I. *Thōte* as a Socio-Aesthetic Site of Gurung Ethnicity and Identity

> After all, the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, between literature and nonliterature and so forth are not laid up in heaven. Every specific situation is historical. And the growth of literature is not merely development and change within the fixed boundaries of any given definition; the boundaries themselves are constantly changing. The shift of boundaries between various strata (including literature) in a culture is an extremely slow and complex process. Isolated border violations of any given specific definition (such as those mentioned above) are only symptomatic of this larger process, which occurs at a great depth. (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination* 27)

The comparative analytical study of continuities and shifts noticed in traditional rural and modern urban versions of *Thōte* explores that the ritual performance is not only the continuation and preservation of the Gurung tradition and culture, but also one of the tribal strategies of reasserting their identity in negotiation and fusion to the local, national, and global forces in the urban context of its performance. The continuities in the performance expose who they were/are through the reiteration of their primitive natural, ritual, religious, economic, aesthetic, and everyday activities such as their food habits, geographical locations, language, and dress codes. The shifts, on the contrary, depict how the tribal identity is in contestation to the emerging local, national, and global forces. Such contestation has conditioned the ritual performance to become a "social drama" of dramatizing the identity politics of the community through the reenactment of their tribal attributes (Turner 8), everydayness, aesthetics, 'strategic essentialism,' and politics of negotiation and fusion for addressing the intra-communal, inter-communal, and glocal dialectics.

Thōte, one of the primitive Gurung tribal rituals, is "performed in *Chaitra* and *Shrawan* after the name of *Ubhauli* and *Udhauli*" respectively (Suk Bahadur Gurung[1]). Traditionally, they perform three days in *Chaitra* and three days in *Shrawan*. They perform it[2] only on Tuesdays. It is celebrated compulsorily on the first and last Tuesdays of the months, while they select one of the remaining Tuesdays according to the consent and convenience of the villagers. It is a ritual of "village worship and defense" known also as a *gaun puja*. The collective communal ritual invites the involvement of the whole villagers directly or indirectly. They perform it as a ritual act of worshipping the gods and deities on the one hand, and chasing away the natural and supernatural evil forces including diseases and wild animals from the village on the other. The basic purpose of the ritual performance is to wish for better life and protection to themselves, crops, and cattle. The ritual is also performed in Pokhara since 2052 B.S. However, they have cut it[3] short and made it a one/one day performance and celebrate it only on the last Tuesdays of the months. The ritual performance in Pokhara city, though started with a purpose of continuing and preserving the Gurung culture and tradition, has undergone tremendous modifications and changes[4] in the urban setting of its performance.

The continuities in the performance of *Thōte* expose how the primitive Gurung tribal identity has been shaped by the Natural courses and supernatural beliefs

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[1] His interview text in Nepali, all translations mine.

[2] It is called a traditional rural version and its text is developed in Chapter IV.

[3] It is named modern urban version and its text is developed in Chapter V.

[4] Chapter VI of the research gives in-depth discussion of the continuities and shifts taking place in the ritual performance.

practiced according to the philosophy of Bon religion. The use of "*bhakimlo*, a wild plant, for making gates and *fitlees*, *ranijhar*, a wild weed, for weaving garlands and camouflaging the performers, and worshipping different landscapes and natural powers" like hailstorm to rainfall appointing the tribal shamans like *Pachyu* and *Khyabri* in the ritual reveal their identity in relation to the Nature and the Bonism (Suk Bahadur Gurung). The ritual also shows the mixed economic activities and aesthetic aspects of their identity based on their everyday activities like hunting, herding, and farming

The mandatory use and exhibition of the tribal weapons like "*bhallas*, bows, arrows, and knives disguising themselves with *ranijhar* and body and face painting" reminds the aesthetics and strategies they undertook during their hunts in the jungles (Tham Bahadur Gurung[5]). The ritual as an act of "worshipping the gods and chasing out the evils from the village for the health and protection of their lives, crops, and cattle" suggest their adoption of the mixed economic practices of herding and farming for livelihood (Santa Kumari Gurung[6]). The use of the costumes, domestic crafts, musical instruments like *dhyangro*, *jhurma*, *dholak* reflect their early aesthetic and everyday practices according to the need in the locations they lived and the socio-economic practices they adopted.

The shifts, on the other hand, show the gradual transformation in their identity politics as per the rhythm of the changes taking place in the urban context. According to the demand of the time and place, the Gurungs have modified not only the ritual, but also their politics of exposing themselves through its repetitive performances.

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[5] His interview text in Nepali, all translations mine.

[6] Her interview text in Nepali, all translations mine.

Here the poetics of the repetition underlines the politics of exhibiting who they are to the world. The Gurung identity politics of negotiation and fusion to the local, national, and global forces made the ritual performance a dialogic and ever shifting. The ritual born out of the beliefs and practices of the Bonism has started including the elements of the Buddhism and Hinduism. The use of "*khada* along with the garland of *ranijhar* and the avoidance of the blood sacrifice and alcohol in the ritual" imply the fusion of the Buddhism (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*).

The ritual performance as a "cultural collage" of all Gurung rituals and cultures in Pokhara has also given a space to the elements of the Hinduism (Pavis 9). Some of such cultures are *Ghantu* Dance based on the life story of "Hindu king Parsuram and queen Pamphadevi" (Jagman Gurung 185-86), *Maruni* Dance equally popular even in other communities like Magars, and *Krishna Charitra* that dramatizes the life story of the Hindu God Krishna. The inclusion of all such and more other cultures in the ritual has made it more politically contentious; since the performance has become a political strategy of exhibiting the tribal unity, power, and cultural heritage collectively in the ritual disguise. Moreover, the adoption of the other religions and cultures as the parts of the ritual and the use of modern technology and media like video recording to TV broadcast are some evidences of how the Gurung identity is negotiating and adopting fusion to the national and global forces.

So the study of the ritual as a performative dialogic discourse of the Gurung identity departs from the common perception of the ritual like *Thōte* as a mere "primitive fiction, illusion, or opinion based upon false reasoning" and having no connection to everyday life and politics (Guerin and et al. 183). It also departs from the myth critics who claim that the ritual is a symbolic dramatization or embodiment of the "fundamental . . . human instincts" that all races inherit collectively but

unconsciously (183). According to the myth or archetypal thinkers, the ritual performance is a symbolic act-out of the "archetypes" (Jung, *Archetypes* 6), the "primordial vision[s]" that have cultural differences only in surface levels with a common universal significance and implication in underlying structure (*Modern* 164).

All human beings, as they claim, share the same fundamental impulses and instincts irrespective of their cultural differences. So the main purpose of the myth critics and archetypal anthropologists is to excavate the common underlying system of the rituals out of their seemingly diverse and incoherent surface structures. Whatever the arguments are, the aforementioned views have a commonality in taking the ritual as a non discursive apolitical component of human cultures though the common thinkers take it as the fictional fabrication of the individual cultures and the myth critics or archetypal anthropologists believe it as a universal category fundamentally shaping and influencing our thoughts and behaviors unconsciously.

It also largely differs from the purely anthropological study of the ritual though the nature of the research study is highly interdisciplinary. Instead of the descriptive and quantitative approach, it applies the qualitative and analytical approach to explore the issues of Gurung ethnicity and thier identity politics in the *Thōte* performance. For that the study not only deals with the religious, social, economic, and political aspects, but also equally engages with the aesthetic aspects of and components in the ritual and shows how all these tribal attributes contribute in forming and shifting the Gurung identity. Moreover, the issue based approach used in the study makes it intensive rather than extensive on the one hand, and on the other, binds it by the theoretical concepts borrowed from different streams of the cultural studies such as performance studies, ritual theories, ethnic studies, feminisms, and

glocal studies. But all these theories move only around the issue of identity in relation to the Gurung culture and ethnicity.

The approach used in the research study is interdisciplinary because of the issue of identity explored in the area of ritual study. Identity, which is one of the most difficult terms to define, is neither given nor discovered. It, as Eduardo Mendieta argues, is "always constituted, constructed, invented, imagined, imposed, projected, suffered, and celebrated" (408). So it is "never univocal, stable, or innocent" (408). It is rather a process of constitution and negotiation among the "matrix of vectors: nation, class, gender, race, and ethnicity," to name some, that always condition it to be positional and conversational between or among the local, national and global forces (408).

The "multiple forms of identity" become evident even in the "[i]dentity-based political" and cultural movements in the name of "race, gender, ethnicity, religion, culture, nationality, disability, age[,] . . . [a]nd other forms of socially recognized identity" (Alcoff 2). The study on the issue of identity, therefore, inevitably becomes interdisciplinary in both perspective and area; since the study of, as Stuart Hall opines, "psychology, culture, politics, and economics, as well as philosophy and history" becomes unavoidable for understanding and exploring what identity is and how it is constructed or formed (qtd. in Alcoff 3).

So the ideas and issues from gender and glocal studies become pertinent for the study while dealing with the intra-communal and glocal conflicts and negotiations seen in the *Thōte* performance. The ritual, on the one hand, shows how the Gurung identity is in constant contestation to the internal identity struggles in terms of gender, age, and region, and on the other, it also shows the tribal identity in constant "dialogue across differences" of the national and global cultures and forces (Mohanty

125). As a result, the *Thōte* performance is becoming a site of enacting the individual to the social responsibilities of maintaining their individual and tribal identities at the same time. So the "cross-cultural referencing" in the ritual is a strategy to meet out their social responsibility of addressing the intercultural and glocal conflicts (Aston and Savona 101). For the analysis of such a "coalition politics based upon the 'strategic use of identity categories'" in the ritual (Beasley 81), the research applies Spivak's concept of "strategic essentialism," in which the group identity is used provisionally as a form of resistance against and negotiation to the national and global forces with a constant realization of its limitations (*In Other Worlds* 205).

The theoretical concepts of culture, which Raymond Williams claims to be "one of the two or three most complicated words" to define (25), become pertinent in course of exploring *Thōte* as a part of the Gurung cultural tradition with "its intricate historical development" reflecting the "intellectual, spiritual," and "aesthetic" to the social, economic, and other cultural aspects of the Gurung identity (26-27). The ritual is a "living tradition" of the Gurung community (Jenks 3), which, as Richard Fox posits, contains a "set of understanding and a consciousness under active construction by which [the Gurungs] interpret the world around them" (10). Reflecting on its construction, the researcher argues that *Thōte*, a part of Gurung culture, is a "set of processes of transformations [which] are moving, acting, [and] interacting" along with the rhythm of changes taking place in the national and international societies (Law 15).

So the study largely leans up on Stuart Hall's view of cultural transformation as a process of "struggle and resistance" ("Notes on Deconstructing" 64). Talking about the cultural transformations, he further argues:

> '[T]ransformations' are at the heart of the study of . . . culture. I mean the active work on existing traditions and activities, their active reworking, so that they come to stand in a different relation to the ways . . . people live and the ways they define their relations to each other, to 'the other' and to their conditions of life. So the culture has "the double movement of containment and resistance, which is always inevitably inside it. On the bases of the culture, people [threaten] constantly to erupt: and, when they [do] so, they break on to the stage of patronage and power with a threatening din and clamour — with fife and drum, cockade and effigy, proclamation and ritual — and often with a striking, popular, ritual discipline. (64-65)

As the given quote reveals, the shifts in the culture like the ones seen in the *Thōte* performance is political as it carries the interests of the containment and resistance in the culturally contested spatio-temporal context of Pokhara city. The ritual performance, as Chris Jenks opines, "does not merely entertain; it enriches and uplifts; it embodies a struggle in its inception and in its apprehension which itself involves the maximization or even the extension of" the tribal potential (4).

Similarly, the theoretical concepts of ethnicity and ethnic identity politics, the highly contested and researched issues in both literature and anthropology at present politics and academics, becomes applicable in the research while exploring the ritual performance as a dramatization of Gurung ethnicity and its identity politics. The term 'ethnicity,' derived from "the Greek word *ethnos*" that means a tribe, "race or large group of people having common traits and customs" with "exotic primitive culture" (Singh 50), has become, in Kathleen Kerr's words, "a locus of contestation primarily between primordialists and instrumentalists in the 1950s" (363). The primordialists

view ethnicity as an essential category that is "given and ineffable . . . bond . . . [of] heredity . . . linking a community together through cultural commonalities" (363). But the instrumentalists see it as a social construct and "malleable, often intentionally produced or multiple, because of historical circumstances such as" the national unification and migration (363).

Ethnicity, therefore, "embod[ies] a paradox: on the one hand, it holds out the promise of social recognition of spiritual ties and cultural [commonalities]; on the other, it is a fiction produced in the process of nationalization which erases underlying social hybridization" (363). Moreover, "ethnicity is a deeply rooted emotional component of identity," which the ethnic groups like Gurungs express and dramatize through their ritual and cultural performances (Fisher 165). They use the ritual or cultural performance as a means "of finding a voice or style that does not violate one's several components of identity" (196). Explaining these concepts, the research explores the *Thōte* performance as an exhibition of the "pluralist, multidimensional, or multifaceted concept of the [Gurung] self" (196). This exploration further shows the "linkage between cultural enactments and politics," "spelling out the dynamics of cultural contestation through the discussion of" the political aspects of the ritual performance (Ross 65).

In addition to all these theoretical ideas, the research also exploits the ideas from the performance and ritual theories for analyzing and exploring the ritualistic components and the performative poetics of *Thōte*. It studies the ritual as a genre of performance which not only dramatizes the natural and supernatural beliefs and practices of a distant past, but also, as Richard Schechner views, reenacts the "reality of the villagers' everyday lives – of hunting and farming, feasting, sharing, exchanging, marrying, child rearing, politicking, fighting, ageing, sickening, [and]

dying" (*Performance Theory* 44). It is, as Grotowski says, "confrontation[al]" between the past and present, self and other, in-groups and out-groups (qtd. in Schechner 44). The motive "of such performance is to entertain, to have fun, and to create what Victor Turner calls 'spontaneous communitas' [by] the dissolutions of boundaries shutting off from each other. The resulting experience . . . of [such practice is a] collective collaboration" (156). The study also analyzes the ritual performance as, in John Tulloch's words, "a site of transgressive 'negotiation[s]' (2), which "reproduce, enable, sustain, challenge, subvert, critique, and naturalize" the existing ideologies, beliefs, and practices within and outside the community (5).

The researcher using all the relevant theoretical ideas in the analytical part argues that the ritual performance is, as in Victor Turner's words, a "cultural-aesthetic mirror" of the Gurung community and their identity politics. It is the "self-reflexivity" of the Gurung cultural identity with "an important aspect of social metacommentary" (8). The ritual, therefore, is a "multidisciplinary symposium" (Geertz 11), which preserves and demonstrates the attempts and struggles of the tribe "to come to terms with the diversity of the way [the Gurungs] construct their lives in the act of leading them" (16). The dissertation, therefore, contends that the ritual, as in Sherry Ortner words, is a "historically developed and socially rooted body of the conceptions and orderings of consciousness that we call culture" (5). He further views:

> The ritual process, then, is a matter of shaping actors in such a way that they wind up appropriating cultural meaning as personally held orientations. At the same time, however, because cultural orientations are, at the abstract level, diffuse, general, somewhat unsystematic and often mutually contradictory, it is in ritual that they receive the shaping and systematization that render them more directly relevant to and

> reflective of the realities of actual social life. Ritual, then, is a sort of two way transformer, shaping consciousness in conformity with culture, but at the same time shaping culture in conformity with the more immediate social-action and social structural determinants of consciousness in everyday life. (5)

The quote implies that the transformations in the ritual performance results out of the dialectics between the ritual world and the real world. So the changes in the ritual are evidences of the way the members in the community are addressing and adopting the shifts in both physical and mental levels. All these relevant theoretical concepts are used to analyze the shifts in the ritual performance and its reflection of the Gurung identity politics.

However, it maintains certain limitations in terms of area and theories. As the ritual is the area analyzed from the perspective of cultural studies over the issue of identity, the study does not include other rituals of the Gurung community except *Thōte* for the critical analysis though some other rituals and cultures are briefly mentioned in chapter two as a part of introducing the Gurung ethnicity and culture. Even in the case of *Thōte*, it incorporates only two versions—one is the traditional rural version performed in the village of Lumle in Kaski and another is the urban version performed in Pokhara since 2052 B.S. Though many regional varieties are found in the rural version, they are not the parts of the research; since the focus of the work is on the continuities, shifts, and their dialectics to the Gurung identity politics rather than the exploration of the varieties. The issue of the diversity in the ritual and its impact in the tribal identity can be a subject of further study.

In order to explore *Thōte* as a socio-political and aesthetic mirror of the Gurung community, the research largely leans up on Mikhail Bakhtin's view that "the

boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, between literature and nonliterature and so forth are not laid up in heaven" (27). Following his logic, the study applies the interdisciplinary approach of literature and anthropology to show the politics of the ritual through its poetics of the performance. As Paul Benson in *Anthropology and Literature* argues that the ritual is an art that fuses "anthropology and literature" (xi), the research deals the *Thōte* performance as "a discourse where the beauty and the [conflicts] of the world are textually empowered by the carefully chosen constructions and subjective understandings" (xi).

Because of such interdisciplinary characteristics of the ritual, the act of separating the "memoir" qualities of literature in anthropology and political qualities of anthropology in literature "is to create a false dichotomy," which, as Edward M. Burner posits, "only makes sense if one believes that the data are independent of how those data were acquired" (4). As he further claims, the events "of the memoir and the events of the ethnography occur simultaneously in experience, and . . . separat[ion] of them . . . takes some considerable mental gymnastics and does violence to the lived experience" (4).

Moreover, the application of the interdisciplinary approach becomes pertinent as the ritual like *Thōte* is, as Richard Bauman argues, one of the oral and performative "social practices by which social life is accomplished" (113). As he says, the politics of the ritual becomes evident as it is a performative form of "telling stories to each other . . . constructing and negotiating social identity; investing the experimental landscape with moral significance in a way that can be brought to bear human behavior . . . [by] generating, interpreting, and transforming the work experience" (113). However, the study here is not about whether the ritual performance is more the matter of literature or anthropology but it is about a "deep sense of context and

social action that are essential to any conception of the literature and ritual as the modes of the social practices” (113).

Similar limitations are taken in the application of the concepts from the aforementioned theories. As the issue of identity demands, the theoretical approach is multi and interdisciplinary. However, the performance theory is taken as the main base of the conceptual framework as the issue of the identity is explored in relation to the ritual performance. Though the performance studies, as Richard Schechner mentions, covers the study of “[r]ites, ceremonies, shamanism, eruption and resolution of social crisis, performance in everyday life, sports, entertainments, play, art making process, and ritual,” the present work delimits it on the ritual theories giving relevant engagements to the issues of rites, ceremonies, shamanism, and social crisis wherever needs be (*Performance Theory* 16-17). While using these theories, the research has made no comprehensive and explanatory discussion on them. Instead, it has briefly introduced them showing their link to each other and to the issue of identity in introductory chapter. The relevant theorists and their ideas are cited and analyzed at places needed for exploring and discussing the issue of the Gurung identity politics and its shifts as reflected in the *Thōte* performance.

The research is also an attempt to address the scarcity of studying the rituals like *Thōte* of the Gurung community. Except some two or three page long descriptions published here and there in newspapers, magazines, and an M.A. thesis by Ajay Gurung, no other extensive and analytical studies on the ritual are available—let alone from the perspective of its role in Gurung identity politics and formation. A three page long report[7] published in *Tamu Shu* by *Tamu Dhi* deals only about the

[7] The report in Nepali, all translations mine.

procedure of the *Thōte* performance in brief and highlights the importance of continuing its performance in Pokhara (13-15).

Another single page long write-up by Ganesh Bahadur Gurung[8] in *Ngyoi Nasa Dhi: Hamro Gaun Ghar* tells us about "his experience of *Thōte* in Parbat where it is called *Simlibar*" (25). Shiva Sharma, in a short news report[9], published in *Kantipur Daily*, reflects on how "the Gurungs celebrated the *Thōte* of *Shrawan*, 2066 B.S. moving through the streets of Pokhara" (11). Even Jagman Gurung and Homa Thakali Gurungs include short introductory discussions on the ritual. Ajay Gurung has made the first extensive study on the ritual as a partial research paper for his M.A. Degree under the guidance of this researcher. His work claims that the continuation of the ritual in Pokhara helps preserve the Gurung cultural dynamics (43-44). However, his research limits the study on the descriptive discussion of the urban version along with other cultures. The present research credits his idea while developing chapter II.

Considering these limitations, scarcities, and applying the interdisciplinary approach in terms of area and multidisciplinary theoretical perspectives, the research study aims to explore the ritual performance as a site of cultural contestation where the Gurung identity politics is dramatized in a ritualized form. It examines the site as a reenactment of the tribal strategies of using their attributes, aesthetics, everydayness, 'strategic essentialism,' and the politics of negotiation and fusion to maintain their tribal identity, keeping the conversational but harmonious relation to the local, national, and global forces. In addition to the objective of studying the ritual as a reflection of the Gurung identity in transformation, the research also comes up with

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[8] His writing in Nepali, all translations mine.

[9] The news report is in Nepali, all translations mine.

the descriptive texts on the traditional rural and modern urban versions with a hope that they will supplement the only oral existence of the ritial that is already on the verge of disappearance.

So the significance of the research lies in initiating a trend of working on the Gurung rituals and cultures, most of which are swiftly disappearing. The attempt may contribute in the preservation of the tribal heritage existing only in oral forms for the coming generations. It can also equally encourage other scholars and students from the community or outside to impart their interest in exploring the rich cultural tradition of the tribe. Similarly, it invites the study of ritual, generally considered as an anthropological domain, into the area of literary studies and gives impetus to look at the dialogue taking place between the ritual poetics and the tribal politics. More importantly, the work contributes the readers to take the ritual also as a part of the political discourse that constitutes and exposes the identity politics explicitly and implicitly in transformation.

For all these purposes, the researcher has used the library research and field research based methodologies. The library research methodology has been used to collect the texts of the relevant theories, about the Gurung tribe and their culture in print versions. The collected texts on the theories are used to develop the introdcutory chapter and cite the applicable concepts for the analysis of the ritual versions, while the texts collected about the Gurung tribe and culture are used to write the critical introduction to the Gurung ethnicity and culture from past to the present, which also functions as the review of literature and the background of what the ritual reflects about the trend of Gurung identity formation. The field research methodology, on the other hand, has been conducted for collecting the archives of both traditional rural and

modern urban versions of *Thōte*; since the ritual, especially the rural version, lacks the written and visual texts or archives.

