्जुली जो बाँधी बाँधी जुहारैला
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी जुहारैला
 चारैपट्टि चारैकुना जुहारैला
 हरे तैतिसै कोटी देवतालाई जुहारैला

१०) सती पर्व

(गाँवै क्यारे सिमेभुमे)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (थानैपट्टि सिमेभुमे)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (गाँवैक्यारे चण्डि माईलाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 हा SSSSS रे (गाँवैक्यारे पञ्चकन्ते)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (घाटै क्यारे देवीमाईलाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (गाँवै क्यारे भैरवीलाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (रक्तकाली देवतालाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (देवी र देउरालीलाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 हरे (निमन्त्रैला यमैरानी)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (आकाशैको चन्द्र सूर्य)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 हरे (पत्तलैको बासुकीलाई) निमन्त्रैला
 (रिडी घाटकी देवतालाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (बेनी घाटको देवतालाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (सती घाटको देवतालाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 हरे (हिमालै चुली देवतालाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (वरैचुली देवतालाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला
 (देवैचुली देवतालाई)^२ निमन्त्रैला

(घाँटेस्वरी देवतालाई)² निमन्त्रैला
 (नाटेस्वरी देवतालाई)² निमन्त्रैला
 (गुरुवावा गुरुआमा)² निमन्त्रैला
 (चारै पट्टि चारै कुना)² निमन्त्रैला
 (तेत्तीस कोटी देवतालाई)² निमन्त्रैला
 (काहाँ हो तम्रो जन्मभुमी)² क्या हो तम्रो नाम ?
 हरे क्या हो तम्रो जात वंशी कहू आफ्नो नाउ
 साँचिलो छौत घाँटेस्वरी कहू आफ्नो नाम
 (उठी जाउन यामैरानी)² उठी जाउन
 उठीमा नाच यामै रानी खेहलैला
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी उठी जाउन
 बाबाज्यूको पटांगीमा खेहलैलाSSSSS
 कण्ठसैको पटांगीमा खेहलैलाSSSSS
 (आमा बाबु छोडी आयौ)² यहि धामैले
 (माया बैना छोडी आयौ)² यहि धामैले
 चैत न बैसाख चरकैला घाम
 हरे (छम छम नाच राजै)²
 छम छम खेल राजै धने शिरीया
 (दिदैज्यूको गोजीयामा)² सोनै काँगिया
 हरे (कोरी पनि देउन दिदै बाटी पनि देउन दिदै)²
 सुनै चुलठी
 (सुनै क्यारे चुलठीमा)² रुपै धागीया
 (फुलुवा त फुलुवा हा)² गोदावरी फुल
 (फुलुवा त फुलुवा हा)² कटर चम्पा फुल
 (यतीमा सुन्दर फुलुवा त)² फुली गएला
 (डालीमा भरी भरी फुलुवा हा)² फुली गएला
 हरे (डालीमा भरी भरी फुलुवा हा)² फुली गएला
 (टिपीमा लेउन फुलुवा हा गाँसिमा लेउन
 फुलुवा त माथै भराइलेउ
 यतीमा सुन्दर फुलुवा त फुली गएला
 हरे टिपीमा लेउन फुलुवा गाँसिमा लेउन
 फुलुवा त माथै भराइ लेउ
 (चन्दनै त चन्दनै हो चुवै चन्दन)²