In the field research, the qualitative research design has been adopted in which the case study approach is used for collecting the archives of *Thōte*, particularly the traditional rural version. As M. Q. Patton explains that the case can be of "individuals, groups, neighborhoods, programs, organizations, cultures, regions, or nation-states" (447), this approach is useful for "the process of analysis or the product of analysis or both" (447). It is, as R.K. Yin defines, an empirical inquiry that investigates a . . . phenomenon within its real life context" (13). This approach is found relevant to collect "basic information about [the ritual] where little research has been conducted" (Merriam 27).

As Yin claims that the personal "interviews are essential sources of the case study information (89), the researcher has conducted the audio tape record of personal interviews[10]. The case study interviews, as Yin asserts, are "open-ended in nature because the participants are asked about the facts of a matter as well as their opinions" (90). The open-ended questions are asked to the interviewees with a purpose of getting their "experiences unconstrained" (Creswell 204). The interview questions have been set prior to the collection of data and the data have been collected through audio taped unstructured interviews at the Lumle Village Development Committee (V.D.C) and Pokhara of Kaski district. Pokhara has been selected as a study area as the urban version of the *Thōte* is performed only in Pokhara city, while Lumle V.D.C has been selected to see the continuities and transformations in the two different

[10] The transcription of the question-answer version of the interviews is included in the Appendix of the research.

versions because only in this area the ritual is called *Thōte* and following the same name it is performed in Pokhara. However, two interviewees are selected from Syangja for collecting some information on its regional varieties.

As Creswell explains that "the intent of qualitative research is not to generalize . . . but to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon," the "purposeful sampling" has been used; since it is the sampling that "the qualitative researcher purposefully or intentionally selects individuals and sites" (193). Furthermore, as Patton argues that "the focus of qualitative research" is on "small samples or single cases that have been selected purposefully to permit inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon in-depth" (46), the researcher has selected two interviewees from Lumle and two from Syangja on the basis of a criteria that includes their age, gender, regions, and experiences. According to Patton, such a small samples on the basis of "purposeful sampling leads to selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth" (46). He further says that the qualitative studies are strengthened by pulling from a smaller sample. This non-probability sampling is used to solve qualitative problems by discovering occurrences, the implications, and relationships that link these occurrences.

The selected interviewees are Suk Bahadur Gurung and his wife Santa Kumari Gurung, the permanent residents of Lumle- 1, Kaski. Mr. Gurung is 67 and Mrs. Gurung is 62 year old who from childhood up to now have gathered tremendous experience of the *Thōte* performance. The third person is Tham Bahadur Gurung of 65, a permanent inhabitant of Darau Sirubari- 9, Syangja, now living in Prithvi Chok-8, Pokhara. Ruk Bahadur Gurung, a resident of Bhirkot Arther, Syangja, is the fourth interviewee. Sixty three year old Mr. Gurung, now lives in Pokhara, is the *Thōte*

Coordinator in Tamu Dhi Nepal during the time of the interview. He is also an ex-president and advisor of Andhikhola Tamu Samaj in Pokhara.

The field research began after the acceptance of my proposal by Central Department of English, Tribhuwan University. For the collection of data, I visited Pokhara three times and Lumle once. I watched the performance of Pokhara too. I visited different Gurung community houses established in different locations of Pokhara city. The repeatedly visited community houses are Andhikhola Tamu Samaj, Bagale Tole Tamu Samaj, and Tamu Dhi Nepal. I collected two different video records of the urban version: one is the record of *Thōte* performance of *Chaitra* 27, 2063 B.S. recorded by Tamu Dhi Nepal and another is of *Shrawan* 27, 2066 B.S. recorded by Lotus Studio, Pokhara. Similarly, I also collected some photographs of both the urban and rural versions of the ritual performance from the Studio. These archives are purposefully selected.

One of the purposes of the selection is to tally the credibility of the visual representations by the autonomous commercial institution and by the leading Gurung organization. Another purpose is to see if there are some differences in the performances of *Ubhauli* and *Udhauli*. The purpose of the visits was also to select, decide, and conduct interviews for the rural versions. Finally, the interviews were taken on the 1st and 2nd *Magh* of 2066 B.S. in different sites of Pokhara and Lumle. Moreover, the interviewees from Lumle were consulted twice through telephones for additional information and conforming the confusions and contradictions during the drafting phase of the research.

During the time of data analysis and interpretation, the systematic data reduction process is applied. In the first step, the interviews are transcribed and translated into English language. Then the relevant information and opinions are

coded. It has been narrowed down through thematization process of categorizing them on the basis of the similar themes and issues. The credibility of the data has been conformed and some of them are even changed through the process of reconsultation and watching the performance of the urban version. The research ethics has been maintained by avoiding the private issues and ideas even in the transcription and taking permission of the interviewees while using their information and opinions in the research. For that the researcher replayed the recorded interviews to them and asked them for their agreement and disagreement about the way their information are used in the research.

The accomplishment of the whole project has been organized into seven chapters. The first chapter contains the brief introductions on the research issue, claim, perspectives, departure, objectives, significances, limitations, and methodology. Brief discussions in terms of origin, geography, economy, religions, customs, costumes, rituals, and cultures are encapsulated in the critical introduction of the Gurungs in chapter two. The chapter three and four incorporate descriptive texts on the traditional rural and modern urban versions of the *Thōte* respectively. The shifts in the versions and their reasons are discussed in chapter five. The sixth chapter includes an intensive analysis of the ritual exposing its continuities and shifts in relation to the Gurung identity politics. It includes the exploration of how the ritual as a discursive discourse mirrors out the different aspects of the Gurung identity formation in accordance to the changes taking place in the local, national, and international societies.

Finally the seventh chapter concludes its findings stating that neither the ritual nor the Gurung identity is static. Instead, they are in constant dialogue for negotiation and fusion in terms of what is primitive and tribal with the emerging socio-political

changes. As a result, the ritual is becoming a more dialogic space where the formation and reformation of the Gurung identity is dramatically enacted with strategic use of their everydayness, tribal attributes, aesthetics, 'strategic essentialism,' and politics of the negotiation and fusion to the national and global forces. So the research concludes with an idea that the ritual performance is not only the continuation and preservation of the Gurung tradition and culture, but also a performative discourse with socio-political agendas for addressing the intra-communal, inter-communal, and glocal conflicts at the same time. While addressing these political forces, both the ritual performance and the Gurung identity are becoming more hybrids in terms of their cross-cultural and glocal referencing.

II. Gurung Ethnicity and Culture from Past to Present: A Critical Introduction

Gurung, known as one of the ethnic groups of Nepal, is one of the hunting nomadic tribes in origin, sharing the high hilly and Himalayan regions of Western Nepal. Also popular as the "thunders of Himalayas," "high landers" (Regmi vii), and "the people of the Himalayan foothills and high hills" (Macfarlane, *Resources* 25), they prefer to call themselves "*Tamu*" in Gurung tongue. The lexical meaning of the name supports the same geo-political implication of the epithets mentioned above. The morphemes, as Khusiman Gurung[11] clarifies, "*ta* refers to an axe or thunderbolt and *mu* to sky" (1). In another definition given by Murari Prasad Regmi, "*ta*" implies "up" or "thunder" and "*mu*" is a derivative of "*mhi*" that stands for "people" (vii). Regmi, therefore, argues that the implication of "the thunder" in the name *Tamu* "metaphorizes the traits of bravery and fearlessness of the Gurungs" (vii). As the epithets and definitions of *Tamu* suggest, Gurungs are originally the inhabitants of the upper lands of high hills and Himalayas practicing the hunting life style with the weapons like an 'axe' and the thunder like power and mobility.

Tamu, a tribe of "Mongolian race with well-built middle sized body structure" (Uklab and Adhikari[12] 13), first came in "Mustang in around the first century A.D." (Thakali Gurung[13] 3). They migrated from Mongol to China to Tibet and to Nepal in course of hunting for their livelihood. For almost 500 year, as Alan Macfarlane mentions, lived a nomadic life "on the north-south ridges that run down from the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri Himalayan ranges" of Western Nepal (12). But, as Homa

[11] His text in Nepali, all translations mine

[12] Their text in Nepali, all translations mine.

[13] Her text in Nepali, all translations mine.

Thakali Gurung claims referring to the oral *Tamu Pye* (*Bedha*/Scripture), “the fertile land of Kohla Sothar, a Northern part of the present Tangting village in Kaski, allured the Gurungs to shift their hunting life style and adopted a relatively more stable pasture and agriculture based social life in around 500 A.D” (3).

From the settlement onwards, the tribe expanded their inhabitation in present “Syangja, Kaski, Lamjung, Gorkha, Parvat, Manang, Mustang, and Tanahu” districts (Regmi 39). According to the Government record of Nepal, the Gurung region includes “Kaski, Lamjung, Gorkha, Syangja, Manang, and Tanahu of Gandaki Zone and Parvat of Dhaulagiri Zone” (Uklab and Adhikari 13). The references of the *Ghale* Rulers of Ligligkot in Lamjung and Mustange and Manange *rajas* (kings) found in the official records of Nepal reveal that it was the region of Gurung states in the past. Despite such a long practice of the stable settlement and politics, the nomadic spirit in Gurungs has not completely lost. It is one of the reasons that they known as one of the mobile groups in Nepal largely practicing internal and external migrations. As a result, they at present are spread in different parts of the country and the world that has brought direct and indirect influences in their tribal identity. Because of their mobility and easily adoptable lifestyle in negotiation to the internal and external sociopolitical forces, the identity of Gurungs, as Alan Macfarlane argues, is “very flexible and fluctuating” (*Resources* 21).

Along with the shift into the social and political practices, they acquired another identity and name called Gurung. The name Gurung, more political than the tribal name ‘*Tamu*,’ is, as Harka Gurung claims, a derivative form of the “*Kukrhon*” where “*Ku*” means “nine” and “*krhon*” refers to the “heads or kings” (qtd. in Thakali Gurung 13). Later it was called “Gurung” as the “*Ku*” changed into “*Gu*” and the “*krhon*” into “*rung*” (13). As the definition indicates, Gurungs refer to the people and

rulers of the nine tribal States/Kingdoms called *Tamuwan*, “the Gurung territory” (Macfarlane, *Resources* 31). However, there are also other scholars like Murari Prasad Regmi who assert that the name Gurung is derived out of the onomatopoeic expression of the thunder that characterizes the thunder like attributes of “bravery and fearlessness” of the tribe (vii).

Similarly, the economic activities and professions they adopted and have been adopting identified them as one of the versatile tribes in Nepal. They were primarily hunters but shifted to the pastures, herding flocks of cattle in the Himalayan grasslands and to the farmers, practicing hoe cultivation in the slopes of the high hills. Moreover, they were also the traders with a side business of salt, animal products, and their crafts. They are also known as the army tribe inside and outside of the country. However, at present, their economic identities are limited to the farming, mercenary, and abroad works as their traditional professions like hunting and herding are largely disappeared from the practice.

The early hunting identity in the geographical locations they visited has been the base of different oral *Tamu Pyes*, the Gurung *Bedhas*, and rituals like *Thōte*. Alan Macfarlane, referring to those *Pyes*, opines that “[h]unting was clearly an important part of the existence. Large- scale hunts, in which hunting dogs and beaters were employed in the pursuit of deer, and a full scale uniform (including special jackets, knives, kilts, bloodcarrying flasks) was worn” (*Resources* 25). Similarly, B. H. Hodgson calls Gurungs the “great *Shikarees* (i.e. hunters)” (10). These references show that hunting was the main source of livelihood among the Gurungs in the past. They were great *Shikarees* of “deer[s], wild pig[s] (which Gurungs eat), jungle cock and other birds” (Macfarlane, *Resources* 29). For them the animals of nearby forests and “fish” of rivers were the “valuable sources of protein” (29). They used weapons

like "blunderbusses . . . shot guns . . . bows[,] and arrows" (29). The profession also gave them the reputation of "avid hunters . . . addicted to [the] arms'" (Buchanan 27). But the same is not the situation at present since hardly one or two villagers are the hunters for hobby and fun in a village. But their hunting skills and addiction to the arms have largely helped them join and succeed in the mercenary services of Nepal, India, and Britain earning the popularity of the "soldiers addicted to arms" (76).

Such recruitment has become one of the "major foundations for the new Gurung economy" (Macfarlane, *Resources* 30). Along with the new economy, the traditional substantial economic practices like hunting and trade have gradually disappeared on the one hand, and, as Macfarlane argues, identified them in national and international arenas on the other:

> Undoubtedly the most important external influence on the Gurungs has been mercenary recruitment into the army. During the past century many thousands of Gurungs . . . have been drafted into the British and Indian armies as 'Ghurkas.' The enormous effects of this situation [can be seen] on the indigenous social, economic and demographic situation[s]. . . . The Gurungs may be looked at, from one angle, as a tribe of migrant labourers, a strange off-shoot of the British Empire set amongst other less affluent and mobile peoples. (Macfarlane, *Resources* 13)

Macfarlane, in the quote, shows not only the positive influence of the army service as the new source of Gurung economy, identifying them as one of the economically self-sufficient groups in Nepal with a worldwide popularity for their bravery and warfare, but also points at the consequence of their appropriated identity as mere "*Bahadurs*"

or "*Lahures*" (Dillijung Gurung[14] 123). But identifying Gurungs merely as *lahures* effaces their dynamic identity based on their rich cultures, oral traditions, rites and rituals, customs, costumes, and philosophies to the Nature, society, and life.

However, the mercenary was not the main profession they had adopted after the hunting. Nor they completely left the hunting profession even when they were practicing pastoralism of herding and farming as their first and second main sources of income. In fact, their profession has turned out to be multifarious. They were practicing herding, farming, trading, and hunting though occasionally. Many references in the Gurung myths reveal that "for many centuries[,] . . . the Gurungs consisted of small bands of wandering shepherds and hoe cultivators who circled the Himalayan foothills, moving from site to site [in] every few generations" (Macfarlane*, Resources* 25).

Other "*pie [pye/*myth] describes herding (including the man going off to live by himself in the forest to herd animals)—usually of sheep, goats, chickens[,] . . . two long haired animals (varieties of yak?) called *Yo* and *Pri* in Gurung . . . [,and] horses" (Macfarlane*, Resources* 25). As Fransics Hamilton Buchanan writes,

> They frequently shifted Alpine regions in summer, and return to the valleys in winter. The men also employ themselves in weaving blankets; they are the tribe addicted to arms . . . The Gurungs cultivate with the hoe and diligent traders and miners. They convey their goods on sheep, of which they have numerous flocks. The crops they cultivate with the hoe are 1. Barley 2. Uya (?) 3. Maniya or Eleusine Corcocanus 4. Kangum (Panicum Italicum) 5. Phapar (?). (27)

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[14] His text in Nepali, all translations mine.

The mentioned quote reports the combined or mixed nature of the Gurung economic practices in the past -- herding the flocks of Himalayan cattle, running domestic handicraft based industries, practicing hoe cultivations, transporting, and trading. Among these economic activities, herding was their main profession and source of income as it had multiple benefits and uses. They used the flocks of cattle like sheep and yak for transportation, for milk and milk based products like ghee, *chakuu*, and cheese. The wools they used for weaving their clothes and the flesh for meat.

The vivid picture of their mixed economic practices including the hunting is found in Brain Hodgson's report too:

> They make their own clothes of wool, cotton and hemp, of the coarsest kind of Khadi, Panga, Bhangria and Pankhi— the two first of cotton, 3rd of hemp and 4th of wool of their own vast flocks. . . . They are chiefly shepherds but also keep some Chouris or Yaks and of cows and Buffaloes. . . . They cultivate ground to considerable extent growing chiefly Makai (maize) & Kodo (millet). Making Dhero from both & that is their favourite food. They milk [sheep] and make ghee of the milk & shear & make Pankhi & Kamals of the wool, & using them also for carriage over the snows bringing back rock salt of Tibet. They are the traders across the snows, taking hence cotton & rice, & wheat & Dalls & merchants wares also either on the sheep or on their own back. . . . They are also great Shikarees (i.e. hunters) and serve as soldiers, having been renowned for hardihood since Prithi Narains time. . . . They are soldiers, traders[,] . . . shepherds[,] . . . [hunters, and farmers]. (10-11)

In the quote, he gives the picture of the traditional Gurung economy related behaviors and cultures like their foods, dress ups, weaving industry, transportation, salt trade, farming, hunting, and mercenary. He also hints at the change in their economy and identity after the unification campaign of Prithvi Narayan Shah. Further the quote shows how the Gurung dress, food habits, business, and identity are based on their different economic practices and geographical locations they settled in the past. Such illustrations clearly suggest that the economic practice is one of the powerful identity markers and the source of understanding the Gurung identity and culture. So, singularly without the proper knowledge of their diverse economy related practices, the study on them becomes a grave mistake and injustice.

The economic practices and the resulting changes in them have a greater influence in the Gurung culture and identity. The significance of the "huge herd of . . . sheep" as the "mainstay of [their] economy in the early part of the nineteenth century" has now been "linger[ing] on only in ritual, especially in the funeral (*pae lava*)" (Macfarlane*, Resources* 27). According to the ritual, "two sheep are needed to accompany a dead person's soul to the village of the dead. Now that sheep are gone. It is not surprising that villagers do not weave blankets as the old Gurungs used to, nor make their own clothes out of 'wool, cotton & hemp'" (27). Instead, "[c]lothes are easily bought in the local bazaar, fabrics brought from Malaya and India. Only the *renga* or traditional over shirt of men is still made from bark-fibre in the village" (27).

Trading, as Macfarlane observed in most of the Gurung villages, has also declined in importance among the Gurungs:

> The description of the ways in which Gurungs acted as middlemen, carrying cotton, rice, wheat, lentils and salt across the Himalayas, finds no echo in the present. . . . The bartering of salt against grain ended

> with the Chinese invasion of Tibet. . . . After the closing of the Tibetan salt route people went for a few years to Butwal in the Terai. . . . During the last five or six years, however, Gurung villagers . . . bought salt at Pokhara. (27)

Now they buy most of the goods needed in their local bazaars. Along with the changes in these forms of economic practices, the primitive "crops and manner of cultivating them have also changed very considerably in the last hundred years" (26). The Gurungs growing potatoes, "barley, wheat, and buckwheat" as the main crops at the Himalayan foothills gradually moved to low hills, valleys, and river basins to grow "rice, maize, and millet" (26-27).

The "[o]nce heavily forested lower slopes down to the river valleys have now been cleared to grow maize, millet, and rice and raise buffaloes, cows, goats, and oxen" (12). As the crops changed; "so did the methods of cultivating them" (27). Mainly two major changes have occurred: Firstly, "there has been a change from hoe cultivation to the hoe and plough in combination" to grow rice and maize (27). The second is the change from "slash-and-burn, rotating agriculture to permanent fields" or terraces (27). As a result, the large "fields which have now become the private propert[ies] of particular families used to belong to the village communally" (27).

Due to such changes, the multifarious Gurung economy of animal husbandry, trading, domestic industry (blankets chiefly), arable farming, and hunting has become dependent on the arable farming, army service, and jobs within the nation and abroad. After the shift in their economy, the Gurung identity as a pastoral tribe with herding, hunting, and trading skills has become incompatible; since "[the] remnants of communal village land on which slash-and-burn cultivation was practiced have

disappeared; the salt trade with Tibet has been closed; clothes are no longer made in the village but almost entirely bought in the bazaar" (27).

However, it does not mean that the old pattern of trading and pastoralism has been completely disappeared from all the Gurung villages. It can "still be found in the higher villages from which the settlers had emigrated" (30). The "blankets are still woven; very large herds of sheep are still driven up into the mountains in early summer" (30). The major argument here is that such economic practices have not remained the main source of income among the majority Gurungs despite some continuities are found. The growing "population pressure," the changing scenario of "labour" as "the most precious capital asset" than the land, machinery, and cash money, the "steeply increasing price of land, the dividing up of the communal maize fields, and the growing surplus of labour except in peak periods of agricultural activity" are some causes of such transformations in the Gurung economic identity" (32). The rituals like *Thōte* that they perform, however, are the reflections of those economic practices in continuities and transformations, thereby identifying who they were/are.

Like the Gurung economy, they also have a unique religious practice originated out of the fusion of shamanism, animism, and nature worship. They have a tribal language, oral myths, rites, rituals, costumes, customs, and social structures. Though the majority of the Gurungs at present follow Buddhism as their main religion, originally they were the Bon religion followers. The Bon is a primitive religion based on the philosophy of animism and practice of shamanism. Later on, the influence of the Buddhism in the Bon led to the division of the Bon religion in two types: the Black Bon, a fusion of the animism and shamanism, and the White Bon in negotiation to the Buddhist philosophy. But the White Bon was also replaced by the

Buddhism in Tibet later on. These religious shifts in nearby Tibetan land and growing influence of the Hinduism within the nation have direct and indirect impacts in the religious practices of the Gurungs of Nepal too.

The Black Bon is one of the primitive and original religions. The religion incorporates the philosophy of "animism, the word derived from a Latin word '*anima*' referring to 'air' or 'soul'" (Thakali Gurung 36). The philosophy, originated at the mid Asia and Siberia regions, believes on the existence of the multiple souls and power of all the living and nonliving beings of the universe. The unity and balance of these souls and powers of the things make the life and continuity of the universe possible. However, the souls exist in good and evil binary opposition. In order to harmonize the possible conflicts and maintain the balance between them, the Bon followers worship all "natural and supernatural, living and nonliving, seen and unseen forces, and objects" equally (36). Following the philosophy, they also worship the dead ancestors as the powers having direct influence over their lives.

Shamanism is a practical form of the animist philosophy. It worships the natural forces and the heavenly organs like "earth, sun, moon, hill, mountain, stone, air, fire, water, animals, and plants" as embodying the divine qualities (37). Guided by the religious philosophy, the Gurungs also worship different natural forces like thunder, hailstorm, gods of crops, cattle, rain, fire, and the supernatural powers like gods, deities, ghost, and the souls of the ancestors. They predict health and illness, good and bad fortune, and happiness and suffering out of the examination of wrist pulse, sacrificed animal liver, and even and odd pairing of the grains on a plate (*acheta ngyoba*).

They begin and end any significant acts like planting and harvesting the crops after specific worships to the natural and supernatural souls. They eat any new crop

and dish by offering to the dead souls. Similar practices include "the worshipping the first hailstorm of a year by halting the communal and individual works called *Ashina Barne*" (39), and not exchanging fire among the members of a community known as "*Aago Barne* on the day after the harvest of barley in *Baisakh*" (41). They harvest the barley on the day of good omen. In the worship, they offer different foods, fruits, milk, and even sacrifice cocks, sheep, goats, and buffaloes. One of the differences between the Black Bone and White Bon is that the former practices animal sacrifice while the latter avoids it.