(चन्दनै त चन्दनै हो धुपी चन्दन)²
 (घोटिमा सक्यौ चन्दन त)² लाउ चन्दन
 (आरसीमा हेरि हेरि)² लाओ चन्दन
 (हलपीमा हेरि हेरि)² लाओ चन्दन
 (शिरै सुहाई सिंदुरै त)² यामै रानीलाई
 (लिलै सुहाई चन्दनै त)² यामै रानीलाई
 (आँखै सुहाई गाजल् त)² यामै रानीलाई
 (नाकै सुहाई बेसोरी त)² यामै रानीलाई
 (दन्तै सुहाई विरिया त)² यामै रानीलाई
 (हरे कानै सुहाई कण्डल्)² त यामै रानीलाई
 (गलै सुहाई पोतिया त)² यामै रानीलाई
 (हरे बाहुली सुहाई चुरीया त)² यामै रानीलाई
 (कुमै सुहाई चोलिया त)² यामै रानीलाई (P. 201)
 (कम्मरै सुहाई पटुकी त)² यामै रानीलाई
 (आँग सुहाई पछ्यौरी त)² यामै रानीलाई
 (हरे जाँगे सुहाई लोहोंगा त)² यामै रानीलाई
 (पावै सुहाई पैजडु त)² यामै रानीलाई
 जुहारैला यामैरानी जुहारैला
 हरे (अँजुली जो बाँधी)² जुहारैला
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी² जुहारैला
 हरे (चारै पट्टि चारै कुना)² जुहारैला
 (तेत्तीस कोटी देवतालाई)² जुहारैला
 (भुई क्यारे थालिया त)² खोजैला
 (भुई क्यारे थालिया त)² बाहुलीमा लेउ
 (सुवर्णको थालिया त)² बाहुलीमा लेउ
 हरे (बाहुलीको थालिया त)² कम्मरैमा लेउ
 (सुवर्णको थालिया त)² कुमैमा लेउ
 हरे (कम्मरैको थालिया त)² कुमैमा लेउ
 (सुवर्णको थालिया त)² कम्मरैमा लेउ
 (कुमै क्यारे थालिया त)² शिरैमा लेउ
 (सुवर्णको थालिया त)² शिरैमा लेउ
 हरे (शीरै क्यारे थालिया त)² कुमैमा लेउ
 (सुवर्णको थालिया त)² कुमैमा लेउ
 हरे (कुमै क्यारे थालिया त)² कम्मरैमा लेउ

(सुवर्णको थालिया त) २ कम्मरैमा लेउ
 राजैज्यूलाई वीरपट्ट पहिरैला
 रानीज्यूलाई वीरपट्ट पहिरैला
 (सुवर्णको वीरपट्ट) २ पहिरैला
 (राजैज्यूको वीरपट्ट) २ पहिरैला
 (रानीज्यूको वीरपट्ट) २ पहिरैला
 (सुवर्णको वीरपट्ट) २ पहिरैला
 (गाँवै क्यारे सिमेभुमे) २ समभैला
 (थानैपट्टि सिमेभुमे) २ समभैला
 (गाँवैक्यारे चण्डि माइलाइ) २ समभैला
 हा ऽऽऽऽ रे (गाँवैक्यारे पञ्चकन्ने) २ समभैला
 (घाटै क्यारे देवीमाइलाइ) २ समभैला
 (गाँवै क्यारे भैरवीलाइ) २ समभैला
 (रक्तकाली देवतालाइ) २ समभैला
 हरे (समभैला यमैरानी) २ समभैला
 (देवी र देउरालीलाइ) २ समभैला
 (आकाशैको चन्द्र सूर्य) २ समभैला
 हारे (पत्तलैको बासुकीलाइ) समभैला
 (रिडी घाटकी देवतालाइ) २ समभैला
 (बेनी घाटको देवतालाइ) २ समभैला
 (सती घाटको देवतालाइ) २ समभैला
 हारे (हिमालै चुली देवतालाइ) २ समभैला
 (वरैचुली देवतालाइ) २ समभैला
 (देवैचुली देवतालाइ) २ समभैला
 (घाँटेस्वरी देवतालाइ) २ समभैला
 (नाटेस्वरी देवतालाइ) २ समभैला
 (गुरुवावा गुरुआमा) २ समभैला
 (चारै पट्टि चारै कुना) २ समभैला
 (सम्भैला यामै रानी) २ समभैला
 (चारै पट्टि चारै कुना) २ समभैला
 (तेतीस कोटी देवतालाइ) २ समभैला
 (काहाँ हो तम्रो जन्मभुमी) २ कहु तम्रो नाउ ?
 हरे क्या हो तम्रो जातवंशी कहु तम्रो नाउ ?
 कहु आफ्नो नाउ