Along with the shift from the nomadic to the more stable pastoral life, as Homa Thakali Gurung also argues, the significance of such religious rituals increased in the Gurung culture and identity. She further explains,

> As the crops and cattle are directly related with their livelihood, the Gurung culture and rituals are found being more sensitive and related to the health and lives of those plants and animals. Most of the rites and rituals are performed to avoid diseases from the lives of crops and domestic animals, whishes for good harvest. Especially, they celebrate such rituals mostly in *Chaitra* and *Shrawan* according to the rhythm of the seasonal changes. Some such rituals are *Thōte*, *Sildonaldo Puja*, *Prho Wapa*, and others. (42)

In order to perform all these religious rituals and worships from life to death, the Gurungs have their own shamans or *khegis*. They are "*Pachyu*, *Khyabri*, and *Bon lama/Bhuddhist lama*" (67). *Pachyus*, also known as the priests of the Gurung communities, treat the ill members and perform different rites and rituals from life to death. They treat the patients, worship the good and evil souls (*twhe labaa*), and separate the souls of dead from the evil spirits and ghosts in funeral rites. They beat

one sided *dhyangro* in the rituals. They "take the *dhyangro* and a bunch of porcupine needles on the left hand" (Jagman Gurung 106). They wear tipped cap made up of thick cloth (*rhyalbo*) decorated with a pair of horns of *ghoral*, four sided *kaudi* and a pair of long threads of sheep wool at the back side that reach up to the hip (107). Around the cap, the pictures and teeth of different animals like tiger, deer, and *kasturi* are studded. On the right side, feathers of male lophophorus and of the female on the left side are put around. At the top, "a knot of white clothe is made" (108). They wear a long female gown (*ghalek*) and a belt on the waist and recite oral mantras.

Khyabris are another type of Gurung priests or shamans known as the experts of the funeral rites. They especially "perform the funeral rites of escorting the souls of the dead to the Heaven" (Thakali Gurung 69). They beat one sided *dhyangro* larger than that of the *pachyu*. They "wear the cap full of the pictures of different gods and deities. Similarly, they put on a black long sleeve gown with white colored brims and four sided boxes, figures of moons, and suns. They "catch wooden birds on their hands throughout the ritual" (Jagman Gurung 110). Except the funeral rites, they also perform other rites of maintaining the social peace and harmony by worshipping the seen and unseen, natural and supernatural evil forces.

The third type of shamans is Bon lamas whose numbers and practices are rapidly disappearing. They are the White Bon followers who recite the mantras written in Tibetan language. The unintelligibility of their mantras and the rising influence of Buddhism have decreased the practice and popularity of the Bon lamas. Most of them have converted themselves into Buddhist lamas. Their ritual role is to perform the rites and rituals of wishing long life and prosperity. They wear woolen round caps with pictures of different gods and deities. They catch *bajrakillas* while performing the ritual. Sky blue gowns with plain white and yellow stripes near the

ankles of the long sleeves are their ritual dresses. They beat *jhyali*s and *dhyangros* during the performance (112).

The Bon religion initiated out of the fusion of the animism and shamanism in the Mid Asia and Saiberia was, as claimed by Anukul Chandra Benerjee in *Bon the Primitive of Tibet*, “introduced in Sangsung State of Tibet by Tonpo Senrap Mioche in around 1055 years earlier than the birth of Buddha in Nepal” (qtd. in Thakali Gurung 55). But the religion faced a severe influence of Buddhism when the Tibetan “kings Tho Tho Ri, Srongchong Gyampo, and Thriu Srong Dechen introduced the latter as their national religion. For the purpose, the king Thriu Srong Dechen called a Buddhist “Padma Sambhav to publicize and establish Buddhism in Tibetan soil and culture” (58). Padma Sambhav “achieved success in the mission and established *Same Gumba*, the first monastery in Tibet in around 747 A.D.” (58). It is also taken as the date of the formal introduction of the Buddhism in Tibet.

Such religious changes in Tibet have direct and indirect influences in the Gurungs of Nepal. Their practice of the Bon lama is one of the examples. Similarly, as mentioned in different oral scriptures called *Tamu Pye Ta Lhu Ta* and *Ken* and in *Bon in the Himalaya* by Binaye Chandra Gurung, the Gurungs of Siklesh, one of the Gurung villages in Kaski, went to “Nar in Manang, Thakkhola in Mustang, and Lhasa in Tibet for Buddhist education in around 1052 to 1135 A.D.” (87). Influence of the Buddhism in Gurung culture becomes more evident with the establishment of a first monastery, “*Lupra Gumba* in around 1077 to 1141 A.D. in Mustang” (Thakali Gurung 105).

After the Mongol emperors “Jhangej Kha and Kubla Kha’s expansion of their Empire annexing Tibet in China in around the thirteenth century” (84), the Gurungs of high Himalayan regions in Nepal came in direct contact with the Buddhist practices

and gradually became Buddhists. At present the influence of Buddhism in Nepal is "rapidly increasing through the Tibetan refugees after the annexation of Tibet in China in 2016 B.S." (84). Revival of democracy in 2046 B.S" in Nepal energized the Gurungs like other tribal communities to champion their identity politics and gradually identified Buddhism as their main religion. However, they are still continuing the Bon related practices in the rites and rituals.

The Gurungs are also highly influenced by the Hinduism. The historical and political causes to the shared nature of their villages among different tribes and communities invite the influence. In effect, on the one hand, there are the Gurung communities, especially in the Eastern Nepal, that follow the Hindu cultures and rites, and on the other, most of the Gurung rituals and cultures are mixed with the elements of Hinduism. The most influential element among others is the "*Hindu Barnaasram*, a tradition of caste division, first introduced by Jayasthiti Malla in 1354 B.S. The influence is of the political nature as it began with "Kulmandal Saha's establishment of the Shaha dynasty in Kaski in 1524 B.S." (90). The influence was institutionalized when "the Royal Priest of Jagati Khand of Kaski, Bhojraj Pandit prepared and published a *Tamu Banswali*, the first Gurung Genealogy, with caste division within the Gurungs in *Falgun* 9, 1549 B.S." (91). The implementation of the caste division got its impetus along with the slogans of King Prithvi Narayan Shah like "Nepal, a garden of 4 castes and 36 *Barnas*" and "Nepal, a Hindu State" (93).

In a response to the Genealogy prepared by the ruling ideology, some of the Gurung communities have recently produced their genealogies. For an instance, *Ribhan Chaura Nathu Pralhad Pariwar* has published a *Ribhan Chaura Nherho Paigi Lama's* Genealogy. In the genealogy, they don't only argue the importance of preparing the Gurung Genealogy to preserve, continue their origins, and disprove the

claims given by the ruling groups, but also confess the problems they faced while writing the genealogy out of their oral traditions:

> Not to have any genealogy of our own is not only the Achilles' heel for the ruling ideology to come up with the fabricated writings and genealogies about our origins and social structures, but is also a severe identity crisis leading to confusions and contradictions among us. Despite the hardships for collecting reliable sources as our tradition is basically oral and many historical records and documents are already in disappearance, the success has been achieved consulting the seniors of the community, visiting the places where our ancestors lived, and unearthing the neglected, forgotten, and almost buried memoirs and documents found. (1-2)

Another historical and political cause is the Britain-India-Nepal Tripartite Treaty known as *Sugauli Sandhi* in 1815 A.D. It made the Hindu influence easier in the Gurungs. According to the Treaty, the male youths of Mongolian race including the Gurungs recruited in British and Indian armies. According to the second article of the Treaty, "the recruits were forced to follow the Hindu religion and culture in their battalions by appointing the Hindu priests" (Thakali Gurung 97).

The most remarkable legal practice of Hinduization began with Janga Bahadur's introduction of *Muluki Ain* in 1910 B.S. making the *Hindu Barnaasram* its main base. The law included even those tribes who were not within the *Hindu Barnasram* and divided them into "*Tagadhari*, *Namasinya Matwali*, *Masinya Matwali*, *Pani Chalne Choichito Halnu Naparne*, *Pani Nachalne Choichito Halnu Parne* groups" (97). The Gurungs were included in the group of *Namasinya Matwali*. Similarly, "Shikharnath Subedi published another *Tamu Banswali* in 1911 B.S."

exaggerating Bhojraj Pandit's *Bansawali* (96). The genealogy strategically divides the Gurungs into superior and inferior clans calling *Rajputra* Gurungs as *4 Jate* and *Daasputra* Gurungs as *Sora Jate*. Karnel Laxman Gurung of the time filed a case against the *Bansawali*. In response, "Jang Bahadur Rana punished Rs. 20 to Subedi on the charge of recording the fictional clan division among the Gurungs in *Poush* 13, 1924 B.S." (96).

Despite Janga Bahadur's legal attempt for stopping the tradition of clan hierarchy, it has become one of the influencing factors of the Gurung social structure and practice. The clan hierarchy has mainly affected three areas in most of the Gurung communities: social structure, marriage system, and funeral rites and ceremony. As a recall to such institutional influence of Hinduism in Gurung culture, Harka Gurung, in "State and Society in Nepal," writes:

> State advocacy was the primary vehicle for the spread of Hinduism in Nepal since punishments prescribed in the Muluki Ain were according to caste ranking. Here, one might also highlight the role of Gurkha soldiers in the dissemination of Hinduism and the Nepali language. Of the ten Gurkha regiments in British India, only the 9th Gurkha Rifles was reserved for Chetri and Thakuri, the rest being of Mongoloid tribals. Since the soldiers were subjects of a Hindu king, each Gurkha battalion had a Bahun chaplain who officiated according to the Hindu customs. In addition, the recruits, who had their own Tibeto-Burman mother tongues, were instructed in Nepal with Roman script. Therefore, the Gurkhas, who provided role models with enhanced income, were important agents for the introductions of pan- Nepali values among ethnic communities. (504)

The direct influence of the Hinduism can be found in the social structure of Gurung community, especially in Kaski, has a "dual organization" based on "two hierarchical strata or sub-tribes" known as "the *Char Jat* or 'four clans' and the *Sora Jat* or 'sixteen clans'" (Regmi 42). The *Char Jat* clans include "*Ghale* (*khle*) who were the ancestral Gurung Kings of Lamjung district probably around the 15th century A.D. The *Ghodane* (*Kon/e*), the chief administrators of the *ghale* kings (42). The "Lama (*Lam*), 'the priests' . . . trained in Nar of Manang district. The *Lamichane* (*Lem* or *Khhro*)[,] . . . [the] village chiefs . . . [and] the local revenue functionaries (*jimuwal*)" (43). The meaning and the stratification of these four sub clans suggest their higher status in their communities, while the sixteen clans are considered lower. Some of the *Sora Jat* clans are "*Lehge*, *Kromje*, *Tuu*, *Mhobche*, *Chohrmi*, *Tohrje*, *Naksi*, *Rhilaa*, *Yojaa*," and others (Thakali Gurung 92).

However, many researchers and Gurung scholars claim that the clan division is not the original practice of the Gurung tribal culture as it was based on structural equality. According to them, the hierarchical *jat* division is the influence and imitation of Hindu *Barnabyawastha* introduced in the late fourteenth century by Jayasthiti Malla that includes *Brahmin*, *Chetriya*, *Baisya*, and *Sudra*. Some Gurungs like Dillijung Gurung even argue that it is a ruling strategy of divide and rule over the Gurungs:

> In the pretension of unification campaign, Prithvi Narayan Shah after his victory[,] . . . imposed the distinct clan division following *Barnaasram* system. He, thereby, transformed *Lam* into Lama, *Lema* to *Lamichane*, *Kone* to *Ghotane* and *Khle* to *Ghale* and brought them into the strict practice of four *jat* clans. There is no provision of

> *Barnaasram jat* among Gurungs nor any hierarchy . . . in Mongoloid tribe. (151)

The influence can easily be seen in the Gurung marriage system based on the *jat* and clan differences. Each sub-tribe is “jat endogamous and clan exogamous, that is members obliged to marry within their jat but outside the clan” (Regmi 42). Regarding the marriage system, Murari Prasad Regmi views that it “broadens the local lineage,” “strengthens sub-lineage interpersonal relationship and social solidarity” (42). He further opines that the cross-cousin exchange based marriage promotes not only the arrange marriage, but also prevents the inter-cast conflict in marital relation. Doherty, pointing to this social and solidifying function of the marriage system, states, “Reciprocity (in form of sister exchange) is the most important organizing principle of Gurung marriage” (qtd. in Regmi 43). While other scholars like Bernard Pignede opine it “asymmetrical one” in terms of gender (qtd. in Macfarlane 192). But “the Gurungs of Ghachok area say that there is no expressed preference as to whether the mate is chosen through the maternal or the paternal link” (Glover and et al. 303). The Gurungs of “Mohoriya” also say “that both types of marriage [are] equally desirable and . . . frequent” (Macfarlane, “Identity” 192).

In some Gurung communities where the clan hierarchy is the practice, the marriage relation should be established within the *char jat* or *sora jat*. But Messerschmidt claims that “there is no evidence of this duality . . . in contemporary [, that is 1976,] marriage practice” (54). No evidence regarding the practice of clan hierarchy in marriage is referred in the older histories of the Gurungs (Macfarlane, “Identity” 194). Moreover, one of the “members of Char Jat . . . sa[ys] that in fact Char Jat [has] nothing to do with the Gurungs specifically. It actually refer[s] to the four Hindus namely Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra, which he sa[ys] later

multiplied into thirty-six jats" during the rule of Prithvi Narayan Shah (194). Pignède has also said that there are not sixteen but only nine clans. He states that "no Gurung was able to give me a list of the sixteen, Solahjat clans" (175). All these references support that the clan hierarchy is not the original tribal practice of the Gurungs but is the adoption under the influence of the fellow cultures and religions.

The influence of the clan division is also found in the Gurung funeral ceremony. On the basis of their practices, the ceremony is performed in three different ways. The Gurungs who claim themselves as the *char jat* basically perform the funeral rites according to the Buddhism and Buddhist lamas involve in the whole process of the funeral ceremony mainly in city areas. But most of those considered *sora jat* still follow the tribal funeral rites according to the Bon religion. They appoint *Pachyu* and *Khyabri* for the function. However, the latter practice is the original tribal rite practiced since the time immemorial and the Gurungs in the villages where the Buddhism is yet to reach follow the same tradition irrespective of their clan differences even at the present time. Similarly, the third type of the funeral ceremony practiced by most of the Gurungs in Eastern Nepal is performed according to the Hindu system.

The rituals and cultural practices of the Gurungs, as Alan Macfarlane states, reflect all the tribal traits, socio-economic practices, and the gradual influences of all the three religions-- The Bon, Buddhism, and Hinduism:

> The Gurungs share [the] hills with many other tribes and groups, though none of these are, by themselves, as numerous as they. The Gurungs themselves are undoubtedly an amalgam of several different peoples who have migrated into [the] area during the last thousand years. They appear to incorporate elements of both Tibeto-Burman and

> Indo-Aryan origin. This is especially evident in their religion and ritual, which is a bewildering mixture of Hinduism, Buddhism, and beliefs very similar to the old *bon* religion of Tibet. (*Resources* 12)

Some such rituals and festivals are *Sildo Naldo Puja, Pro Waba, Gaindu Puja, Thōte, Failu, Tu Dewata Puja, Thaso Waba*, *Chyadu or Serga*, *Tamu Loshar*, *Rupa Khiba, Pla Whiba,* and *Syai Syai Laba*. All these rituals have the Bon as the base though gradually there is the fusion of other socio-political and religious elements according to the shifts in time and space of both the Gurung communities and the performance of the rituals.

The Gurung communities celebrate *Sildo Naldo Puja*, a preventive ritual, in *Chaitra* and *Kartik*. It is also a healing ritual performed at the time the community suffers from a plague or an epidemic. In the ritual, "the whole villagers collectively worship the Nature God including the lakes, streams, hills, mountains, jungles, and other natural forces either wishing to prevent them, their crops, and cattle from the possible diseases, destructions, and deaths or for the cure if they are suffering from the evils" (Jagman Gurung 132). The worship is performed by their Bon priest *Khyabri* making the symbols of the hills and mountains out of the grains collected from each house. Similarly, they perform *Pro Waba* ritual on the first Tuesdays of *Chaitra* and *Kartik*. In this ritual, they worship the Route/Road God wishing to take away all diseases, haunting evils, and defilements from the lives of people, cattle, and crops. They make a gate of *bhakimlo* and *ranijhar* at the main exit of the village and worship the God by setting the village boundary-line for security (135).

Gaindu Puja is another ritual celebrated collectively by the Gurung communities. They worship the God of Stone and Seed offering a crowing cock on the Full Moon Day (*Purnima*) in *Kartik*. It is the celebration after the harvest of crops

and return of the herds of cattle from pastureland. In this ritual, they wish for no disease to the cattle and no decay to the grains and seeds harvested. *Thōte*, focus of the research, is another defensive ritual performed collectively to chase the evil spirits out of the village borderline. They perform it three/three times in *Chaitra* and *Shrawan* on Tuesdays for the security and well being of the villagers, crops, and cattle. *Fainlu* or *Kul Puja* is “a clan-wise ritual. It is a worship of the Patron God and the Souls of the ancestors on the eighth or nineth day of *Dashain*” (Thakali Gurung 172).

Tu Dewata Puja and *Thaso Wapa* are other collective rituals for the well being of the cattle. The former they “celebrate in *Magh* and the latter in *Kartik* wishing no disease, sterility, and untimely death to the animals reared” (173). Similarly, they perform *Chyadu* or *Serga* in commemorative funeral ceremony called *Pai Laba*. On the first and second nights of the ceremony, the “groups of *Chaydu* dancers, all males, gather with *dholak*, *jhurma*, and *jhyali* in the house where the funeral ceremony begins” (Thakali Gurung 155). They perform it in a round circle moving around the symbols of dead souls called *Pla*. They believe it as a ritual for liberating the dead souls from the evils’ control and lead them to the heaven peacefully.

Tamu Lhosar is more a collective celebration of the Gurung New Year than a ritual. But its celebration incorporates some ritual components. It takes place on the fifteenth of *Poush*. On the *Lhosar* eve, “the whole villagers gather in a nearby monastery and participate in the worship of the New Year God along with *Pachyus*, *Khyabris* and Lamas” (Jagman Gurung 163). By building a fire and kindling the lights, they wish for happiness, prosperity, and well being of all human kinds. It is also the occasion of receiving blessing from the seniors, participating in different tribal games like throwing a stone (*cholyo bhyoban*) and shooting the arrows (*teer*

priban). They enjoy feasts (*syokain*) collectively. Feasting together on the occasion is believed as the welcoming of prosperity. It is also an occasion of all the Gurung members fulfilling their responsibilities and duties. They take it as the time of clearing the whole economic give and take of the last year and beginning for the New Year (164).

The greater ritual significance of the occasion lies in its cyclic philosophy of time. The period of the fifteen *Poush* to another fourteenth *Poush* is called a '*Lho*' or '*Barga*' means roughly a year. The morphemes, '*Lho*' and '-*sar*' mean "a year" and "change" respectively (Thakali Gurung 190). So, the *Lhosar* stands for the yearly transition of the time. It is believed that there are twelve '*Bargas*' or '*Lho*,' making a complete cycle in which a year is a component as well as a cycle itself. They believe that in each twelve year, the cycle repeats. Each *Lhosar*, therefore, is both the change of the year and the cycle at the same time. A person born in the '*Lho*' carries it throughout the life. On the basis of the '*Lho*,' the person's horoscope, good or evil fate, selecting a partner for marriage, and initiating any new acts are decided.

They know the age of a person by counting the transitions of such '*Lhos*.' In each twelve year, the person returns to his/her '*Lho*.' The return is taken special in Gurung culture. On the year, they "consult *Khyabri*, *Pachyu*, and *Lama* about the person's fate and accordingly an individual ritual is performed to make him/her free from the possible misfortunes" (191). In Gurung culture, the '*Lho*' in which the parents passed away are taken as the great hurdles for the children. Similarly, if any senior survives up to the seventh repetition of the '*Lho*' cycle that is eighty four years, a special ritual is performed believing that the person has got a new life.

The twelve '*Lhos*' are named after the names of different animals, birds and insects. The twelve names of '*Lhos*' make a complete cycle. The chart of the Gurung

'*Lho*' is a reflection of the Bon philosophy about the universe, nature of time, and lives of people and animals. The twelve names, as in the "Photograph 1," are: "*Chu* (Mouse), *Lo* (Cow), *To* (Tiger), *Hi/Hyu* (Cat), *Mupri* (Eagle), *Sapri* (Snake), *Ta* (Horse), *Lhu/Mhu* (Sheep), *Pra* (Monkey), *Chya* (Bird), *Khi* (Dog), and *Pho* (Deer)" (192). The cycle of the '*Lho*' chart reflects practice of no hierarchy among the animals and the persons belonging to the '*Lhos*.' But while counting, the order as given above should be strictly followed as they move accordingly. It is believed that the persons with the mentioned '*Lhos*' carry the attributes of the animals. So, while making the pairs either for marriage or business, the matching of '*Lhos*' are strictly followed. For examples, the pairs of *Hi* (Cat) and *Chyu* (Mouse), *To* (Tiger) and *Khi* (Dog) are forbidden, while the pairs of *Lo* (Cow) and *Ta* (Horse), *Chyah* (Bird) and *Fo* (Deer) are accepted.

Photograph 1: *Tamu Lho* Chart

The rituals that family members and relatives collectively perform whenever needs be to any of the members are *Rupa Khiba* and *Syai Syai Laba*. They perform

the rituals either for healing, blessing, and encouraging or for congratulating the individuals. Sometimes they are acted out to boost up the person's self esteem. In *Rupa Khiba*, the person is blessed and encouraged by the senior members of the family putting a *rupa* round his/her neck. '*Rupa*' is a joined thread. It contains nine threads and nine knots for male and seven threads and knots for female. The number of threads and knots represent the number of the souls. As the "Gurungs believe in the existence of multiple souls, it is believed that the union of seven souls makes the female self and of nine to the male self" (176). *Pla Whiba* is a part of the ritual related to the act of soul calling. When a person falls ill, this ritual-- *Pla* means soul and *whiba* means calling— is performed. It is believed that accident, disease, failure, and misfortune disintegrate the unity of the souls.

The ritual is performed to call back the disintegrated souls wearing a thread called *rupa* colored by turmeric and charcoal. The seniors of the family with a thread entangled in a jug go to a nearby water source carrying a weapon like sickle or knife. They scratch here and there on the way calling the disintegrated souls. They "return home by filling up water in the jug and put the *rupa* on the person's neck and say '*pla kho*, *pla kho*,' means come back the souls, come back the souls-- by other family members touching the persons' head" (177). In some places, it is also called *Syai Syai Laba*. The seniors or kin members say this expression "either by wearing the *rupa* or simply express *syai syai* by putting hands on the persons head" (178). In Gurung culture, the expression carries the significance of communal feeling, bonding, and wishing too.