साँचिलो छौत घाँटेस्वरी कहु आफ्नो नाउ
 (उठी जाउन यामैरानी) २ उठी जाउन
 बाबाज्यूको पटाँगीमा खेहलैलाऽऽऽऽ
 कण्ठसैको पटाँगीमा खेहलैलाऽऽऽऽ
 (आमा बाबु छोडी आयौ) २ यहि धामैले
 (माया बैना छोडी आयौ) २ यहि धामैले
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमीखेहलैलाऽऽऽऽ
 मालीमा गाइको दुधै त दधिमा जमाउ
 मारसीको चामलैमा दधिया मुछौं
 (फुलपाती अक्षताले) २ पुजैला
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी पुजैला
 हरे (धरतीको मातारीलाइ) २ पुजैला
 आकाशैको चन्द्रसूर्य पुजैला
 हरे पत्तलैको बासुकीलाइ पुजैला
 (गाँवैक्यारे सिमेभुमे पुजैला) २
 हरे थानै पति सिमेभुमे पुजैला
 गाँवैक्यारे चण्डीमाइलाइ पुजैला
 हरे गाँवैक्यारे पञ्चकन्ने पुजैला
 घाटै क्यारे देवी माइलाइ पुजैला
 गाँवैक्यारे भैरवीलाइ पुजैला
 रक्तकाली देवतालाइ पुजैला
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी पुजैला
 हरे देवी देउरालीलाइ पुजैला
 रिडी घाटकी देवतालाइ पुजैला
 हरे बेनी घाटकी देवतालाइ पुजैला
 सति घाटकी देवतालाइ पुजैला
 हरे हिमालै चुली देवतालाइ पुजैला
 वरैचुली देवतालाइ पुजैला
 देवैचुली देवतालाइ पुजैला
 घाँटेस्वरी देवतालाइ पुजैला
 हरे नाटेस्वरी देवतालाइ पुजैला
 (पुजैला यामैरानी पुजैला) २
 (दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी) २ पुजैला
 चारैपट्टि चारैकुना पुजैला

तेत्तिसै कोटी देवतालाई पुजैला
 हरे (कम्मरैको थालिया त)^२ बाहुलीमा लेउ
 (सुवर्णको थालिया त)^२ बाहुलीमा लेउ
 हरे (बाहुलीको थालिया त)^२ भुईं राखन
 (सुवर्णको थालिया त)^२ भुईं राखन
 जुहारैला यामै रानी जुहारैला
 हरे अञ्जुली जो बाँधी बाँधी जुहारैला
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी जुहारैला
 हारे (चारै पट्टि चारै कुना) जुहारैला
 तेत्तिस कोटी देवतालाई जुहारैला
 भुइं क्यारे तरवार खोजैला
 भुइं क्यारे तरवार बाहुलीमा लेउ
 सुवर्णको तरवार बाहुलीमा लेउ
 हरे बाहुलीको तरवार कम्मरैमा लेउ
 सुवर्णको तरवार कम्मरैमा लेउ
 हरे कम्मरैमको तरवार कुमैमा लेउ
 सुवर्णको तरवार कुमैमा लेउ
 हरे कुमै क्यारे तरवार शिरैमा लेउ
 सुवर्णको तरवार शिरैमा लेउ
 हरे शिर क्यारे तरवार कुमैमा लेउ
 सुवर्णका तरवार कुमैमा लेउ
 हरे कुमै क्यारे तरवार कम्मरैमा लेउ
 सुवर्णको तरवार कम्मरैमा लेउ
 हरे कम्मरैको तरवार बाहुलीमा लेउ
 सुवर्णका तरवार बाहुलीमा लेउ
 आफ्नो आफ्नो तरवार सेपी सेपी लेउ
 खिया लाग्यो घुनै लाग्यो सेपी सेपी लेउ
 आफ्नो आफ्नो तरवार बाणै लगाऊ
 घुन लाग्यो पुतलै लाग्यो बाणै लगाऊ
 तरुलै पातले बाणै लगाऊ
 पूर्व दिशाको राजैज्यूलाई हाँकै पठायो
 पश्चिम दिशाको राजैज्यूलाई हाँकै पठायो
 उत्तर दिशाको राजैज्यूलाई हाँकै पठायो
 हरे दक्षिणै दिशाको राजै ज्यूलाई हाँकै पठायो