Unlike some of the Gurung rituals that show the fusion of the Bon and Buddhism, some of the Gurung folk dances and songs reflect the fusion of Hinduism. Some such typical Gurung dances are *Ghantu Dance*, *Sorathi Dance*, *Maruni Dance*,

and *Krishna Charitra*. Similarly, the tribal folk songs are *Dholaki Song*, *Salaijo Song*, *Sunimaya Song*, and *Dohori Song*.

Ghantu, a lyrical dance, exists in two different forms: *Barahmase* and *Sati Ghantu*. Both the forms act upon the life stories of the Hindu king Parsuram and the queen Pamfadevi in a form of lyrics and dance. In Allen Andors' words, it is "a traditional ritual dance, found only among Gurungs, but whose story, confusingly is Hindu in theme" (15). The *Barahmase Ghantu* focuses on the king Parsuram's childhood and the hunting adventures in youth. The name *Ghantu* comes from a *ghanti*, a bell, hung on the neck of a dog during the hunts. Talking about the *Baramase Ghantu*, Ellen Andors says that it "can be performed at any time of the year—on village holidays, days of leisure, at marriages, and often when a . . . soldier or outside visitor comes to the village" (15). So it is called *Barahmase* as it can be performed at any time and season.

But *Sati Ghantu* centers on the king's rule, battle with enemies, death, and the queen Pamfadevi's self-immolation on the funeral pyre of the king leaving the baby prince Balkrishna to maternal uncle. The *Sati Ghantu* begins "on the day of *Sripanchami* and ends on *Baisakh Purnima*" (Thakali Gurung 207). Besides the ritual time period, they restrict its performance. If the *Barahmase Ghantu* carries romantic and adventurous tone, the *Sati Ghantu* gives tragic mood to the listeners and viewers. Only women are the dancers, singers, and trainers in both the *Ghantus* though sometimes the musicians like *madal* players and flute players can be males. But in the level of audience, they have no restrictions of age and gender. The well experienced senior women take the roles of patrons and trainers who are called *Ghantuni Ama*.

Similarly, experienced women with beautiful vocals sing the song narrating the life story of the royal couple. The selection and training of the dancers are of

special sort. The age of the dancers must be in between 12 to 16 years (210). They must be virgins without any wounds and injuries with beautiful body structures. They must take bath, cut the nails, and change the clothes before they participate in training. After the long training, they perform the dance to the mass audience.

Sorathi is another lyrical dance based on a story of an anonymous childless ancient king who had seven wives. The dance reveals a jealousy and conspiracy among the queens reaching at the extreme when the seventh queen gives birth to a baby girl. In jealousy, other six queens throw the baby in a river. Fortunately, a fisherman finds and rescues the baby. The reunion scene between the baby and her mother, in the dance, gives the blend of tragic and comic feelings. The dance also shows the punishment to the culprit queens. As the dance is performed between the sixteen days between the *Dashain* and *Tihar*, it is called *Sorathi* (220). As Murari Prasad Regmi states, a *Sorathi* girl also "narrates the infidelity of a Brahmin priest, Jaya Singe" (48).

Gurung villages also perform the dances like *Maruni* that begins in *Shrawan* and ends in *Poush* and *Krishna Charitra*, a dance based on the Hindu epic exploring the life story of God Krishna in the tribal Gurung style. In the former, the male performers disguise themselves as women called *marunis* and jokers named *fusrunges*. Other participants play *madals*, "beat drums, clang cymbals, sing, and dance" (Regmi 48). The latter is "performed by four young men . . . especially at Dasain, funerals, weddings, and at *putpute*, a ceremony held for the eldest male child of a family" (Andors 17).

Rodhi, a traditional Gurung social organization, arranges and conducts all these tribal folk dances and songs on different occasions of rites, rituals, and festivals. *Rodhighar* is one of the most important traditional social organizations among the

Gurungs. Many scholars and researchers have come up with their views and definitions about the organizational practice. Min Bahadur Gurung[15] defines *Rodhi* as a historical sentimental dance performed collectively in a community house. He opines that "*Ro*" refers to "sleeping" and "*dhi*" to the house of the community (1). The morphological meanings of the name suggest that it is a socializing cultural practice performed during the night.

Like him, Pignède calls it "the custom of evening meetings among the young" girls and boys (217); Dor Bahadur Bista defines it as a "club for boys and girls" (78); Macfarlane views it as a "young people's meeting place" (*Resources* 55); and Andors says it "a nightly social gathering place, a semi-permanent dormitory where young girls and boys of the village congregate to sing, talk, and joke" (10). Some outsiders even view it as the "lax and immoral" communal practice of allowing "sexual activity" among the youngsters. But neither the mating of the youths is the purpose nor the sexual activity is "a frequent occurrence, and in any case" it happens, "they carry out as secretly as possible like in other communities" (11).

Instead, it functions as "a socializer of the younger members of society," and it is the center "from which many economic and religious activities are organized and carried out" (10). Conventionally, the decisions and performances of the Gurung rituals and cultural performances including marriage used to take place in the *Rodhi* house. So, the *Rodhi* practice is a "good training in obedience for the child and a source for a release of frustration and tantrum" (Regmi 47). Regmi further reminds the main function of the *Rodhi*:

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[15] His text in Nepali, all translations mine.

> The main functions of *rodi* (sic.) are recreating premarital cross sex socialization, develop individual autonomy, and mutual understanding. *Rodi* members entertain each other in the evenings and throughout the night with dancing, drumming, singing, and joking. . . . *Rodi* activities are a good source for making link with work and ritual types of organization. (78)

Such practices and activities in *Rodhi* serve the childhood and adolescent "personality development through recreation, sociability, and co-operation" helping the members in "social adjustment and in meeting the needs" and solutions of the crises they encounter (49).

Moreover it, as Min Bahadur Gurung illustrates, is not only the performance of songs and dances, but also the platform for crafting and weaving the domestic artifacts: "Women weave *bhangra*, *kached*, *patuka*, *ghumradi*, *kambal* (blanket), *pasmina*, *ghalek*, and *barko* out of the threads of wools or nettle, while the men craft *damlo*, *namlo*, *thunse*, *doko*, *bhakari*, *chitra*, and *shayakhu* out of the slates (*choya*) of bamboo or *nigalo*" (3). Most of the Gurung costumes like *Chitko gunyu*, *ghalek*, *patuki*, *chaubandi choli*, *tikis*, *rhengha* and *karmu* of women and *kachad*, *bhoto*, cap, *pagari*, *prahauli*, and *bhangra* of men they learn and weave in the gatherings of *Rodhi*. Except the costumes, the Gurung women also wear typical ornaments like *fuli*, *silmundri*, *madwari*, *shirbandi*, *muga*, *tutho*, *bijbandha*, *nougedi mala*, and *asarfi* when they participate in the dormitory or in other special occasions (Thakali Gurung 227).

However, in most of the Gurung communities, the *Rodhighar* is dying out. Exploring the causes of its disappearance, Ellen Andors writes,

> Indeed many Gurung villagers no longer have fixed *rodi* (sic.) houses as such, although they did in the recent past. Some authors have suggested that this is due to the influence of the surrounding Hindu society and its values . . . . In the eyes of outsiders, a society that allows its boys and girls to gather and interact freely is considered to be lax and immoral. Thus, social disapproval, coming initially from outside the community, which in turn, affects the thinking of the members of the community itself, is . . . a fact or responsible for the ongoing disappearance of the *rodighar* (sic.). (10)

Besides the "social disapproval" mentioned by Andors, the large flow of migration or urbanization and the unstoppable influence of the global means of entertainments like radios, TVs, movies, and internet have also equally played the roles in the disappearance of the *Rodhi* practice. In the urban areas, different social organizations like *Tamu Dhi Nepal* are replacing the roles of *Rodhighar*. However, along with the rise in political and identity consciousness, some of the Gurung communities are attempting to revive the practice of the tribal organization.

In addition to the typical rituals, cultures, costumes, and social organizations, the Gurungs also have their tribal language called *Tamu Kyui*. As Macfarlane says, the language is "predominantly Tibeto-Burman" (12). However, the language lacks a written script on the one hand, and on the other, it has tremendous regional variations within a small region too. For an example, the Gurungs of Syangja simply separated by Andhikhola, a river, do not almost understand each others' varieties. As a result, the handover of the language to the new generations through oral traditions is facing crisis. Moreover, the influence of other languages and increasing flow of the

migrations of the Gurungs from the villages to the cities has added a risk on its existence.

The Gurungs of Eastern Nepal and most of the Gurungs of Gorkha and Dhading, to mention some of the examples, have lost their mother tongue. Even in most of the villages, the frequent use of Nepali, English, and Hindi words has replaced many original Gurung lexicons. The condition is more threatening in the urban areas. Most of the Gurung children understand the language but cannot speak out and use. This situation clearly shows that, if they are not encouraged to speak, the language would disappear very soon. The *Census Report 2010* of Central Bureau of Statistics shows that only the "1.49%, that is 338925" (27), Gurungs can speak the language out of the total population of 543571, that is 2.39% of the total population of Nepal (32).

On the basis of all these tribal characteristics and cultures, though does not consider on the shifts taking place, the Gurungs are officially recognized as one of the ethnic tribes of Nepal. Gurungs as an ethnic group is their political identity they have received after the rising tribal consciousness for their distinct identity along with the political change in 1990 A.D. As a response to the changing identity politics of the tribal groups in the changed political scenario, the Government of Nepal had formed a National Committee under the Ministry of Local Development in *Basisakh*, 2053 B.S. The committee has enlisted many nationalities as ethnic tribes including Gurung. It says, Gurung known as *Tamu* is an ethnic group in Nepal "having its own ancient history, language of Tibeto-Burmese family though lacks written scripts, cultures, rites and rituals like *Loshar*, *Rodhi*, and animal husbandry as its main occupation" (Uklyab and Adhikari 13). However, the official recognition has come after the long debate and confusions regarding: Who is ethnic? And what is ethnicity?

Gehendraman Udas[16] engaging with the political nature of *Janajati* or ethnicity explores its ubiquitous but political nature of definition that "became popular after U. N. O's call for the promotion and preservation of the ethnic groups" (1). After the call, he says, "some ethnic groups denied themselves being ethnic because of the misconception of ethnicity as being subaltern and uncivilized, while even some non-ethnic groups started claiming themselves ethnic running after the opportunities and benefits" that the national and international states and agencies may provide in the name of ethnicity (2). Udas reveals the very political nature of the ethnicity and the acceptance and rejection of the category according to the interests of the groups.

Amidst such confusions and contradictions, the official record of the Government of Nepal documented by the National Committee defines ethnic for "those group/community/tribe that do not fall under the Hindu Caste System but have their own language, rites, rituals, and tradition" (Ukyab and Adhikari 13). The record further adds that any tribes or groups are called ethnic if they

> have a distinct collective cultural identity; have traditional language, religion, rites, rituals, and cultures; have equality based conventional social structure; have their own historical geographical location; have written or unwritten history; have the communal feeling of 'we;' have no decisive roles in politics and governance of modern Nepal; are aboriginals of Nepal and call themselves ethnic. (3)

The definition shows that ethnic or ethnicity is a political category. Though the definition seems perfect in surface, it has the politics of homogenizing and fixationalizing the fluid and heterogeneous identities even within the ethnic tribes like

[16] His text in Nepali, all translations mine.

that of the Gurungs discussed previously. Moreover, it has the problem of vagueness in simply saying the aboriginals. The particular historical time line must be pointed out to be called aboriginals. The more striking weakness in the definition is that it has taken identity, which is very much fluid and diverse, as something fixed and final.

As a result, the definition neither can give justice to the nature of identity nor to the ethnic and ethnicity. Rather it has created the space for possible confusions and conflicts; since it says nothing about the case like whether the groups once categorized ethnic can be non-ethnic or not if they lose their distinct attributes mentioned above. Should all conditions meet to be an ethnic or only certain percentage? Is such definition only for recognition of difference or for real empowerment? These are the questions not addressed properly. If such a definition is for empowerment, what about those communities which do not come into ethnic groups but do not have any say in policy making sectors? Is the problem of ethnicity the matter only of ethnic groups or of all in the nation?

Keeping these difficulties and diversities under consideration, the United Nations Statistical Division in its 1998 *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses (Revision 1)* has given the wide range conceptualizations of ethnicity:

> The national and/or ethnic groups of the population about which information is needed in different countries are dependent upon national circumstances. Some of the bases upon which ethnic groups are identified are ethnic nationality (in other words country or area of origin as distinct from citizenship or country of legal nationality), race, color, language, religion, customs of dress or eating, tribe or various combinations of these characteristics. In addition, some of the terms

> used, such as ‘race’, ‘origin’ and ‘tribe, have a number of different connotations. The definitions and criteria applied by each country investigating ethnic characteristics of the population must therefore be determined by the groups that it desires to identify. By the very nature of the subject, these groups will vary widely from country to country; thus, no internationally relevant criteria can be recommended. (72)

Here the United Nations focuses on the operational or practical diversities and differences of ethnicity indicating some basic indicators like language, costumes and customs.

But the problem is that the indicators are contextual and they have diversities even within the tribe or community; since the formation and function of the community and identity, as Macfarlane finds about the Gurung communities, are not based on the “boundaries . . . tightly set, the contrasts between old and young, rich and poor, upper and lower *jat*, one neighbourhood and another, are not stressed” (21). Such a fluid situation, for an instance, “helps to explain the adaptable nature of the Gurungs . . . [with] their ability to change . . . [according to] their social environment, to become world- renowned for their courage as warriors when, in their own home, the [they] are gentle . . . and extremely unaggressive” (21).

Finally, the multifarious and fluid Gurung identities in terms of their settlement, economy, religion, rituals, cultures, and language justify that the fixed and singular identity indicators of ethnicity do not always recognize and represent ethnicity as a shared fundamental concept. Practically such a definition merely becomes an academic and policy level political categorization of such communities.

Therefore, as this research argues implicitly, the recognition and empowerment of the tribes or communities should be taken by addressing the diversities not as the demerits but as the opportunities, and comparisons should not be only between the tribes or communities, but also within a community taking the differences as the standards upon which social groups are thought to be distinct. Moreover, the purpose of the basic criteria used for defining and categorizing the communities should be clearly explained. The primary criteria must include a few broad indicators, leaving open the possibility of expanding and addressing the ever fluid nature of in-group or outer group ethnic identities.

III. A Descriptive Text on Traditional Rural Version of *Thōte*

Thōte is one of the primitive Gurung tribal rituals performed collectively since the time immemorial in Gurung villages. The Gurung villagers call it a '*Jatra'* or '*Gaun Puja*,' which means a ritual for 'community or village worship.' They perform the ritual twice a year in *Chaitra* and *Shrawan*. They call *Ubhauli* to the performance of *Chaitra* and *Udhauli* to *Shrawan*. They perform it on three Tuesdays in both the months. They compulsorily celebrate it on the first and last Tuesdays of the months. But for the last performance, they select one of the remaining Tuesdays of the months according to the consent and convenience of the villagers.

Though Richard Schechner in his discussion on the structural poetics of ritual includes only the patterns of "gathering, performing, and dispersing" ("Towards a Poetics" 176), the researcher contends that the structural poetics of the ritual must begin from the early phase of decision making, management, and preparation as these phases initiate the ritualistic mood inviting the collective involvement of the members from the community. With this contention, the research in the chapter aims to produce the descriptive text of the traditional rural version of *Thōte* with a structural pattern of 'decision making,' 'management and preparation,' 'gathering,' 'performing,' and 'dispersing.'

'Decisions for management and preparation' of the *Thōte* performance at least take place a week before the actual day of the performance. For the purpose, the village head orders *Katwal*, "the peon of the village assembly . . . [whose] work is to announce the decisions of the village head" (Regmi 56), to convey a voice message to all senior members, especially men, for a village assembly at a *Chautari*, the village meeting place, on a particular day and time. The village assembly presided by the village head discusses and prepares a proper plan for the preparation and management

of the performance. According to the agreement, the village assembly again asks the village voice messenger, *Katwal* to call upon the villagers in the meeting place.

After the *Katawal*'s announcement, the villagers gather in the meeting place on the mentioned time of the day and receive the decisions and their duties. The villagers get their duties and responsibilities in groups according to their age, sex, and skill. The seniors carry out the duty of guiding, advising, and counseling; male adults and youths actively participate in management and preparation of all necessary goods and materials for the performance*;* and women and children play supportive roles and assist other members.

The preparation of *Thōte* roughly covers three areas: collection of grains, village sanitation, and collection and preparation of materials like *ranijhar*, *bhakimlo,* weapons, musical instruments, and colors. A group of young and adult males visit "each house in the village and collect fixed amount of corn or its floor, millet or its floor, and rice" (Santa Kumari Gurung). The villagers use the grains and floors for preparing foods, which they offer to gods, deities, and spirits in worships and feed the participants during the performance. They also sell some portion of the grain for cash to buy cocks for the ritual sacrifices.

Another group of adult men, women, and even some children actively work on maintaining the village sanitation. The sanitation and maintenance campaign usually takes place in *Chaitra* and *Shrawan* with some differing patterns. In *Chaitra*, as Suk Bahadur Gurung says in his "Personal Interview," "they dig out the village drainages and balance them so that they remain fit during the whole rainy season and save the village from probable inundations and landslides. Similarly, the members of village sanitation team dig out, manage, and clear the village-routes from the possible hurdles such as dry leaves, dust, and stones." By contrast, in *Shrawan*, they "uproot weeds on

the paths and make them neat and clean for the pedestrians. They repair the damaged routes and drainage system to ensure the safety of the villagers."

Yet another separate group of male youths and adults go to jungle for collecting wild plants and weeds that are necessary for the ritual performance. The plant and weed include *ranijhar*, a wild weed of long threads, and *bhakimlo*, a wild plant, which is called *simli* or *tibru* in Gurung language. Besides these, they also collect some other materials such as charcoal, turmeric, white and red soil or rice floor, bird feathers, and animal skins, if any in the village, for performers' decorative purpose.

As the collection of all the ritualistic materials completes, the elaborate preparation of the performance begins. The villagers, as in the "Photograph 2," fix the branches of *bhakimlo* on the both sides of the village entry and exit routes in all four directions. These branches there ritually function as "*lingas* and poles of gates made

Photograph 2: Participants fixing a gate of *bhakimlo* and *ranijhar* with five *fitlees* hung on it

out of the threads of *ranijhar* and logs of *bhakimlo* that help set the village boundary-line." Out of the logs and woods of *bhakimlo*, they make thin plates called *fitlees* in Gurung tongue. The five pieces of the *fitlees* they hang in each of the gates and place three pieces at the top of the door of each house as the symbols of security guards.

The group of the male youths and adults arrange not only real weapons form the village, but also make symbolic weapons out of the woods and logs of *bhakimlo* like "swords, knives, sickles, spades, hoes, axes, *daavs*, *khundas*, *bhalas*, bows, arrows, *sunasies*, shields, shot guns, and brooms" (Suk Bahadur Gurung). As some of them are also seen in the "Photograph 3," they collect and carry the musical

instruments including loud sound producing utensils during the performance such as "*dhyangros*, *jhurmas*, *damphus*, drums, *dholaks*, *thundlus*, *madals*, cymbals, tin canes, plates, *kopres*, and other pots."

Photograph 3: Participants beating *dholaks* and *jhurmas* during the performance

After all these preparations and arrangements in previous days, the villagers, especially skilled men and women including some of the performers, even on the day of performance, remain busy on preparing and decorating the performers who disguise themselves either as jokers, wizards, ghosts, wild animals, beggars or as the

Photograph 4: Performers clad in rags, feathers, face painting, *ranijhar,* and weapons getting ready for the performance

deities, security guards, and other good forces. Some of them even perform the roles of cross-dressers. For this purpose, they paint their faces and bodies with charcoal, turmeric, white and red soils or rice floor. They wear rags and oversized clothes, feathers, animal skins, and *ranijhar* as seen in the "Photograph 4."

Along with the completion of these preparations, the villagers become physically and psychologically ready for the performance. Now the 'gathering phase' of the ritual begins in a public space where they wait for night as the performance cannot take place in day light. They believe that the evil spirits including the wild animals visit the village only in darkness. So, they wait for the sun set so that the birds return to their nests. The awaited moment comes along with the dusk. After the dusk, the 'performing phase' starts. The whole village gets thrilled by the noise of the people: "'*Ha ha ha hu hu hu, bhago bhago bhago*' with whistles and the jumble of the loud sounds of the musical instruments" (Suk Bahadur Gurung). This is how the

performance begins in the evening and lasts till midnight. The *Jatra* begins from the entry gate by building a fire and putting incense of *sikridhup* or *pati* mixed with ghee. After this ceremony of purification and worship of the five *fitlees* at the gate, the procession starts. A *dhuparo*, a person who carries a *dhupari*, leads the procession. D*hupari is a* chandelier like portable hanging metal or clay pot with fixed chains, filled up with burning charcoal and incense as seen in the "Photograph 5."

Photograph 5: Participants making *dhupari* ready with burning charcoal

The performers with weapons follow the *dhuparo*. On the way, they play and brandish the weapons at each other. Their act makes it look like a fight in a battle field. In such acting, "the evil forces lose the battle time and again. They gesture lying on the ground and the performers representing the good forces act like attacking upon them with the weapons" as in the "Photograph 6." Behind the performers playing the role of good and evil forces, the participants with the musical instruments play the music. Other participants behind the musical band whistle and make loud noises. The senior members, women and children watch and support the performance. During the time, "the participants and performers even joke, poke, and flirt at each other and to the young girls and women there" (Santa Kumari Gurung).

Photograph 6: Performers acting a fight scene of evil being defeated

The procession visits each house in the village. When they reach at a house, they move encircling the house and barn with loud noises, music, thuds of logs, and whistles saying "*bhago bhago*" (run away, run away) to the evil spirits. Some of the performers with weapons and drum beaters led by the *dhuparo* enter the house. On their entry, the head of the family puts some incense on the *dhupari* wishing his/her

house and barn be free from all the evils and their haunting. The entered group, as Santa Kumari Gurung reminisces, "visits every nooks and corners to chase the evil forces out of the house. Similar act repeats even in the barn. At a moment when they finish the chasing act and come out, the head of the family throws a palmful ashes wishing the evil spirits do not return again." In the same way, they visit all other houses and barn in the village and repeat the similar act of chasing the evil spirits away.

After visiting every house and barn in the village, the procession arrives at the exit gate where they again build a fire, incense, and worship the five *fitlees* and come out of the gate with a belief that they have chased the evils away from the village. Outside the gate, the final rite of sacrifice takes place. They "sacrifice a crowing rooster and offer other foods and domestic wine/alcohol in the name of all evil spirits so that the remaining sins and evils go away with the chased spirits and the village gets purified" (Suk Bahadur Gurung). As being offered to the evil spirits, the "remaining grain, alcohol and the sacrificed cock are not brought back in the village. It is believed that they will bring the evils back" (Santa Kumari Gurung). So, the participants of the performance cook the chicken and food; enjoy eating them with sips of domestic wine in a victorious mood. After the ending ceremony of feasting, the 'dispersal phase' begins. With a sense of pride in completing the serious duty of the village security, they disperse and return to their houses at midnight wishing good fortune, good health, prosperity, and well-being of the whole villagers and of their crop plants, and cattle. Wishing better times ahead, they go to bed and take rest being fully content.