कासपेली राजैज्यूलाई हाँकै पठायो
 चारै दिशाको राजैज्यूलाई हाँकै पठायो
 गोरखाको मैदानैमा हाँकै पठायो
 हरे पूर्वेली राजैज्यूले भण्डै गाड्यो
 पश्चिमेली राजै ज्यूले भण्डै गाड्यो
 हरे उत्तरैको राजै ज्यूले भण्डै गाड्यो
 दक्षिणको राजैज्यूले भण्डै गाड्यो
 हरे कासपेली राजैज्यूले भण्डै गाड्यो
 चारै दिशाको राजैज्यूले भण्डै गाड्यो
 गोरखाको मैदानमा भण्डै गाड्यो
 जाउन कटुवाले जैसी बोलाइ लेउ
 धुलौटोमा कोरी कोरी हेर जैसीज्यू
 हेरी^२ मा सकें जुरे साइत जेठको १२ गते जुरे साइत
 पूर्वेली राजैज्यूले सामेलै पाच्यो
 पश्चिमेली राजैज्यूले सामेलै पाच्यो
 उत्तरै दिशाको राजैज्यूले सामेलै पाच्यो
 दक्षिणै दिशाको राजैज्यूले सामेलै पाच्यो
 हरे चारै दिशाको राजैज्यूले सामेलै पाच्यो
 कासपेली राजैज्यूले सामेलै पाच्यो
 गोली गट्टा तोप बन्दुक सामेलै पाच्यो
 गोरखाको मैदानैमा सामेलै पाच्यो
 पूर्वेली राजैज्यूले हातै मिसायो
 हरे पश्चिम दिशाको राजैज्यूले हातै मिसायो
 उत्तर दिशाको राजैज्यूले हातै मिसायो
 हरे दक्षिण दिशाको राजैज्यूले हातै मिसायो
 कसपेली राजैज्यूले हातै मिसायो
 चारै दिशाको राजैज्यूले हातै मिसायो
 हरे गोरखाको मैदानमा हातै मिसायो
 जैसिंहे राजैज्यूलाई ठहरै पाच्यो
 हरे जैसिंहे राजैज्यूलाई ठहरै पाच्यो
 हरे कसपेली राजै ज्यूले ठहरै पाच्यो
 गोरखाको मैदानमा ठहरै पाच्यो
 रगतमा मुछ्छिएको शिरै पगरी
 पहिला समचार ल्याउने काली कौवा

तमरो राजा रणमा पन्यो साँच्चै^२ हो
साँच्चै नै कहु काली कौवा साँच्चै^२ हो?

दोसरो समचार ल्याउने सारीमा सुगा
तमरो राजा रणमा पन्या साँच्चै^२ हो
साँच्चै नै कहु सारीमा सुगा साँच्चै^२ हो?
तेसरो समचार ल्याउने त काली मैना
तमरो राजा रणमा पन्यो साँच्चै^२ हो
साँच्चै नै कहु कालीमा मैना
साँच्चै साँच्चै हो ?