The ritual performed thus is called *Thōte*. However, as per the regional differences of Gurung villages, the names vary. During the interview, Suk Bahadur

Gurung and Tham Bahadur Gurung have informed the researcher that they call it "*Thōte* in Kaski, *Ohore* and *Syausyaure* in Syangja and *Simlibar* in Lamjung." But despite the diversity in its nomenclature, the basic performing style and the ritual purpose are same. As a result, Gurungs from all these regions in Pokhara perform the ritual by the name of *Thōte* under the lead and management of Tamu Dhi Nepal without any disagreement and discontentment.

Thōte performed in *Chaitra* as *Ubhauli* and *Shrawan* as *Udhauli* do not have the differences in management, preparation, performance, participation, and in the basic ritual purpose. They have slight differences only in the direction of performance and their seasonal implications. The villagers perform the *Ubhauli* in *Chaitra* in upward move marking the beginning of the Spring Season and lives of plants and animals. But they perform *Udhauli* in *Shrawan* in downward move indicating the aging and ripening of lives including plants, crops, fruits and the Rainy/Summer Season.

On these performing days, the villagers halt their field works. They instead fully devote themselves to the performance. They do not even allow outsiders' entry in the village. As Schechner posits that the "ritual mean[s] a serious, effacious, result oriented performance whether to insure fertility, to placate the powers who control hunt, to maintain balance between male and female, to initiate, or something" (*Performance Theory* 54), the villagers take this "performance not like other feasts and festivals of celebration with joy and merrymaking. Instead they perform it with seriousness. They consider it as the collective act out of the communal responsibility for protecting and maintaining the well-being of the whole village including its people, crop plants, and cattle" (Santa Kumari Gurung). So, the performance carries a serious dramatic mood and environment of a battle between the good and evil forces.

Victor Turner, defining the ritual performance as a "cultural-aesthetic mirror" and "social drama" (8), includes "Breach, Crisis, and Redressive action that ends either in "Reintegration or Schism" in the processual form of ritual (11). He explains that in the first stage of 'Breach' in which "a person or subgroup breaks a rule deliberately or by inward compulsion in a public setting. In the stage of Crisis, conflicts between individuals, sections, and factions follow the original breach, revealing hidden clashes of character, interest, and ambition" (8). These conflicts "mount towards a crisis of the group's unity and its very continuity unless rapidly sealed off by redressive public action, consensually undertaken by the group's leaders, elders, or guardians" (8). He further argues,

> Redressive action is often ritual[ ] . . . [that] emphasize[s] ethical problems, hidden malice operating through witchcraft, or ancestral wrath against breaches . . . or the impiety of the living towards the dead. If a social drama runs its full course, the outcome . . . may be either (a) the restoration of peace and 'normality' among participants, or (b) social recognition of irremediable or irreversible breach of schism. (8-9)

Unlike Turner's claim of breaking the rules or harmony by a person of subgroup, the "Breach" in *Thōte* is the seasonal change that inevitably brings the change in the Natural course and related activities and productions. So the "Crisis" in the ritual is between the natural and supernatural destructive forces and the members of the community.

In this dramatic conflict, the villagers under the blessing of gods and deities represent the good forces, while the seen and unseen, natural and supernatural destructive forces including wild animals, diseases, floods, landslides, storms,

hailstorms, witchcrafts, wizards, ghosts, and other spirits are taken as the evil forces. As the ritual is performed for the "Redressive action" of healing the "Breach" by resolving the battle between these two forces, the villagers "do not bother about buying and wearing new clothes and enjoying new foods and dishes" (Santa Kumari Gurung). Instead, the whole villagers' concern is how to get victory over the evil forces by making natural and supernatural gods and deities happy so that they achieve the reintegration instead of "Schism."

Thus, the performance of *Thōte* acts as a 'ritual defense or shield' of the village. Out of the nature of its performance, it can be easily surmised that the performance originated out of the needs of Gurung community's shift from nomadic hunting life to the agriculture based social life. The implied meanings of the morphemes of *Thōte* also support the point. The morphemes '*Thō-*' stands for 'the Gurung village' and '-t*e*' refers to 'the act of chasing away the evil and destructive forces from the habitat. So it is, traditionally, a collective practice of the village worship and defense for the protection and healthy lives of people, crops, and cattle there.

IV. A Descriptive Text on Modern Urban Version of *Thōte*

The urban version of *Thōte* is performed in Pokhara since 2052 B.S. under the lead of Tamu Dhi Nepal[17]. The Executive Body of Tamu Dhi, currently presided by Mrs. Karma Gurung[18], appoints one of the members as the Coordinator of *Thōte* Committee taking the other members' consent. All the *Samaj* Presidents also called Regional Presidents remain the ex officio members in the Committee[19]. As per the decisions and managements of the Committee, the Gurungs of Pokhara valley perform *Thōte* twice on the last Tuesdays of *Chaitra* and *Shrawan* in a year. The urban version of *Thōte* follows roughly the pattern of 'decision making, management, preparation, gathering, performing, and dispersing.' But while following this structural poetics, it time and again deifies the mentioned pattern and Schechner's processual structure as the phases most often crisscross each other (176). Surprisingly, the performance breaks the traditional sense of the ritual performance. In the urban setting, it is becoming a less ritualistic and more a competitive political performance. As a result, it is becoming a contentious cultural collage including almost all the Gurung cultures and rituals within the package of *Thōte.*

The first phase of decision making begins with *Thōte* Coordinator's call for "a meeting of the Committee members at Tamu Dhi Nepal at least a week earlier" (Suk Bahadur Gurung). The meeting presided by the Coordinator decides about the

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[17] It is the Head Organization of 42 Gurung communities also called *Samaj* of Pokhara and Lekhnath Municipalities. Its name has been changed from Tamu Dhi Kaski to Tamu Dhi Nepal after the political change in Nepal on May 18, 2006.

[18] She is the President of Tamu Dhi Nepal since 2052 B.S. till the present date.

[19] Consensus selection is the general practice for appointing members in different organizational bodies

management and preparation of the performance. In the meeting, they decide a group to collect *bhakimlo*, a wild plant, and a wild weed called *ranijhar* from jungles. The group, as Suk Bahadur Gurung claims, "goes to village forests for *bhakimlo* and high hilly forests for *ranijhar*; since the latter is found only at the height of 5000 meter and above." They use the *bhakimalo*, as seen in the "Photograph 7," for preparing "weapons, *fitlees*, and *gates*, while the *ranijhar* is used for making and decorating the gates, Tamu Hyula Chok,"[20] a "Square of Gurung Region" in Pokhara, and to clad the performers and participants (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*).

Photograph 7: Participants preparing the artificial weapons of *bhakimlo* and decorating a pole of a gate with *ranijahr*

They form volunteer teams of each 42 *Samaj* as per the suggestions of the Regional Presidents. The volunteer groups help systematizing the performance by taking responsibilities of providing water, maintaining security, traffic management, and remaining ready for primary health care. The meeting decides for asking required budget either to the Executive Body of Tamu Dhi Nepal or to find donor members[21] of the communities. The Coordinator in the meeting circulates a decision to the Regional Presidents "to make sure of their participants be present in the prescribed Gurung costumes" (Ruk Bahadur Gurung[22]). Finally, the meeting ends with the

[20] It has become a part of the performance after they named Birauta Chok as Tamu Hyula Chok in 2066 B.S. From the date, it has been used as the beginning venue of the ritual performance of *Ubhauli* of *Chaitra*.

[21] Most of the Gurungs in abroad are found donating for social works and such cultural performances.

[22] His interview text in Nepali, all translations mine.

Coordinator's permission to "all the Regional Presidents to make their individual preparations and make their participations grand."

The Regional Presidents call meetings of their respective communities according to their convenience. In the meetings, they decide how to prepare and make their performances special; since it is not only a matter of participation, but also a part of competition. The meetings decide including "a cultural or ritual performance popular in their villages in addition to the *Thōte* performance so that their participations become outstanding. They make a team "to collect and arrange musical instruments from each member house if they have any" (Tham Bahadur Gurung). Most of the communities have the necessary musical instruments already and use them even in the ritual performance. The meetings circulate the members for making their presence in the coded costumes with special gait ups to win the dress competition as well. They end deciding to use the budgets needed out of the communities' funds.

The skilled members, usually the seniors, of each *Samaj* start preparing *Thōte* performers in the roles of good and evils forces. They, like in the "Photographa 8," "disguise them in the roles using natural colors of charcoal and turmeric to readymade colors for body and face paintings" (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27*).

Photograph 8: The *Thōte* performers with symbolic weapons clad in *ranijhar*, feather crown, face and body painting are being ready for the performance in Tundhikhel

They also use "readymade masks, rages, garlands of maize cobs, *ranijhar*, and crowns of feathers for the purpose." As per their disguises, the seniors of the communities

including the Presidents distribute “symbolic weapons and give instructions of their roles to be acted out during the procession.”

The *Thōte* Committee members make their own preparations. They invite the Chief Guest and Guests; prepare gates and stages necessary for beginning and ending ceremonies ready; collect dry woods for building fire; decide *dhuparos* for caring *dhupari* in the profession, and decorate the beginning venue with banners, *ranijhar*, and *toran*. The beginning venue was Tundhikhel since 2052 to 2065 B.S. But the venue got changed to Tamu Hyula Chok in 2066 B.S. as the “Photograph 9” illustrates it. However, they are using Tamu Hyula Chok as the beginning point of

Photograph 9: Members of the *Thōte* Committee decorating the Tamu Hyula Chok with the banner of Tamu Dhi Nepal, *ranijhar*, and *toran*

Ubhauli in *Cahitra* and Tundhikhel of *Udhauli* in *Shrawan* since 2067 B.S. as per their geographical heights keeping the bank of the Seti River fixed for the end venue” (Suk Bahadur Gurung).

On the day of the performance, Tundhikhel in *Shrawan* and Tamu Hyula Chok in *Chaitra* gradually turn out like carnival stages from the early morning. All the 42 communities with their “special cultural packages (*jhankis*) along with the *Thōte* performers clad in weapons, bands playing and beating the musical instruments, and participants all in their dress codes and gate ups and carrying their *Samaj* banners and play cards make their presence grand” (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan* 27). The environment and mood gradually becomes ceremonial and festive. In the venues, some “participants remain busy for decorating themselves with *ranijahr* and others for decorating the venue and gates.” Some of them “build a fire to prepare charcoal for

dhupari, while others find themselves busy in managing the participants into rows for a mass street procession."

Before the procession, the Chairperson of Tamu Dhi and the *Thōte* Coordinator jointly welcome the Chief Guest and Guests by offering *khada* and garlands of *ranijhar* in the beginning venue. After the Chief Guest and Guests' welcome, they perform the rite of purification, as in the "Photograph 10," by putting

Photograph 10: The Chairperson Mrs. Karma Gurung, the Chief Guest, the then Member of the Constituent Assembly Krishna Bahadur Gurung with a bow and the Special Guest Raja Mama Kusunda in the mid putting incense on the fire in the performance of *Shrawan* 27, 2066 B.S.

incense of *sikridhup* or *patiee* with ghee on the fire built at the gate made up of *bhakimlo*, *ranijhar*, and a set of five *fitlees* hung on it. The President of Tamu Dhi and the Chief Guest jointly initiate the incensing. Then other Guests and seniors of each *Samaj* follow them. After the incense, the mass street procession begins.

The procession is ordered systematically as seen in the "Photograph 11." The "*dhuparos* lead the row followed by a group of young boys and girls" (*Thōte Parva-Shrawan 27*). The members of "the Executive Body of Tamu Dhi, Chief Guest

Photograph 11: The *dhuparos* leading the procession arranged in the order described

and Guests, and the *Thōte* Coordinator walk with them wearing *ranijhar* and carrying symbolic weapons. A portable gate made for the end venue is carried after them." After the gate, the banners of Tamu Dhi, of the *Thōte* Committee, and of each *Samaj* are arranged in an order. The opportunity of "following the banners in the procession

goes to the community that won 'the best prize in all' in the previous performance." Other communities that won the prizes of best *Thōte jhanki*, best dress, best participation, and consolation prize winners follow respectively. The remaining communities follow them according to the consensus.

All the communities "arrange the participants in two lines led by the banners of their *Samaj* and a row of young children of both sex as seen in the "Photograph 12." The *Samaj* banner is carried either by women or by the children of either sex. After the banner, the *Thōte* performers follow the procession in two lines. But "the lines of the performers time and again disperse in course of their acting. The musical band of the men follows the performers." The musical band is followed either by the lines of male participants or female participants. Some senior members of each *Samaj* walk in-between the space and keep the lines intact" (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra* 27).

Photograph 12: The women participants of Fulbari Tamu Samaj with their banner and leading the procession

Besides the community based participants, some members make their unique creations and participate in the procession individually. For an instance, one of the participants of *Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27, 2063 B.S.* makes "his presence with an artificial eagle riding on a bike." Similarly, different Gurung related organizations participate in the procession in groups with their banners. The participations of "Tamu Bidyarthi Union" and "National Pro-Public Committee against HIV/AIDS in the *Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27, 2063 B.S*. are some such evidences. The ratio of such participants is increasing in each succeeding performances.

The Gurungs of all age, sex, *jat* or clan groups, region, and class simply become the participants and hierarchy if ever practiced any melts down with a sense

of equality in the procession[23]. Young children to the senior members including both male and female equally participate in the performance and procession. All these participants clad in the tribal costumes and garlands of *ranijhar* submerge themselves in the festive environment and follow the procession. Some participants carry whistles, *lingas*, and even weapons. They whistle and make sounds like: "*Ohore, Ohore*" and "*Ha Ha Hu Hu*" (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27*), while other participants remain busy in singing, dancing, and performing their *jhankis* or cultural performances. Some others carry their banners and play cards and chant the prescribed slogans.

Photograph 13: The mass street procession and the audiences watching it from the banks of the road

They basically use four types of banners of the Tamu Dhi Nepal, *Thōte* Committee, all 42 communities, and of their demands. The banner of the Tamu Dhi writes its name and leads other banners as in the "Photogrph 14." The banner of the *Thōte* Committee "arranged in second position carries the main slogan of the performance such as: 'Celebrate *Thōte*, Preserve National Culture.'" (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27*). The banners of the communities come third in the procession mentioning their names, like "Fulbari Tamu Samaj." They can mention their addresses, years of establishments, and the cultural packages included.

[23] Each community includes members of both *Char* and *Sora Jat* or clans. The jat or clan discriminations get no space in the formation of the community and in such ritual performances though it is found in practice in cases of marriage and funeral ceremonies in some of the communities.

Photograph 14: The banners arranged in the order as being described

The fourth kinds of banners that follow all other three types discussed above contain the specific political demands. The banner, as seen in the "Photograph 15," carried by the National Pro-public Committee of Gurungs against HIV/AIDS in the performance of *Chaitra 27*, 2063 B.S. states: "Guarantee Our Position in the Constitutional Assembly." Besides the banners, they also carry two types of play cards. The first types mention the social evils and problems like "Poverty," "Discrimination," and "Corruption" and the second types portray their demands and wishes such as "Declare the Gurung State" and "Declare the Tribal Language a National Language" (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*).

Photograph 15: The banner of Gurung related National Pro-public Committee with its slogan

These are the evils they want to eliminate and the demands they wish to achieve. These wishes and demands are also allegorically acted out by the *Thōte* performers throughout the procession.

The group of the *Thōte* performers in Pokhara include adults, youths, and children but all men. The performers according to their roles are three types. The first types represent natural and supernatural forces. Some of them represent the good forces like gods and deities, while others stand for the evil spirits like ghosts and witches. Other types of the performers act out the roles of socio-political forces allegorically. They play the roles of "Poverty," "Corruption," "Violence" and "Discrimination" to the roles of their demands and wishes like "Peace," "Prosperity," "Justice," and "Equality" (Tham Bahadur Gurung). The third types are those

performers who play the roles or carry the creations of birds and animals as in the "Photograph 16."

Photograph 16: A group of performers disguised in the forms of a horse and other good and evil forces clad with feathers, *ranijhar*, weapons, and other decorations

According to their roles and representations, they disguise themselves with rags, garlands, masks, face and body paintings, feathers, *ranijhar*, clothes, and symbolic weapons as the real weapons are forbidden in the urban performance. In the procession, they follow the banner of their communities and act. They can easily "disperse out of the lines and blur the order of the procession" (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27*). Similarly, they can also "move out of the procession to the banks of the roads; poke and flirt with the audiences and return to their places." Time and again "they dance and act according to their roles." Most often they create the atmosphere of a battle field fighting between the good and evil forces. In the battle, "good forces win the evils time and again." As seen in the "Photograph 17," the performers "representing the evil forces fall down on the ground and the good forces pretend like attacking over them."

Photograph 17: A group of performers acting a fight scene in which a performer representing the evil force is lying down on the ground and others representing the good forces are attacking him

Though the name is *Thōte*, the performance in Pokhara includes even other Gurung cultures and rituals. It is celebrated as a package of all the Gurung cultures

and rituals. All communities can come up with their distinct cultural performances, songs, dances, and rituals popular in their regions. Some of them come up with "*Sati Ghantu*," "*Sorathi*," and "*Chyadu*," while others with "*Dohori*," "*Maruni* Dance," and *Salaijo* Song" (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27* and *Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*). Throughout the procession, they perform, dance, and sing their cultural packages along with their *Thōte* performance. The "Andhikhola Tamu Samaj," as seen in the "Photograph 18," incorporates "*Sati Ghantu*" as its special cultural performance and wins the best prize in the performance of *Chaitra*, 2063 B.S. (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27*).

Photograph 18: A group of dancers and singers showing their *Sati Ghantu Dance* to the mass

Another crucial part of the performance is the street management and volunteer services. As the performance takes place either in the hot month *Chitra* or in the rainy month *Shrawan*, one of the problems faced in every performance is the management of umbrella culture. Though the organizers suggest all the participants for avoiding the use of umbrella, it has become the wanted and unwanted part of the performance. However, the management team makes time and again sure that at least the performers and the groups of dancers and singers do not use them. Even other participants try not to use them except in the extreme conditions. Similarly, traffic management is another challenge. As Pokhara is the city of people from different cultures, regions, and religions including the internal and external tourists, they remain cautious about creating no problems to them. For the purpose, they take help of traffic officers and employ voluntary groups in different stations so that traffic jam does not last long.

Photograph 19: A group of volunteers providing drinking water to the participants during the mass procession

In order to manage drinking water, as in the "Photograph 19," and primary health care, they appoint and set groups of volunteers at different junctions on the road sides (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*). The "roadside houses and inhabitants also participate here and there providing the water if asked." The management team takes a responsibility of the water management. In some performances, some Gurung members donate and take the responsibility. For an example, "Captain Karna Bahadur Gurung of *Bagar Tamu Samaj* and Mrs. Purna Kumari Gurung of *Nagbeli Tamu Samaj* carried all these responsibilities in the performance of *Chaitra 27,* 2063 B.S."

Though it is a 'Gurung-only' performance in the village setting, the multicultural setting of Pokhara directly or indirectly invites the involvement of people from fellow cultures and groups too. Some participate as the volunteers, some as providing water on the roadsides, some as the audiences either from their house roofs or on the banks of the roads, some involve as photographers and video recorders, some as media persons from different TV Channels, FMs, and newspapers, while some others as the tent and stage makers and managers. In the performance of *Chaitra 27*, 2063 B.S., for an instance, the members of the "Solti Tent House, Ramghat-10, Pokhara," "B. C. Cable and Golden Eye Television," "Pokhara Cable," "Pokhara Movies," "Himchuli FM," "Annapurna FM," "Pokhara FM," and "Machapuchre FM" participated directly or indirectly. Some members participate even in the procession as seen in the "Photograph 20."

Photograph 20: A man from different culture and community participating in the procession along with his fellow Gurungs

The area and the roads they cover during the procession is another important aspect of the performance. As mentioned earlier, the procession in Pokhara begins either from Tundhikhel or from Tamu Hyula Chok and ends at the bank of the Seti River after visiting Tamu Dhi Nepal on the way. The procession that begins from Tamu Hyula Chok in *Chaitra* moves upward to symbolize the *Ubhauli*. They cover the area of "Tamu Hyula Chok, Mustang Chok, Airport Chok, Nagdhunga, Prithvi Chok, Nayabajar, Tamu Dhi, and reach at the bank of the Seti River" (Suk Bahadur Gurung), while the procession from Tundhikhel in *Shrawan* moves downward at the beginning to mark the *Udhauli.* They move through "Prithivi Chok, Srijana Chok, Zero Kilometer, Bindyabasini, Bhairavtole, Nalamukh, Palikhe Chok, Mahendra Pool, Nayabajar, Tamu Dhi, and the bank of the Seti River."

The premise of Tamu Dhi Nepal is the important mid venue. Before they reach to the bank of the Seti River, they enter into the house of the Organization. The

Photograph 21: A Group of performers coming and throwing a palmful ash out of the house of Tamu Dhi Nepal

procession, as seen in the video recordings of both *Chaitra 27*, 2063 B.S. and *Shrawan 27*, 2066 B.S., "moves around the house (*Dhi*) at the center;" since the house is taken as the representative of all the Gurung houses in Pokhara. After encircling the house, "the groups led by the *dhuparos* enter the house and incense it turn by turn. The groups include the performers and music bands of each community." They perform and visit, as in the "Photograph 21," "every inside part of the house and exit throwing a palmful ash out by one of the senior performers as the symbolic act of chasing the evils out."

While the performers are doing so, other participants, as seen in the "Photograph 22," gather and take their seats around the stage prepared for the ending

ceremony. After the chasing act, the performers and musicians join their respective groups near the stage for exhibiting their special culture, dance, and song for the final judgment in the competition.

Photograph 22: The mass participants gathered in the premise of Tamu Dhi Nepal for their final competition

On the other side, the management team with the help of spokesperson gives the stage a formal but ceremonial turn that begins with the "chairing of the function by the President of Tamu Dhi. It completes when the Chief Guest, other Guests, the other acting members of Tamu Dhi, and the *Thōte* Coordinator are called upon the stage for their seats" (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*). The judges take their seats for the evaluation though some of the performances like that of *Thōte* performers, costumes, and participation are already judged during the procession. However, all the communities, as in the "Photograph 23," perform their cultural programs once again in front of the gathering. This mid venue gathering in the performance defies the rigid ritual pattern given by Schechner as in his pattern dispersal follows directly after the performance (176). Similarly, the exhibition of the *Thōte* performances and music

Photograph 23: A Group of *Putpute* dance from *S*hri Himali Gurung Family performing their dance with music and song

bands of each *Samaj* takes place turn by turn. The groups of *Thōte* performers and music bands led by the *dhuparos* and gate carriers go to the bank of the Seti River after their exhibitions.