रगतले म्छिएको शिरै पगरी
राजै ज्यूको चिनो देखी धुरु^२ रोइ
हरे राजै ज्यूलाई समझी^२ धुरु^२ रोइ
राजै ज्यूको चिनै देखी धुरु^२ रोइ
हरे राजै ज्यूको चिनै देखी धुरु^२ रोइ
रानीमा यामैवती धुरु^२ रोइ
हरे रानीमा यामै उठी धुरु^२ रोइ
गाउँ घरका भाइभारदार धुरु^२ रोइ
हरे तवेलाको हात्ती घोडा धुरु^२ रोइ
सारी सुगा काली मैना धुरु^२ रोइ (p. 213)

गरभ रहैला रानी गरभै रहयो
एक र महिना दुवै र मास गरभै रहयो
गरभ बाँधैमा रहैला रानी गरभै रहयो
दुवै महिना तिनै मास गरभै रहयो
गरभ बाँधैमा रहैला रानी गरभै रहयो
हरे तिनै महिना चारै मास गरभै रहयो
गरभ बाँधैमा रहैला रानी गरभै रहयो
हरे चारै महिना पाँचै मास गरभै रहयो
गरभ बाँधैमा रहैला रानी गरभै रहयो
हरे पाँचै महिना छवै मास गरभै रहयो (p. 206)
गरभ बाँधैमा रहैला रानी गरभै रहयो
छवै महिना पुगैला रानी तिसना लाग्यो
हरे दहि चामल अमिलोको तिसना लाग्यो
छवै महिना सातै मास गरभै रहयो
गरभ बाँधैमा रहैला रानी गरभै रहयो

सातै महिना आठै मास गरभै रहयो
गरभ बाँधैमा रहैला रानी गरभै रहयो
आठै महिना नवै मास गरभै रहयो
हरे गरभ बाँधैमा रहैला रानी गरभै रहयो
नवै माहना दशै मास गरभै रहयो
गरभ बाँधैमा रहैला रानी गरभै रहयो
दशै महिना पुगैला रानी कष्ट लाग्यो (p. 206)
हरे रानी ज्यूलाई कष्ट लाग्यो सोडिनी बोलाइ लेउ
जाउनमा जाउ कटुवाले सोडिनी बोलाइ लेउ
हरे राजैज्यूको रगतलो जन्म्यो जैसी बोलाइ लेउ
जाउनमा जाउ कटुवाले जैसी बोलाइ लेउ
धुलौटोमा कोरी कोरी हेर जैसी ज्यू
हेरिमा हेरी सक्यौ मूलै घनाघोर
यीन यीन बालकको मूलै घनाघोर
पहिले खावैला बाबैज्यूलाई पछि खावैला माँ SSSSSSS
राजै ज्यूको रगतलो जन्म्यो नालै बेडाऔं
हरे राजै ज्यूको रगतलो जन्म्यो
सुनैको स्याँगियाले नालै बेडाऔं
हरे सुनैको स्याँगियाले नालै बेडाऔं
बालकलाई नुहाइ धुवाइ कपडै लगाउ
हरे घर बना कपडा जो कपडै लगाउ
यीन यीन बालक त माइतीको सरण
हामी त जान्छु स्वामीको साथ माइतीको सरण
हरे यीन यीन बालक त माइतीको सरण
पालेमा पून्य मारेमा हत्य माइतीको सरण
हरे पालेमा पून्य मारेमा हते माइतीको सरण
हामी त जान्छु स्वामीको साथ माइतीको सरण
(p. 209-10)

उल्टो सुल्टो बाजै बजनै लाग्यो
(उल्टो सुल्टो बाजै त)^२ बजनै लाग्यो
राजै ज्यूको मलामी त)^२ चले लस्कर
हरे (भागीरथी जमुनैमा) २ भए दाखिला
(भागीरथी जमुनैमा)^२ भए दाखिला
(हरे गण्डकीको निकटैमा)^२ सोलै गाडौं

गण्डकीको निकटैमा सोलै गाडौं
 सोलैको उपरैमा चितै बनाऊ
 हरे चितैको उपरैमा चँदुवा टाँगौं
 रानीमा यामैवती घीउ छाँया हेरन
 रानीमा यामैवती तेल छाँया हेरन
 रानीमा यामैवती दूध छाँया हेरन
 हरे रानीमा यामैवती पानी छाँया हेरन (p. 208)

(रानीमा यामैवती)^२ राम^२ बोलन
 (हरे रानीमा यामैवती)^२ राम^२ बोलन
 (रानीमा यामैवती)^२ सोलै चढाउ
 (हरे दाहिने वर्ता घुमी^२ सोलै चढाउ (p. 209)
 (रानीमा यामैवती)^२ सोलै चढाउ
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी सोलै चढाउ
 रानीमा यामैवती भष्मै खरानी (p. 209)

हरे रानीमा यामैवती भष्मै खरानी
 (राजै ज्यूले जन्मै लिए)^२ क्यामोराको भेष
 (हरे राजै ज्यूले जन्मै लिए)^२ क्यामोराको भेष
 (रानी ज्यूले जन्मै लिए)^२ पोतलीको भेष
 (हरे रानी ज्यूले जन्मै लिए)^२ पोतलीको भेष
 क्यामोराको भेषै गरी उडि चली जाऊ
 हरे क्यामोराको भेषै गरी उडि चली जाऊ
 पोतलीको भेषै गरी उडि चली जाऊ
 हरे पोतलीको भेषै गरी उडि चली जाऊ

जुहारैला रानी ज्यू जुहारैला
 अञ्जुली जो बाँधी बाँधी जुहारैला
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी जुहारैला
 चारैपट्टि चारैकुना जुहारैला
 हरे तेत्तिसै कोटी देवतालाइ जुहारैला

११) देउराली पर्व

हिमालै चुली पल्लो पट्टि हामरैको थान
 हरे जाउनमा जाउ माया बैना पुजनालाई जाऊ

देवी र देउरालीलाई पुजनालाई जाऊ
 हिउँदै भनौ मंसिर महिना वर्षालाई भनौ जेठ
 नमरी बाँचे कुशलै रहे आगोन होला भेट
 हामी त जान्छौं इन्द्रलोक भलै विदा देऊ
 भलै विदा भलै सिदा भलै आशिष
 तम् त बैठ मायाबैना हामी त चली जाऊ (p. 211)

वरैचुली पल्लै पट्टि हामरैको थान
 हरे जाउनमा जाउ माया बैना पुजनालाई जाऊ
 गण्डकीको निकटतिर देउरालीको थान
 जाउनमा जाउ माया बैना पुजनलाई जाऊ
 देवी र देउरालीलाई पुजनालाई जाऊ
 हिउँदै भनौ मंसिर महिना वर्षालाई भनौ जेठ
 नमरी बाँचे कुशलै रहे आगोन होला भेट
 (हामी त जान्छौं इन्द्रलोक भलै विदा देऊ)^२
 भलै विदा भलै सिदा भलै आशिष
 तुम त बैठ माया बैना

हामी त जान्छौं इन्द्रलोक भलै विदा देऊ
 राजै ज्यूको वीरपट्टा चढावैला,
 रानीज्यूको वीरपट्टा चढावैला (p. 211)
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी चढावैला
 देवी र देउरालीलाई चढावैला
 फुलपाती अक्षताले पुजैला
 दाहिने वर्ता घुमी घुमी पुजैला
 देवी देउरालीलाई पुजैला
 आफ्नो आफ्नो मेडियालाई पसैला
 फुलपाती अक्षताले पसैला
 आफ्नो आफ्नो मेडिया त चढावैला
 देवी र देउरालीलाई चढावैला (p. 213)

((श्रोत: मिति २०७०/०२/११ देखि १३ गतेसम्म
 रक्तकाली मन्दिर, माभ्रिठार, नुवाकोटमा भएको घाँटु
 नाँच प्रदर्शन अवलोकन गरी शोधकर्ताद्वारा सङ्कलित)

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