When all the groups of the *Thōte* performers reach at the bank, the ending ritual begins there. They "fix the gate and build a fire at its exit. They incense the

surrounding by putting *sikridhup* or *patiee* with ghee" on the fire (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27*). They worship all the gods and deities known and popular in their own regions. After the worship, they "exit out of the gate and take off, as in the "Photograph 24," the clothes, garlands, feathers, weapons, *ranijhar*," and all other materials they used. They put the weapons and *ranijhar* at the gate. They "burn down other materials like clothes, feathers, and garlands." They offer fruits and flowers at the final rite of chasing the evils so that they do not return but no blood sacrifice of a cock is offered. When these entire rites are taking place, the music band continuously go on playing the musical instruments.

Photograph 24: Ending the performance at the bank of the Seti River

As they finish, some of them take bath in the river; others sprinkle sanctified water and return with a belief that they are free from all the evils. While the final rite is taking place at the bank of the Seti River, the cultural and other ritual programs and their judgments at the premise of Tamu Dhi continue. After the return, they change their dress and join the formal program. Rejoining the mid venue gathering also does not come in Schechner's performative poetics of the ritual (176).

In the program, all the communities try their best to make their performances best. They present, as recorded in the video of *Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27, 2063 B.S.*, either "*Ghantu*," "*Dohori*," "*Sorathi/Putpute*," "*Rodhi*" or "*Chudka*" to name some. As the performance ends, the judges give their final results to the announcer. But before the prize distribution to the winners, the Chairperson of the function and the *Thōte* Coordinator distribute a set of three *fitlees* to all the Regional Presidents for the protection of their community houses. As in the "Photograph 25," the sets of *fitlees* are also given to the Chief Guest and Guests as the ritual tokens for security. As the

distribution of the *fitlees* ends, the prize distribution to the winners begins. These acts of competition and distribution of the prizes included in the urban version of the ritual performance are also mentioned neither in Schechner nor in Turner's theorization of the ritual structure.

Photograph 25: One of the Regional Presidents receiving a set of *fitlees* from the Chairperson and *Thōte* Coordinator

Finally, the Chairperson of the program and the Chief Guest jointly distribute the prizes to the winners of "Participation," "Dress-up," "*Thōte* Performance," "Music," "Best in all," and "Consolations" (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27*). For the reference, "Bagar Tamu Samaj wins the prize in 'Costumes'," "Dip Tamu Samaj in 'Participation'," "Fulbari Tamu Samaj in 'Music'," "Kolma Tamu Samaj in '*Thōte* Performance and the Best in all'," and "Andhikhola Tamu Samaj received 'Consolation prize'" in the performance of *Chaitra* 27, 2063 B.S. The prize distribution is followed by the speeches and wishes of the Chief Guest and Guests. The whole function ends after the sum up speech and thanks by the Chairperson. So after the sum-up speech and thanks by the Chairperson, the dispersal of the participants begins from the mid venue gathering.

Photograph 26: Winners of the Best Prize holding their trophy along with the Chairperson

Thus, the urban version of the ritual contains the social and political evils as the 'Breach' instead of the seasonal change of the rural version. The 'Crisis' of the conflict enacted in the ritual performance is not against the natural and supernatural destructive forces but between the virtues and evils of the human society itself.

However, the ritual as a ‘Redressive action’ is enacted for the purpose of the reintegration not for the ‘Schism’ even in the changed context of time and space of its performance. Chapter V in the dissertation explores and analyzes more such shifts and transformations between and within the versions.

V. Shifts in *Thōte* Performance: A Comparative Analysis between the Traditional Rural and Modern Urban Versions

Thōte is a Gurung ritual performed collectively for the village safeguard since the time immemorial. It has recently two distinct traditional rural and modern urban versions in addition to the regional variations. However, most of the villages have left and forgotten the performance now. Rapid flow of internal and external migration of Gurungs from villages, unstoppable influence of mainstream national and global cultures, growing trend of Gurung youths joining the Indian and British army forces, and moving for abroad jobs and opportunities, the Nepalese government's indifference and lack of policy to preserve the tribal culture and ritual, and the only oral existence of the ritual are some of the main reasons that made the handover of it from old to new generations difficult, though not impossible.

As a result, the ritual has not only reached almost on the verge of disappearance in many rural settings except "in a few villages of Kaski, Lamjung, and Syangja" (Tham Bahadur Gurung), but also led to the development of a new urban version in Pokhara with a motive of preserving and continuing the primitive Gurung cultures and rituals. But in course of its spatio-temporal shift from the rural to the urban settings, it has undergone tremendous transformations with a few continuities. On the basis of the descriptive texts developed in the chapters IV and V, this chapter intends to analyze the shifts taking place between the versions. Though both the versions are performed "for the community defense and protection by chasing the evils away from the Gurung community" (Suk Bahadur Gurung), the notions of the evils and community have been largely changed.

The evils in the traditional rural version are the "natural, supernatural, diseases, and wild animals" (Tham Bahadur Gurung), whereas in the modern urban

version they are the "violence, identity crisis, discrimination, injustice, inequality, poverty, and diseases" (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27*). The villagers perform the chasing ritual to protect their lives, plantation, and cattle in their communities but the same act is carried out in Pokhara for peace, prosperity, equality, justice, good health, better education, and respect for identity in difference. The ritual in the village is performed as a strategy for survival and self defense. It embodies significances in terms of economy and security concern of the Gurung community. It reveals how the protection of their lives through the protection of their farming and cattle was/is must in the rural setting; since the agriculture and the animal husbandry were/are the main economic sources for their sustenance.

In both the versions, they prepare a group of *Thōte* performers in disguise to act out the ritual purpose. They use different, as Suk Bahadur Gurung informs, "colors for body and face paintings, rags, feathers, animal skins, and *ranijhar*." But instead of the villagers' use of charcoal, turmeric, red and white soils, the urban dwellers mainly use "readymade colors" (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan* 27). The performers in Pokhara also use "readymade masks" which is not the part of the performers' decoration in the village. In the village performance, they use the domestic products like *shyakhu* to save from heat and rain. But the typical scene has been changed in Pokhara where "the participants use umbrella so massively" that it makes the performance look like an Umbrella *Jatra* or Umbrella Exhibition. These shifts in the performance show the influence of the national and global consumer culture intervening the local tribal cultures and rituals.

A remarkable transformation is found even in the concern of the costumes. In the village performance, whether the performers make their presence in Gurung dress is not the matter of great worry as the costumes are most of their daily garments. The

everyday dress up in the rural performance has become an occasional affair in Pokhara. The shift in the everydayness to the occasional practice of the dress brought change in their sensibility and intentionality of its wearing. In the village, it is an unconscious and unintentional part of the performance through which they distinguish themselves as the Gurungs.

But in Pokhara they wear and identify them very consciously though occasionally. Moreover, the youngsters are gradually attracted to the costume at least on the days of the performance as a part of their glamour. In effect, the business of many shopping complexes, fancy stores, and medias in main cities like Kathmandu and Pokhara are booming up out of the sales and advertisements of the imported costumes; since, as Macfarlane notices in many Gurung villages, the tribal domestic industries that produce Gurung dresses are on the verge of extinction and all most all of the weavers abandoned the profession except in some villages where they still weave the clothes for personal uses (*Resources* 27-30).

Similarly, the performers in the village use "both the real and artificial weapons" (Suk Bahadur Gurung), while in Pokhara they "use only artificial symbolic weapons made up of *bhakimlo*" (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27*). The change in the use of weapons in Pokhara, as the researcher was informed by the interviewees, is because of the sense of responsibility and the security sensibility in open and multi-communal nature of the urban setting. Unlike the closed nature of Gurung villages where the ritual can easily be the 'Gurung-only' performance and the use of the real weapons can easily be managed without a security threat in Pokhara city, a common place of people from different cultures, creeds, and regions, the ritual has become a 'not/ Gurung-only' in which directly and indirectly people from other cultural groups involve. As Suk Bahadur Gurung says, "We brought this change as our ritual

performances here should respect others' feelings and sensibilities. More importantly we must be abiding by the State Law. The law does not allow us to use the real weapons in public places." The remarks reveal a fact that the modifications in the ritual are also the marks of how the Gurungs are changing and adopting the urban life following the national spirits and multicultural nature of society.

Differences are also seen in the management and preparation of the performance. The preparation, in the village, begins with, as Santa Kumari Gurung reminds, "the collection of grains and floors from each house for managing food and money for the performance." But in Pokhara, it begins with searching for donation or collecting cash from each member house. The management of village sanitation according to the seasonal change in *Chaitra* and *Shrawan* is a crucial part of the rural performance for which members from each house involve irrespective of their age and sex. But it is not the case in Pokhara. Instead, they "form different volunteer groups for water, traffic, and primary health managements" (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*).

These groups are set at different locations of street during the mass procession. During the procession, "even non-volunteer members of different cultural groups from the roadside houses enthusiastically participate in providing drinking water." The groups also actively work on managing newspapers, media, tent, stage, music set, *khada*, and the garlands of *ranijhar* for welcoming the Chief Guests and Guests. They help for conducting the beginning and ending functions in formal settings and for broadcasting the performance through the media. The Chief Guest and Guests as the ritual components are not the matter of concerns in the village. This addition has led to the incorporation of political and intercultural members in the performance. For an instance, "the then Member of the Constituent Assembly, Krishna Bahadur Gurung as

the Chief Guest and Mama Raja Kusunda as the Special Guest" were invited in the performance of *Shrawan* 27, 2066 B.S.

Transformation of the ritual as a village procession to a mass street procession is another noticeable feature in the versions. In the villages, "they set up the boundary line before the procession by fixing *bhakimlo* gates in all four directions" (Suk Bahadur Gurung). But in urban performance, they set only beginning and ending borderlines. For the end borderline, "they make a portable gate and carry throughout the procession at the front line after the *dhuparos* and fix it only at the final ceremony" (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27*). Moreover, the procession "in the village visits each house and barn compulsorily. Certain group of performers and musicians with *dhuparos* perform the chasing act inside the house and barn and the family head puts some incense in *dhupari* wishing the protection and finally throws a palmful ash out for no return of the evils" (Santa Kumari Gurung). This act of visiting each house and performing the chasing act inside the house and barn has become only a symbolic part in the urban version. The procession in Pokhara moves through different stations of the street and reaches at the house of Tamu Dhi Nepal and moves around taking it as the representative of the whole Gurung houses in Pokhara Valley.

The groups of performers and musicians from each *samaj* enter the house and perform the chasing act. The Regional Presidents take three pieces of *fitlees* and put them at the top of the community house known as the *samaj ghar* in the final session of the performance in Pokhara (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27*), while the act of putting a three piece set of *fitlees* in each house takes place before the performance in the villages. As the interviewees explain, "these sorts of changes are taking place in the ritual performance because of the multicultural setting and their sparse settlement in different locations of Pokhara valley" (Suk Bahadur and Santa Kumari Gurung). So

the ritual in mass procession, large but sparse Gurung settlements, problem of traffic management, and respect for the sentiments of the fellow cultural groups are some reasons behind the changes in the urban version.

Another remarkable difference is in time and place of the performance. In the rural version, they maintain fix places. Usually, the main village entry and exit routes are the beginning and ending of the performance respectively. They use different places for the beginning of the *Ubhauli* in *Chaitra* and *Udhauli* in *Shrawan*. But Tundhikhel was the beginning and the bank of the Seti River was the end venues from 2052 B.S. to 2065 B.S. in Pokhara. But they changed "the beginning location in 2066 B.S along with the change in national politics" (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*). As the national politics was moving from the tradition long monarchical rule to the federal state system, like other ethnic groups, the Gurungs of Pokhara also actively participated in spatial politics of naming the town square after their name.

After a long struggle, they got success to name Birauta Chok as a 'Tamu Hyula Chok," a Square of Gurung State. As the celebration of their victory, they ritualized the new place and tried to convert it as a part of their culture and identity. They used the venue as the beginning point of the ritual performance of *Shrawan*, 2066 B. S. However, considering its lower height than that of Tundikhel, they use it now as the beginning point of the *Ubhauli* in *Chaitra* whereas the *Udhauli* in *Shrawan* they begin from Tundhikhel itself since the performance of *Chaitra*, 2067 B.S.

The villagers perform the ritual in darkness. Generally the time span of the performance covers, as Santa Kumari Gurung remembers, from "dusk to midnight." So after the completion of all the preparations on the day of performance, they enthusiastically wait for the dusk looking at the sky for the return of the birds to their

nests. The ritual belief is that "the chasing act to the natural and supernatural spirits, ghosts, diseases, witchcrafts, and wild animals becomes effective in the night as these forces visit the villages in the darkness." The ritual belief in the urban version has changed in Pokhara. They believe neither on the existence of the supernatural powers nor have the threats of the wild animals. Instead, they think that "the human beings themselves are the causes of all the social evils like violence, war, discrimination, corruption, threat, injustice, and inequality" (Suk Bahadur Gurung). So they perform the ritual for the purpose of exposing their collective conviction and determination to avoid such ill intentions and activities by inviting even others for the same.

Besides this, they take it as a ritual platform to show "their unity, power, and identity" through their cultural performance to their fellow communities within the nation and other international communities in the world (Tham Bahadur Gurung). For the purposes of exhibiting their determination for good human society and cultural integrity for their tribal identity, the day light performance becomes appropriate. So the Gurungs in Pokhara "gather in the beginning venue since the morning with their cultural packages along with the *Thōte* performance" (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27*). Throughout the day, they actively participate in the procession; at the late afternoon they participate in the final ceremony; and in the evening they disperse to their respective homes. For such exhibitionary purpose, they also invite "different media including FMs, Radios, TVs, and Newspapers."

Recently they have started posting and installing photographs and videos of the performance in different online social networks like *Facebook* and *Twitter*. More strikingly, the urban ritual space has also become the platform for different Gurung related organizations to exhibit their strengths and political agendas. For an evidence, "Tamu Bidyarthi Union," "National Pro-public Committee against HIV/AIDS," and

"Gurung Liberation Front" participated with their demands on the banners in the *Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27, 2063 B.S.*

The practice of maintaining unity and homogeneity through the ritual performance in Pokhara is another change. In the villages, they perform the ritual separately. So there are not only regional variations especially in the names, but also "the villages maintain their own boundaries for the performance" (Santa Kumari Gurung). In some villages, it is called, as Tham Bahadur Gurung informs, "*Ohore* while in others *Simlibar*" to mention some examples. During the performance, they "halt their field works and do not allow outsiders' entry in the village" (Santa Kumari Gurung). But in Pokhara, the communal nature of the village performance is changing to the organizational form. In the urban version, the practices of maintaining strict boundary, halting their works, and stopping the outsiders' entry are at a far cry due to the multiethnic setting, competitive professionalism, and impossibility of involving all the members of family in the performance.

Despite the regional differences of the Gurung communities in Pokhara, "they perform the ritual after the name *Thōte* for maintaining homogeneity and unity" (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27*). Though, during the performance, some communities recite their own regional ritual names, the banners that lead them in the procession carries the name *Thōte* and the slogans they unanimously decided. Similarly, if some members are participating in the performance, some others are found working in their profession. More significantly, even during the performance, "the pedestrians including fellow neighbors from other cultures, and the foreign tourists cross it over easily"— let alone restricting the outsiders' entry in the communities.

The shifts in the performance have led the ritual from 'Gurung-only' to the intercultural and national performance which is also one of the motives of the

Gurungs of Pokhara as they write on the banners: "Let us Celebrate *Thōte*, a National Culture" or "Celebrate *Thōte*, Preserve the National Culture" (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*). The intercultural dimension of the urban version of *Thōte* is found in terms of participations, use of languages, audiences, and inclusion of different Gurung cultural performances that have the elements of other cultures too. Though the whole procession is named after the ritual, the name is appropriated for the collective package of almost all cultures and rituals practiced in the Gurung communities.

Each community participates in the ritual at least with an extra cultural or ritual performance popular in their regions. Unlike in the village, the procession in Pokhara includes even other performances, dances, and songs. Some of them are like "*Ghantu Dance*, *Sorathi Dance*, *Maruni Dance*, *Krishna Charitra*, and Folk Songs such as *Rodhi*, *Dohori*, and *Salaijo*" (*Thōte Parva- Cahitra 27*). Some of the dances and songs included are not always necessarily of the Gurung culture only, but also those that are popularly shared by the communities of other cultures. For an instance, *Maruni Dance* and *Krishna Charitra* are the popular performances even in Magar and Hindu cultures respectively. The ritual originated out of the beliefs of the Bon religion has gradually incorporated the Buddhist components like the use of *Khada* and avoidance of blood sacrifice and Hindu stories and myths in different cultural performances and songs like in *Ghantu* and *Krishna Charitra*.

The ritual is also an interesting space of multilingualism in the urban setting where the participants make "code-switching between the Gurung language, Nepali, and English languages" (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*). In some situations, the "Nepali language functions as a *lingua franca* not only between the intercultural members, but also among the Gurungs of different regions whose varieties of the Gurung language become unintelligible to each other." Most of the songs like the *Ghantu* song sung in

the performance create a bilingual situation of Gurung and Nepali languages. Similarly, the participation in the performance of Pokhara is more inter-communal. Members from other cultures and communities participate as the "media persons and stage makers, some others as the audiences, pedestrians, and tourists crossing the lines of procession here and there." Some of them even involve in the procession itself walking along with the fellow Gurungs.

Massive use of the modern forms of media and technology is another change seen in the two versions of the ritual. The role of *Katwal* in the traditional version has been replaced by the modern forms of communication like phones and internet both in the urban and in most of the rural settings. However the use is more pervasive and excessive in the urban version. They use modern media and technologies like "FMs, Radios, TVs, Newspapers, videos, and cameras to capture and broadcast the scenes of the ritual worldwide" (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27*). Similarly, they use "the banners and play cards writing the names of their communities, regional identities, slogans, demands, and wishes with *Thōte* and other extra cultural packages."

The use of these different forms of media and technologies show the influence of the global force fusing with the Gurung local culture that has made the ritual a kind of glocal space where the local knowledge and global force in the form of technology contradict, clash, and fuse together. Moreover, such use of the modern technology has posed the question on the tribal rituals and cultures as merely oral forms. The visual mode of representation is converting the performative oral culture into the exhibition culture— an exhibition of their identity and power collectively through the camera lenses.

Another explicit change in the urban version is the inclusion of a competition and prize awarding part at the final ceremony. The competition takes place among the

Gurung communities participated. They are judged on the basis of their dress up, *Thōte* performance, music band, participation, and the best in all. The communities "perform and exhibit all these performances during the procession and in the final formal ceremony as well" (Ruk Bahadur Gurung). After the exhibition, a team of the judges decide the winners and accordingly they are awarded. The winners get "the medals, prizes, and an opportunity to participate at the front line in the next performance according to the positions they win" (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27*).

Moreover, the implicit prize is the pride they gain being successful to identify their regional and tribal identities to the world. The inclusion of the competition part in the ritual has brought change in the communal tribal spirit of the Gurungs based on mutual sharing, understanding, caring, and cooperating to the gradual practice of the competition and communal individualism according to the demand of the time and space. It also helps making the performance and procession more magnificent and grand as all the groups try their best to make excellent performances and participations.

No trace of clan hierarchy in the ritual performance is one of its tribal characteristics though it is still strictly practiced in some of the Gurung societies. The participants who may be facing the problem of clan discriminations to each other in the society "simply become Gurungs and devote themselves in the ritual" (Suk Bahadur Gurung). In this way, at least for some of the days in a year, the ritual provides the Gurung communities an opportunity to create and practice 'the clan discrimination free zone' and identify their tribe with a sense and practice of equality. Unlike the issue of the clan, the gender stratification in the ritual is seen explicitly.

The gender stratification in the performance is more obvious in the traditional version where the women participate either as the supporters, audiences, or as the

ones to welcome and farewell the procession in the house and barn if they are the family heads. From this aspect, the ritual in its rural version is almost a masculine performance. The "males involve in the whole process of decision making, collecting the materials, managing, preparing and performing the ritual." The male head of the village guides, decides, initiates, and controls the whole performance. The men perform even the roles of the women by wearing cross dresses.

However, the strict gender stratification in the ritual is gradually waning out in the urban version and the performance is becoming more an organizational practice than the communal. Mrs. Karma Gurung, the head of the Tamu Dhi Nepal since 2052 B.S., decides, initiates, leads, and controls the performance. Similarly, the women, more than the number of men, involve in the collection, preparation, and participation of the ritual. Most of "the women participants carry the play cards with their demands and lead the rows in the procession by carrying the community banners at the front" (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*). Some of the cultural packages like *Ghantu Dance* are 'women-only' performance in which only women are the dancers and singers. It does not mean, however, to claim that the ritual has become completely free from the gender discrimination. Yet, some of the aspects of the ritual are still highly male centered. Especially, the music band and the group of *Thōte* performers include only male members even in the version performed in Pokhara.

These aspects of clan and gender issues reveal two striking facts of Gurung communities and identities, which may be the same case even in other cultures and societies, that the gender discrimination is much older practice than the clan or *jat* discrimination; and the fields of music and the performance of the ritual proper in the Gurung culture were not only male centered in the past, but are yet to be questioned by the Gurung women and make them gendered free zones. In the same way, the role

of age stratification and gradual disappearance of the practice is another significant change found in the versions of the *Thōte*. Conventionally, the age difference is another base of all relations in the Gurung communities along with other factors like gender and skill. The juniors in age should respect and obey the seniors and the seniors must guide and take care of the juniors in whatever relations.

The age stratification has a greater role in the ritual performance in the village than in Pokhara. The "seniors in age perform the role of deciding, guiding, and controlling the performance; the adults and youths manage, prepare, and perform the ritual, and the children play the supporting roles" (Santa Kumari Gurung). Though the role of age in the society and ritual has not disappeared completely, the roles according to the age stratification are not so strict and gradually shifting in the urban version. In the performance of Pokhara, "the seniors, adults, youths, and children all participate in preparation and performance (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27*). However, the "seniors basically involve in guiding and participating in the procession, adults and youths take part in preparations, participations, and performance of *Thōte*; and the children participate in the procession and some of them even perform the ritual" (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*). So certain changes in the roles and participation according to the age stratification are visible in the urban version.

Similar types of changes Alan Macfarlane also finds in his anthropological study. In the study he reveals the trend of shifts taking place in Gurung communities during the period of 1968 to 1992 A.D.:

	1968	1992
Where do you live	a Gurung village	a Nepali Town
What do you do?	agriculture or army	various paid jobs
What do you wear?	Gurung clothes	Nepali clothes

What language	Gurung (Nepali)	Nepali (Gurung)
What politically?	Gurung	Nepali
What hobbies?	Dancing and singing	radio, sport
What leisure	age group, *rodi*	friends
What work group	*gola*, *nogora*	wages, share-crops.

("Identity" 188)

The aforementioned chart shows the changes swiftly taking place among the Gurungs in terms of their settlement, economic activities, costume, language, cultural practices, friendship, and in their political consciousness. Macfarlane notices the rising political awareness of the Gurungs especially in terms of their "cultures" (190), "religion" (195), and "history" (199). All these transformations in Macfarlane's study and in the ritual performance of the community support a point that the ritual performance is ultimately the dramatization of the real changes, struggles, and resistance taking place in the lives and society of the Gurung tribe.

To sum up, the analysis of the shifts between the traditional rural and the modern urban versions of *Thōte* show that the ritual performance like other cultural discourses is in shifting process according to the changes in time and space. This historicity of the ritual emerges out of its conversational relation with the changing sociopolitical and economic changes taking place in local, national, and global arenas. The performance of the ritual in the rural and urban locations and in different times does not only continue the Gurung tradition and culture, but also include changes and consequently shaping and reshaping their identity. The continuities and shifts in the ritual, thus, expose, which is the major focus of chapter VI, the nature and trend of the Gurung identity politics and the process of its formation. More importantly, the shifts

in the ritual also function as the replicas of different identity markers in clash and dialogue within the apparently homogenous Gurung ethnic identity.

VI. Dramatizing Gurung Identity through *Thōte*: Shift in Identity Politics

The comparative analysis of the continuities and shifts in the rural and urban versions of *Thōte* shows it not merely a continuation of the Gurung tradition and culture, but also a dramatization of the Gurung identity in transformation. The continuities of their primitive religious, social, economic, cultural, geographical, and aesthetic markers in the performance expose their tribal identity, while the shifts in the ritual reflect the tribal identity in constant conversation, negotiation, and fusion to the local, national, and global forces. So the chapter argues that the ritual performance with its gradual shift from the ritual significance to the socio-political agendas is becoming a space of reenacting the Gurung identity politics to address the emerging intra-communal, inter-communal, and glocal conflicts. As a resolution to the conflicts, the ritual dramatizes how the Gurungs' strategic use of their tribal attributes in the forms of their everydayness, aesthetics, and 'strategic essentialism' functions for their politics of resistance, negotiation, and fusion to maintain their tribal identity, keeping a dialogic but harmonious relation to the challenging forces. As a result, the Gurung identities as well as the ritual performance both are turning out to be more dialogic, cross-cultural and glocal.

As Stuart Hall argues that the culture has "the double movement of containment and resistance, which is always inevitably inside it" ("Notes on Deconstructing" 65), the ritual performance, a part of the Gurung culture, has the primitive Gurung identity traits as the containment that replicates the tribal identity constituted in relation to the Nature and its processes, supernatural beliefs and practices, mixed economy of hunting, herding, and farming regulated by the Bon based rites and ritual practices (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27* and *Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*). It also contains their cultural practices in the forms of weapons, musical

instruments, language, costume, foods, songs, dances, rhythmic performances of other rituals, and different crafts of weaving, disguising, and making weapons."

Similarly, it includes the typical tribal social structure that value unity, collaboration, cooperation, and sharing on the one hand, and practice of the age and gender stratifications with no clan hierarchy on the other. The use of such tribal attributes, as Marc Howard Ross views, "conveyed and sustained [in] the ritual performance," function as the "images of the past" giving a "commemorative continuity" and helping shape the "communal memory" of their identity (67). The tribal practices and actions with some supernatural beliefs make the ritual a species of the social "behaviors whose central elements and the contexts in which [it] take[s] place [is] emotionally meaningful because of what [it] represent[s]" (66). The ritual materials and the "people's actions" are mostly "mundane," that "elicit" the "moods and motivations" (66), and, as Paul Connerton's posits, "the community is reminded of its identity" (qtd. in Ross 67). The communal memory of their identity in the ritual functions as a strategy of resistance against the influence of the national and global forces at the present urban context of its performance.

One of such mundane elements and people's activities in the ritual performance is the dramatization of the early Gurung economic practices of hunting, herding, and farming. The ritual performance, as a memoir of the past Gurung economic identity, reenacts them as the hunters, herders, and farmers. It depicts the hunting life style of the tribe "through the use of real and symbolic weapons" (Suk Bahadur Gurung). The exhibition of "their hunting weapons like bows and arrows, knives, and *bhallas*" as an essential part of the ritual performance helps preserve and identify who they are to the world. Similarly, the performers' camouflage with face

and body paintings and wearing *ranijhar*, a wild weed, portrays the hunting strategies the Gurungs had adopted in the past.

The strategy, as Tham Bahadur Gurung posits, shows how the hunters used the natural and domestic materials for "self defense" and "concealment from the prey for an easy hunt." It also reveals the shift from hunting to the pastoral life style. However the use of the same weapons, skills, and strategies for "the defense and protection of their lives, crops, and cattle" even during the agriculture based farming and herding social life shows continuity along with a departure in their economic identity (Suk Bahadur Gurung). Despite the changes in the economy and life style, the strategic use of the ritual for the protection of their changed identity has converted it into a collective village worship called *gaun puja* from its early celebratory form of feasting after the hunting success.

The performance after the shift from hunters to the herders and farmers reveals mainly four different communal aspects of the Gurung identity— the life style, the practice of the village security and health, importance of the crops and cattle, and the Bon based ritual worships and practices combining the spirits of both the animism and shamanism. While doing so, the ritual reflects the evolutionary trend of the Gurung community and identity in mutual dialectics to their geographical locations and the life style according to the seasonal change and vegetable life cycle, which at present has become more a matter of the revolution. The use of "the *bhakimlo* plant of the upper hilly forests and the *ranijhar*, a wild weed found only at the height of around or above 5000 feet" in both the versions replicate the early geographical identity of the Gurungs as the settlers of "the high hills and Himalayan foothills" (Macfarlane, *Resources* 25).

In the same way, the performance of the ritual in "*Chaitra* and *Shrawan* is set according to the rhythm of the seasonal change and vegetable life cycle." They call *Ubhauli* to the performance of *Chaitra* that marks the beginning of "the Spring Season and life with new twigs, plants, flowers, and bearing fruits through the upward movement of the performance usually from the South to the North" (Tham Bahadur Gurung). It, as Suk Bahadur Gurung clarifies in his "Personal Interview," signals the "beginning of farming in the rural area. Farmers in *Chaitra* sow maize seeds in their fields." Similarly, the performance in *Shrawan* called *Udhauli* performed in the downward movement implies "the ending of the Rainy or Summer Season and cultivation." It also suggests that the crops and fruits are "gradually aging and ripening" for the harvest in the near future.

In such seasonal contexts, they perform the ritual setting the village boundary line on the Tuesdays of the months "wishing for the well being of the whole village, crops, and cattle by chasing all the evils like diseases, famine, natural calamities, and wild lives out of the village" (Santa Kumari Gurung). They worship natural forces for preventing the possible calamities and defilements so that they can benefit abundant from their fields and cattle without any harm. The seasonal nature of the performance continued even in the modern version exposes how the Gurung identity was shaped by their farming and herding related mixed economic activities in tune to the rhythm of Natural processes in the past.

So the ritual performance depicts the mixed and multifarious economic identities of the Gurungs. While doing so, it does not only show the link between the early economic practices and mercenary life styles of most of the Gurungs, but also defies the singular and stereotypical "*lahure* identity" (Dillijung Gurung 123). It shows how the unified and communal spirit of their early economic practices, the

hunting skills and strategies, the risk bearing and adventurous hunting life style, and the love for the weapons as reflected in the ritual made them fit and successful in the adoption of the mercenary profession on the one hand, and on the other, it tells us that the Gurungs have very versatile and fluid nature of the economic identity ranging from the hunters, farmers, herders, and, as the modern urban version shows, "armies, political leaders, intellectuals to the abroad workers" (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*). The ritual in the urban version recognizes these multiple forms of Gurung identity either acknowledging "the donations and contributions of the armies and abroad workers in the management like that of drinking water or including and inviting the leaders and intellectuals as the Chief Guest and Guests in the performance" (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27* and *Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*).

The seasonal context and the economic motif of the performance reveal that the ritual performance was/is a social occasion to inform and unify the villagers for their physical and psychological readiness for the cultivation, harvest, and animal husbandry on the one hand, and performing worship to the gods and deities and the acting the chasing act of the evils for the health and wealth of the community and its people on the other. But in the present context of Pokhara, it has been a social-political occasion of "gathering and unifying the members of community for exhibiting their power and identity to the world" (Tham Bahadur Gurung). Despite the change in its purposes, the ritual performance has been a powerful act of the Gurung socialization process through the collective practices.

The ritual as a practice of socialization invites collective involvement and cooperation of all the members irrespective of their age and gender differences. The members from the community devote themselves in the collective management, preparation, and performance of the ritual. The whole "community participates in the

sanitation or street management campaign, contribute in the collection of grains or money from each house needed for the performance, jointly collect and prepare the materials like weapons, *bhakimlo*, *ranijhar*, musical instruments, and performers" (Suk Bahadur Gurung). The members of the community participate either in the roles of performers, music players, followers, audiences, or play the the roles of family heads that help create a situation for everyone's involvement.

The traditional version incorporates the collective sanitation campaign at the preparatory phase. The members of the village including male and female, youths and children participate in "the sanitation team to dig out and manage drainages to prevent the village from the possible landslides and inundations. They also clear the dry leaves, dust, and stones from the village-routes to avoid the possible hurdles" in the performance of *Chaitra* (Suk Bahadur Gurung). By contrast, in *Shrawan*, they "uproot weeds on the paths and make them neat and clean for the pedestrians. They repair the damaged routes and drainage system to ensure the safety of the villagers." Though the sanitation program of the rural version has been "changed into the managements of the stage, street, traffic, drinking water, and primary health care in the urban version" (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*), they perform all these duties out of their collective participation.

Such communal acts in the ritual make not only the Gurung communities and people neat, healthy, and systematic, but also exercise them to learn and be conscious about the significance of such collective strategies to prevent and defense themselves and their identity if found at risk. It also shows how the Gurung communities take health as a communal concern not only of the human beings, but also equally of the crops, plants, and cattle. For that the ritual trains them for adopting prevention rather than the treatment. In this sense, the ritual itself is a preventive strategy against the

possible destructions, illness, and deaths by means of worshipping the gods and deities and chasing the natural and supernatural evils and defilements away from the village.

These practices in the ritual expose how the Gurung personality and identity development is shaped by the collective communal practices from their early childhood. Through the ritual practice, they internalize how and why they need to respect the seniors, devote themselves to the communal welfare, and also develop the aptitude of fulfilling their communal duties according to their age and sex. More strikingly, "the Gurung children learn these communal skills and strategies while

Photograph 27: A Gurung boy is learning to beat a *dhyangro* while his father is carrying it in the procession of the *Thōte* performance

playing the roles of the supporters and audiences in the traditional version" (Santa Kumari Gurung). But in the urban version, "they learn and practice being the participants and performers" (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*). It has become a usual site in the urban version where the parents are escorting the kids in the procession. Some of them lead the procession while others, as in the "Photograph 27," are found practicing how to perform or beat and play the musical instruments.

The rural and some of the continuities in the urban versions show us the Bon as the original Gurung religious identity that contains Nature worship, animism, and shamanism. The ritual components such as its "setting according to the seasonal cycle, the sanitation and village maintenance as per the seasonal needs, inevitable use of the plants like *bhakimlo*, *ranijhar*, and *sikridhup*" as the natural powers for their protection and defense, and the personification and "worship of different natural and supernatural forces and objects as the gods, deities, and evils" according to the effect

in their life are Bon based components used in the *Thōte* Performance (Suk Bahadur Gurung and Santa Kumari Gurung).

Similarly, the ritual as a worship of the good natural and supernatural forces for their blessings and as a chasing act of the evils to get rid of their harms by offering foods, alcohol, and blood sacrifice of the cock reveal how the ritual performance is shaped by the beliefs and practices of the Bonism. Following the Bon Philosophy, the Gurungs "believe in the existence of the multiple souls" thinking that every object in the universe has power and life (Thakali Gurung 36). So they, by appointing the Bon shamans like *pachyus* and *khyabris*, "worship the sun, moon, jungle, hill, mountains, rocks, and land in the forms of the gods and deities whereas they chase the harmful forces and spirits like ghosts, witchcrafts, wizards, and other evil spirits" (Suk Bahadur Gurung). They believe that the harms like storm, hailstorm, landslide, flooding, thunderbolt, diseases, sterility, deaths, destruction to the people, cattle, and the crops of the community are caused by the unseen evil forces.

The Bon based religious beliefs and practices can also be found in their use of "ash and celebrating the rituals only on Tuesday" (Santa Kumari Gurung). The use of ash as the antiseptic of the evils and diseases and Tuesday as the day of self-reservation for familial and communal unity even in the urban version while most of the members of the Gurung community and participants in Pokhara are already Buddhists and they no more believe on the existence of unseen powers and forces suggests the supersaturation of the Bon based ritual beliefs and philosophies in the lives of the tribe. In such context, the inclusion and continuation of the supernatural forces including the Bon related components in both the versions implicitly and explicitly carries the interest of preserving and telling their tribal, mythical, and religious aspects of the identities to the world.

Besides these, the ritual poetics of "repetition and the ritual practice of setting the village boundary line" express the security concern and fear complexity of the Gurungs at the early phase of their socialization process (Suk Bahadur Gurung). Moreover, the repetitive ritual, as Marc Howard Ross views, is "a crucible way of creating and solidifying collective memories that are transmitted over time" (67), which functions as a performative evidence of how the Gurungs settle the needs and fears. As the ritual shows, the collective communal practice and sharing is one of the strategies they adopt to tackle them. Another strategy is the ritualization of their everyday materials for the survival and protection of their lives, crops, and cattle from the possible natural calamities, diseases, and from the wild animals. As a result, the ritual has become a collective socializing practice for the defense and protection of their communities and identity at the same time.

So performing the ritual as the repertoire of the Gurung community's everydayness is another remarkable politics. As Anuradha Kapur says that the "quotidian aspects" of the ritual "keep[ ] its bits and pieces functioning" (18), the *Thōte* performance uses the everyday tribal beliefs, skills, and practices in terms of their economy, weapons, musical instruments, costumes, language, geography, and religion that explicitly and implicitly identify them as the Gurungs. The major everyday component used in the ritual is the worshipping, wishing, and protecting of the crops and cattle which they encounter every day as the sources of their survival. Similarly, the materials they use in the ritual like *bhakimlo* and *ranijhar* that they encounter everday while visiting forests for hunting or for woods and grass. Other everyday objects include "fire, ash, *sikridhup*, *patie*, the weapons like sickles, spades, and axes to the common musical instruments like *dhyangro*, *jhyali*, *damphu*, *kopre*, and tin canes" (Santa Kumari Gurung).

They perform the ritual by wearing their everyday costumes and using their everyday language to chase the evils. They offer the everyday foods made up of the grains they have collected make the ritual a collective performance of their usual and common behaviors, beliefs, and practices. The use of the everyday geographical landscape on the basis of its height for upward and downward movements symbolically indicates the change in the seasons and vegetables lives. More importantly, the use of the everyday space for the ritual purpose in the rural version to the ritualization of the everyday streets and squares for the tribal political cause in the urban version have made the *Thōte* performance "a matter of finding a voice or style that does not violate one's several components of identity" through the "representation of everyday space" in the ritual disguise (Fisher 196; Gaenszle and Gengnagel 15).

The ritual, in this sense, is a mirror reflecting the everyday Gurung identity. During the performance, the dress they wear like "*Kachad*, *Bhoto*, *Askot*, *Bhangra* (*Rhanga/Rhenga*)" by men and "*Chitko Gunyo*, *Cholo*, *Patuki*, *Pro*, and *Khati Karmu*" by women tell us about their skills, crafts, geography and economic practices (Ruk Bahadur Gurung). The language and the mythical beliefs and stories they tell to each other inform us about their origin and oral tradition, the use of plants, weeds, and seasonal celebrations reveal their devotion and faith to the Nature and its processes, and the collective management, preparation, and performance of the ritual tell about the social structure based on their everyday cooperation and sharing.

The reenactment of these tribal identity markers as the parts of their aesthetics and a strategy of the tribal essentialism in the *Thōte* performance carry the intentional or unintentional politics of not only preserving and continuing the tribal identity, but also telling and showing who they are to the fellow local, national, and global

communities. The ritual performance is also, in Geertz words, "a story they tell themselves about themselves," especially for those who have almost forgotten their past identity (qtd. in Ortner 5). The intentionality of such identity politics can easily be seen in the shifts in the ritual performance. This act, as Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka defines, of combining the "politics with culture" is called "ethnicization of politics" (44). She further explains,

> The term 'ethnicization of politics' connects specific notions of culture to processes of political mobilization. Ethnicization occurs when ethnic groups emerge as collective political agents. . . . Consequently ethnic mobilization consists in shaping perceptions of a common destiny and, hence, in demonstrating the necessity for common action; the necessary sense of unity is claimed by resorting to cultural elements. Ethnicity formation pertains to the idea that culture is an important unifying factor within any given society. . . . [I]n today's world two major notions of culture inform social thought and action: culture understood as the evidence of diversity in human forms of thought and practice, and a set of symbols at the root of a people's sense of identity. (44-45)

The shifts in the ritual performance as the evidences of the Gurung 'ethnicization of politics' vividly show the primitive Gurung identity in transformation according to the changes they have adopted willingly or forcefully. Their adoption of new economic practices like military service and abroad jobs, gradual influence of and fusion with other religions and cultures, inevitable conversation and negotiation with different national and global politics, and the growing trend of internal and external migration from the Gurung villages, and the

rise in their identity consciousness are some of the forces behind the shifts in the Gurung identity and its politics. As a consequence, the ritual performance, especially in the urban version, has undergone lots of modifications along with the continuities. These shifts and continuities have transformed the performance into, as Charles Tilly points, a "collective performance" with "contentious politics" (xv).

One of such modifications visible in the urban version is the notion of the evils. Unlike in the traditional rural version in which the purpose of the ritual is "to chase away the natural and supernatural evil spirits like calamities, diseases, wild animals, ghosts, and witchcrafts from the village" (Suk Bahadur Gurung), the urban version dramatizes the "injustice, inequality, discrimination, war, corruption, violence, epidemics, and poverty" like everyday socio-political evils and problems writing them on the banners and play cards (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*). The enemies in the ritual are the socio-political problems and evils to be defeated, defaced, and expelled from the human society as a whole rather than from the Gurung communities only. The ritual purpose is also executed symbolically through the performers' allegorical roles of "Poverty," "Injustice," "War," and "Discrimination." This shift clearly suggests that the ritual performance is moving from reenacting the ritual significance to the socio-political aspects of the Gurung community and identity in the changed context of their urban settlement.

As a result, the collective ritual practice of the village worship and defense for the survival has become a ritual disguise of the collective organizational struggle and negotiation for promoting, preserving, and defending their identity from the threats of different national and global forces in Pokhara. This political dimension of the ritual performance has made it a "'masquerade politics,' in which ethnic and cultural organizations indirectly, and not necessarily consciously or explicitly, meet important

political needs" (Ross 64). As Abner Cohen argues, such "politics articulated in terms of non-political cultural forms such as [ritual]" performance is very common in the urban society (qtd. in Ross 64).

As Marc Howard Ross and Abner Cohen argue, the *Thōte* performance in Pokhara has become an organizational practice and a platform for the Gurung related organizations for showing their unity and exhibiting their power and demands at the same time. The urban version of the ritual is "organized and performed by Tamu Dhi Nepal, the Head Organization of the Gurung communities in Pokhara and Lekhnath Municipalities, which regulate and circulate its decisions and management through its regional communities" (Tham Bahadur Gurung). Similarly, it has also been a cultural occasion for the Gurung organizations such as the "National Pro-public Committee against the Aids and Committee of Tamu Students" in *Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27*, 2063 B.S. and "Tamu Rastriya Mukti Morcha" in *Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*, 2066 B.S. have made their powerful presence in the performances. Their participation is less ritualistic and more political as noticed in their banners with explicit political demands. The banner of the National Pro-public Committee against the Aids is demanding for "guaranteeing their position in the Constitutional Assembly" and the

Photogtaph 28: Tamu Rastriya Mukti Morcha staging its banner with explicit political demands during the procession of the *Thōte* Performance

Tamu Rastriya Mukti Morcha, as in the "Photograph 28," is calling for "making the *Thōte* performance a platform for the mass unity of the Gurungs" so that they can have their own state called *Tamuwan*" and using the ritual performance as a means to

pressurize the Government of Nepal for declaring "the tribal culture as one of the national cultures."

Besides this organizational dimension of the ritual performance, it has also started including the political and intellectual members by introducing the Chief Guest and Guests as the parts of the urban version of the ritual performance. For an instance, "Krishna Bahadur Gurung, the then Member of the Constituent Assembly, and Chandra Bahadur Gurung, a Ph.D. scholar, have been invited as the Chief Guest and a Guest in the *Thōte* Performance of *Shrawan* 27, 2066 B.S." Such inclusion reveals the "coalition politics" of the ritual performance for unity and using it as a means of circulating their ground level agendas to the higher authorities (Beasley 81). More importantly, such act also has the motive of exhibiting their versatile identity such as from the political leaders to the intellectuals. As a result, the covertly political and overtly ritual performance of the past has now become just opposite where the organizers and participants stress their political demands directly to the authorities or state holders not only through their voices, but also through banners and play cards, as in the "Photograph 29," converting the implicit ritual motives into the explicit politics.

Photograph 29: Young Gurung and girls carrying play cards with their` demands: "Declare Gurung State" and "Declare National to all Tribal Languages"

Referring to such political nature of the tribal ritual, Tilly says,

> The contentious politics involves interactions in which actors [and participants] make claims on someone else's interests, in which governments appear as the targets, initiators of claims, or third parties. Contentious politics thus brings together three familiar features of

> social life: contention, collective action, and politics. . . . Claims run from negative to positive. People make claims with such words as condemn, oppose, resist, demand, beseech, support, and reward. They also make claims with actions such as attacking, expelling, defacing, cursing, cheering, throwing flowers, singing songs, and carrying [weapons] on their shoulders. (5)

As the quote mentions, the shifts in the *Thōte* performance also expose a clear political intention in which the government being the decision making agency is directly addressed. The ritual from this perspective becomes, as Tilly posits, "contention, collective action, and politics." The participants in the ritual procession "condemn" and "resist" the repressive powers and "demand" their wishes and rights. They also symbolically enact "attacking" and "expelling" the evils "carrying [weapons] on their shoulders" and wishing for the better society and lives by offering "flowers" to the gods and deities. While doing so, they also identify who they are by singing songs and dancing on the streets.

The politics for their identity and presence becomes even more evident out of their spatial politics. The politics of naming and renaming of the geographical spaces and inclusion of the places as the parts of the ritual suggests how the Gurungs are using the act of "representation," as Stuart Hall argues, as a means to promote their "power" and "identity" through the ritualization of the new place after their tribal names (*Cultural Representations* 42). Before the performance of *Shrawan*, 2066 B.S., the beginning venue of the performances of both the *Chaitra* and *Shrawan* was Tundhikhel of Pokhara. But after the change in the national politics from the tradition long Monarchical rule to the Federal system, the Gurungs of Pokhara participated in the politics of naming one of the squares as the 'Square of the Gurungs.' This

evidence clearly shows that how the changes in the national level directly affect the tribal cultural performances like the *Thōte* performance; since the cultural performance is one of the powerful means the ethnic group uses as a means of addressing the the national politics.

In this spatial politics, the Gurungs of Pokhara, after a long struggle, achieved success to name Birauta Chok as "Tamu Hyula Chok," "a Gurung Square" in Pokhara (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*). After this tribal naming, they have shifted the beginning venue of the performance of *Chaitra* to the '*Chok*' from 2067 B.S. giving a ritual implication of *Ubhauli* signaling the upward movement; since the place lies at the lower height than Tundikhel. The political act of naming the square, using it as a part of the ritual on the basis of its geographical height show the ritual in the urban space is becoming a dialectical process of ritualizing the politics and politicizing the ritual for making their presence visible and voices heard to the national and global worlds.

Such political motives in the performance have brought a lot of transformations in the ritual performance itself. One of such changes is that "the '*Thōte*-only' performance for the ritual purpose of the village worship and defense" has changed into the "performance of all the Gurung rituals and cultures in a package under the brand name of the *Thōte*" in the urban setting (Ruk Bahadur Gurung). Similarly, it has also shifted from the celebratory form of the ritual performance to exhibitionary with an implicit and explicit motive of identifying who they are through their rituals and cultures and enforcing the inevitability of their presence in the national politics.

Besides these politics, the ritual also enacts the intra-communal, inter-communal, and glocal conflicts and resolutions. The intra-communal politics includes the ritual performance as the dramatization of contradictions, conflicts, and

resolutions among the different identity forces within the community itself. The forces and issues like regional diversities, gender differences, age stratifications, and clan differences come into the dramatic conflicts and reach at the resolutions with negotiations through the strategic use of the essential homogeneity which they maintain by "simultaneously reflect[ing] and produce[ing] plausible accounts of . . . [the] group's past and present" in the ritual performance (Ross 67).

The traditional version shows that the every Gurung communities in the village perform the ritual by setting the strict village boundary line. The practice of the village boundary line suggests that the ritual performance carries regional identities as reflected in the variations in its names from "*Ohore* to *Simlibar*" (Tham Bahadur Gurung). But these regional differences are negotiated in the urban version for the political cause of unity and power. However, the regional distinctions and voices rise and crisscross the strategic homogeneity of celebrating it under the unanimous name of *Thōte*.

Similarly, they carry on the unity by means of the tribal "costume, language, the common tribal ritual materials like *bhakimlo*, *ranijhar*, fire, ash, weapons, musical instruments, and the banners" with common slogans (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra 27* and *Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*). These components collectively identify them homogeneously as the Gurungs. But the heterogeneous regional identities intersect the collective tribal identity here and there giving the impression that the diversity is another common feature among them. The impression of the diversity they give in the ritual when some of the participants recite their regional names like "*Ohore*, *Ohore*" and "*Simlibar*, *Simlibar*" amidst the echo of "*Thōte*, *Thōte*."

They also maintain the distinction by designing the costumes slightly different in color and decoration and by including the cultural performances popular in their

regions. These are some conscious strategies they adopt to expose their differences. Similarly the Gurung language they use unifies and also segments their homogenous identity. The regional variety of their language most often segment their strategy of homogeneity so much that they have to use Nepali language as a *lingua franca*. So the ritual is a dynamic space where bonding and differencing take place constantly as an inevitable part of the Gurung identity politics. This strategy exploited intentionally or unintentionally indicates, as Clifford Geertz argues, "a rather dialectical movement . . . between . . . the small local imaginings of the local knowledge and the large one of the cosmopolitan intent [–] an attempt to come to terms with the diversity of the way [the Gurungs] construct their lives in the act of leading them" (15-16).

The conversation and negotiation between their tribal homogeneity and regional differences in the ritual reminds the implementation of Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak's concept of "strategic essentialism" (*In Other Worlds* 205).

As Stephen Morton clarifies that the "idea of strategic essentialism accepts that essentialist categories of human identity should be criticized, but emphasizes that one cannot avoid using such categories at times in order to make sense of the social and political world" (89), the Gurungs in Pokhara use the ritual performance as a space for experimenting their essentialism strategically in the form of the tribal homogeneity amidst the diversities. As Spivak argues that such a "strategic essentialism" carries "a scrupulously visible political interest" (qtd. in Morton 89), the basic politics of maintaining the essentialism in the urban version of *Thōte* performance is for exhibiting their unity, power, and identity to the world on the one hand, and, as Fisher argues, using it as a process of practicing "an ethnic identity [with] an insistence on a pluralist, multidimensional, multi-faceted concept of self; one can be many different

things, and this . . . sense [is] . . . a crucible for a wider social ethos of pluralism" (196).

Chris Beasley says that the "collective political struggle" based upon "'a strategic essentialism'" of the "group identity" should be "used provisionally . . . with a constant sense of [its] limitations" (81). The implication of these limitations is visible in the ritual performance. It reveals the gradual development in the awareness of critiquing over the gender and age stratifications practiced in the ritual as well as in the Gurung communities at the present urban context. The rural version of the ritual shows that the Gurung rituals, communities, and families were strictly "structured according to the age and gender differences" (Santa Kumari Gurung). Generally, the male members used to carry on the social duties, while the females fulfill the family responsibilities.

The seniors in age used to "suggest and guide the others; adults and youths carry on the duties of working and fulfilling the needs of the families and society; and children were to support, obey, and receive what the seniors say and offer" (Suk Bahaur Gurung). But this is not the exact situation seen in the urban version. Even the senior male members are found involving in the domestic affairs and women participating in the social works. Those seniors who simply play the roles of deciding and guiding in the ritual performance in the village are found participating and walking in the procession in Pokhara. The children, who merely involve as the supporters and audiences in the performance in the traditional version, are found "actively involving as the participants and the performers" in the urban version (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*).

Similarly, the urban version also shows how the Gurung identity is becoming more democratic in terms of the gender stratification. Karma Gurung, the President of

Tamu Dhi, is one of the examples under whose guidance and control the whole ritual performance takes place. Similarly, the women, who were mere audiences and supporters of the ritual in the past, "are active participants" in the urban version (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*). Women, more than the number of men, involve in the collection, preparation, and participation of the ritual. Most of "the women participants carry the play cards with their demands and lead the rows in the procession by carrying the community banners at the front." Some of the cultural packages included in the performance like *Ghantu Dance* are 'women-only' performance in which the dancers and singers are only women.

However, the rising gender consciousness in the Gurung women strategically negotiates, like in the "Photograph 30," with the communal identity. They carry the play cards written with their communal demands such as "Guarantee the Rights of *Tamus*."

Photograph 30: A Gurung woman along with other women participants wait for the procession holding a play card that reads 'Guarantee the Rights of the *Tamus*

These evidences show the strict gender and age stratifications, as Chris Beasley argues, are collapsing and emerging the new participatory and sharing relations to carry out the individual and social responsibilities: "Collective political struggle may require both the invocation of identity groupings . . . and a persistent critique of their essential status, thereby recognizing the complexity of social life rather than upholding their self evident authentic character" (81-82).

Similarly, the ritual as the 'clan hierarchy free zone' is one of the aspects of the ritual unchanged in both the traditional and urban versions. Despite the clan stratifications and practice of hierarchy in some of the communities, the ritual

provides the opportunity of forgetting and resolving this social crisis though for a short period. All the participants of so called *char jat* and *sora jat* become only Gurungs/*Tamus* and without any realization of the clan hierarchy. Instead they devote in the ritual performance to meet out the objectives they have set collectively.

The ritual in this context critiques and raises the questioning voice not only against the Gurung societies that still practice the clan hierarchy, but also against "Bhojraj Pandit's preparation of a *Tamu Banswali*, the first Gurung Genealogy, in *Falgun* 9, 1549 B.S." (Thakali Gurung 90), "Shikharnath Subedi's publication of an article exploring clan hierarchy in *Tamu Banswali* in 1911 B.S" (96), and "Janga Bahadur's *Muluki Ain* in 1910 B.S." that introduced the clan hierarchy of *char jat* and *sora jat* among the Gurungs calling them "*Namasinya Matwali*" (97).

The ritual performance without clan hierarchy has aroused meta-consciousness in some of the Gurungs like Shri Prasad Gurung[24] who calls for giving up the practice of clan discrimination claiming that the *jat* system is not the original tribal social component rather a disintegrating strategy ensued among the Gurungs by the ruling systems. He further recalls the history of how the clan division was introduced and socialized in the Gurung tribe:

> The publication of Gurung Genealogy by Bhojraj Sharma has initiated the groundless practice of clan division. Similarly, the article of Shikharnath Subedi and the Geneology of Yogi Narahari Nath further supported and expanded the impact and influence of the system. These publications and articles have divided the Gurungs into so called superior four and inferior sixteen clans without any evidence. (10)

[24] His text in Nepali, all translations mine.

Similarly, as Macfarlane records, "one of the so-called *Char Jat* . . . sa[ys] that in fact *Char Jat* [has] nothing to do with the Gurungs specifically. It actually refer[s] to the four Hindus namely *Brahman*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya*, and *Shudra*, which he sa[ys] later multiplied into thirty-six *jats*" during the rule of Prithvi Narayan Shah ("Identity" 194).

This critiquing and voicing politics of the performative oral tradition of the ritual clearly contradicts to Gayatri Chakravarty's claim, which she herself rejects later, that the "voiceless" should be represented; since "they cannot speak" ("Can Subaltern Speak" 24). But the ritual makes it clear that the tribal group, as Foucault and Deleuze view, not only "can speak and know their conditions" by means of "solidarity through alliance politics" of the ritual performance, but also can underwrite for the correction of the misrepresentations if any (qtd. in Spivak, "Can Subaltern Speak" 25). So the *Thōte* performance of the Gurung community also defies and unburdens the voiced groups with "pencil" carrying the burden of representing those groups who have no voice or "pencil" (Conquergood 148). Dwight Conquergood, referring to Garifuna people, clarifies the meaning of "the pencil" in this way,

> [A]n African-descended minority group, uses the word *gapencillitin*, which means 'people with pencil,' to refer to middle – and upper-class members of the professional-managerial class, elites who approach life from an intellectual perspective. They use the word *mapencillitin*, literally 'people with-out pencil,' to refer to rural and working-class people, 'real folks' who approach life from a practitioner's point of view. . . . For Garifuna people, the pencil is not a neutral instrument; it functions metonymically as the operative technology of a complex

> political economy of knowledge, power, and the exclusions upon which privilege is based. (148)

Like Conquergood in the mentioned quote, Foucault says that the so-called "subjugated knowledge" of the tribe, "a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" (82), can easily critique and disqualify the subjugating politics of "the dominant way of knowing" based on the "empirical observation and critical analysis from a distanced perspective" through such a collective and performative ritual (Conquergood 146)

The ritual performance in Pokhara is also a "space for social interaction" (Mendieta 408), where new forms of inter-communal or intercultural elements are coming into the dramatic interaction in terms of religion, myths, language, and participation of the intercultural members. The *Thōte* performance as the intercultural practice reveals the changing cultural tradition in the Gurung communities according to the change in their identity politics. It also mirrors their open psychology to adopt the changes and needs according to the time and space. Unlike the "Gurung-only" nature of the ritual in the past, the urban version is open to incorporate the ongoing changes and conditions. They have invited the intercultural elements too. The inclusion of the interculturality is the need of their historicity and a practice, as Geertz posits, of

> 'the social history of the moral imagination,' meaning by that the tracing out of the way in which our sense of ourselves and others— ourselves amidst others— is affected not only by our traffic with our own cultural forms but to a significant extent by the characterization of

> forms not immediately ours. . . . Particularly in the modern world, where very little that is distant, past, or esoteric that someone can find something out about goes undescribed and we live immersed in meta-commentary . . . . [O]ur consciousness is shaped at least as much by how things supposedly look to others, somewhere else in the lifeline of the world, as by how they look here, where we are, now to us. (9)

So the interculturality in the ritual performance is a strategy of an "eye-opening" and a practice to "see [them]selves as others see [them]" and "see[ing] others as sharing a nature with [them]selves is the . . . decency" and see[ing] [them]selves amongst others," "case among cases," and "world among worlds" is "the largeness of the mind . . . without which objectivity is self congratulation and tolerance a sham" (16).

In terms of the participation, the interculturality in the performance is almost unavoidable. Either in the roles of "the tent and stage makers, media persons or as the audiences on the roadsides, members from different cultures and communities" involve directly or indirectly in the performance (*Thōte Parva- Chaitra* and *Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*). Some of them even actively participate in the procession, while others involve in providing drinking water to the participants. After the national political change in 2006 A.D, the invitation of the members from other communities, most importantly from the tribal communities, has become a part of the ritual. For an example, in the performance of *Shrawan* 27, 2066 B.S, "Raja Mama Kusunda's participation as a Special Guest" is one of its evidence.

The fusion of different religious elements further makes it more intercultural. The ritual began with the spirit of the Bon Religion, as Judith Pettigrew claims, worshiping the natural and supernatural forces in the forms of gods and deities, or evil spirits:

> Here they [are] known as *Tamu* (*Tubo*) by 1,000 B.C. and during the course of time developed Bonism, the pre-Buddhist religion, with its priest, the *Nam-bo* or *Pa-chyu* . . . . Bonism, the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet, was a very advanced form of animism. It is still preserved, almost solely, by the *Tamu* priests in the form of the *Pye-Ta Lhu Ta* [the oral Gurung *Bedha*, the base of all the rituals and rites]. (481)

The writer in the quote exposes the early name and origin of the Gurungs and argues that the Bonism as the early Gurung religion is still in practice in the Gurung rites and rituals while it has been almost replaced by Buddhism in Tibet – its origin place. But same is not the situation at present time. Like in other aspects of the Gurung community and identity, the ritual performance is also not free from the influence of other religions like Buddhism and Hinduism.

The influence began from the village setting itself. However, it has become more pervasive in the urban performance when the Gurungs started the ritual as a cultural collage under the name of *Thōte*. The gradual influence and fusion of Buddhist elements in the ritual has brought change in the traditional tribal version. All "the participants and performers wear the garlands of *ranijhar* and *khada*" in Pokhara (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*). The two different garlands on a Gurung's neck, the *ranijhar* representing the spirit of the Bonism and the *khada* standing for the Buddhism signify the fusion of the two religions in the ritual practice. Following the Buddhist philosophy of non violence, they "offer no blood sacrifice and alcohol in the ritual performance of Pokhara" (Tham Bahadur Gurung). Instead, they offer flowers, fruits, and moneys.

Though the influence of Hinduism has not been the part of the *Thōte* proper like that of the Buddhism, it exists in other cultural performances like in *Krishna*

Chartra, *Sorathi Dance*, and *Ghantu* that are included along with the *Thōte* performance. *Ghantu*, as Allen Andors remarks, is “a traditional ritual dance, found only among Gurungs, but whose story, confusingly, is Hindu in theme” as it lyrically narrates the life story of the Hindu king and queen (15). Similarly, *Krishna Charitra* is a narrative lyrical dance based on the life story of the God Krishna of Hindu mythology, *Mahabharata*. Most of the songs are sung in both Gurung and Nepali languages during the performance. Not only that, most often the Nepali language in the ritual site functions as a *lingua franca* not only between the people and participants of different languages and cultures, but also among some of the Gurungs when they fail to understand each others’ regional varieties.

As a result of such interculturality, the ‘Gurung-only’ ritual “in the village setting a boundary allowing no outsiders’ entry” has been blurred in the urban version (Santa Kumari Gurung). Neither the boundary line nor the restriction of the outsiders’ entry is practiced. The collapse of the boundary line in the ritual symbolizes the gradual disappearance of the communal distance in the practice and behavior of the Gurungs. This inter-communal, as Geertz says, “hospitableness in the face of cases is the major strength of the ritual” that imparts a good lesson of negotiation and fusion among the differences. Such a negotiation and fusion is one of the solutions of managing the diversities. So the intercultural elements in the urban form of the performance expose, as Anuradha Kapur says, the Gurungs being “open to change” (3). As the evidences, they have also cut short the three day long performance into one/one day performance in both *Chaitra* and *Shrawan*. Similarly, they have also avoided the use of the real weapons in the performance considering the problems of the fellow communities.

Moreover, the ritual as "a glocal space" dramatizes the dialogues between the tribal traits and the global forces circulating in the forms of the media, technology, and donor culture (Wilson and Dissanayake 2). The ritual, as a "set of understandings and a consciousness under active construction by which individuals interpret the world around them" (Ross 10), expresses the "core parts of [the] group's self-understood identity and history" in the form of continuities as the means of their essential homogeneity and bonding that they use "to build or bolster [the] political" motives of resistance, negotiation, and fusion to the global forces (67). So the ritual space, as Conquergood says, is

> a heavily trafficked intersection, a port of call and exchange, instead of a circumscribed territory. A boundary is more like a membrane than a wall. . . . [The] 'local context' expands to encompass the historical, dynamic . . . movements of people, ideas, images, commodities, and dynamic. It is no longer easy to sort out the local from the global: transnational circulations of images get reworked on the ground and redeployed for local, tactical struggles. And global flows simultaneously are encumbered and energized by these local makeovers. . . . [So], the 'local' is a leaky, contingent construction, and that global forces are taken up, struggled over, and refracted for site-specific purposes. (145)

The glocal tension, as discussed in the aforementioned quote, in the ritual occurs when the tribal elements and reminisces collude with the global means and forces. The participants use and carry on "the tribal weapons and musical instruments with *sikridhup* on the fire and the gates of *bhakimlo* wearing the garland of *ranijhar*," and "Gurung costumes on the one hand, and the same participants use umbrella

instead of *shyakhu*, carry cameras, take snaps, and records the ritual performance" on the other (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*). The use of modern technologies like media, cameras, banners, and play cards for the visual representation of their oral tradition is another example of the negotiation. A participant, who presents himself disguising in

Photograph 31: A Gurung member participating in the procession disguising himself as an eagle on a bike

the form of eagle with body and face painting camouflaging with garlands of *ranijahr* but riding on a motor bike in both *Thōte Parva- Chaitra, 2063 B.S.* and *Thōte Parva- Shrawan, 2066 B.S.*, as in the "photograph 31," is a good example of the fusion of the local with global.

The intertextuality is another strategy that the Gurungs have taken to address the complexities of their identity politics. The mixture of the different rituals and cultural performances within *Thōte*, the fusion of performative oral tribal tradition with the modern forms of written, visual, sonic and digital texts like "TVs, FMs, videos, cameras, websites, banners, and play cards" used extensively in the ritual performance create an intertextual dynamics (*Thōte Parva- Shrawan 27*). The intertextuality, in the ritual, "is more than an empirical surprise; it is a cultural change" according to the need of making dialogue between and among the identities to come in term to the different cultures (Geertz 81), communities, genders, regions, religions, and language in national and global levels.

The use of the modern global means of representations like media to the banners and play cards in fusion with the oral and performative text of the ritual has helped the "*mapencilaton*" Gurung culture and identity to come in term to the culture of "*gapencilaton*" giving it the visual and sonic representation though it lacks the

reliable written representation yet. Here, Stuart Hall's clarification of the politics of adopting the new machinery mode of representation by the ethnic group becomes pertinent:

> [T]he 'machineries' and regimes of representation in a culture do play a constitutive, and not merely a reflexive, after-the-event, role. This gives questions of culture and ideology, and the scenarios of representation—subjectivity, identity, politics—a formative, not merely an expressive, place in the construction of social and political life. ("New Ethnicities" 91)

So the politics of fusing the global means of representation with the *Thōte* performance is to construct their wider social and political life by publicizing themselves and their culture in the national and global arenas. While doing so, they have changed and used the ritual as a "social drama" of "regenerative process" for "strategic interaction" to the national and global politics and forces fusing what are local with more national and global issues and politics (Geertz 27). So the fusion found in the Gurung ritual is not the process of "acculturation and enculturation" but of "glocalization" (Mendieta 410).

Such fusion has made it a dynamic glocal space in the ritual disguise where what is local and tribal in terms of cultures and knowledges interact, negotiate, and create a new glocal identity according to the demand of the new time and space of the Gurung settlement and ritual performance. The strategy of coming into the conversation and negotiation between the tribal and glocal forces in the ritual, as Geertz reminds,

> is to attempt to navigate the plural/unific, product/process paradox by regarding the community as the shop in which thoughts are

> constructed and deconstructed, history, the terrain, they seize and surrender, and to attend therefore to such muscular matters as the representations of authority, the marking of boundaries, the rhetoric of persuasion, the expression of commitment, and the registering of dissent. (153)

As a result, the *Thōte* performance in Pokhara is not only "the local site of resistance to and liberation from oppressions" (Dirlik 23), but also a socio-cultural form of the glocal space for dramatizing the explicit and implicit process of Gurungs identity formation in the changing scenario of their ethnic politics in rhythm to the shifts they are encountering in their local to national and global societies. So their continuation of the ritual performance in the urban space is not only to create, as Oliver Cromwell Cox says, "an opportunity to speak for themselves about the things which they believe" (50), but also, as Abhi Subedi argues, to use the space for combining the "power and ritual" into "one" and make their "strong communal presence" for asserting their difference and negotiating with the intra-communal, inter-communal, and global differences and forces at the same time (29).

The ritual performance enacts all these Gurung ethnic politics not only through the reenactment of the tribal attributes in the form of ritualized tribal everdayness, but also equally through the dramatization of the tribal aesthetics. The poetics of its rhythmic performance in the mass procession, the craft of disguising with face and body paintings, the skill of preparing weapons, and the act of fighting between the performers impersonating the good and evil forces make the ritual performance a tribal drama captured and broadcasted to the world through the use of the global means of visual representations like video record and photograph. Similarly, the performance of the ritual as a package of all the Gurung cultures,

rituals, dances, and songs with music on the one side and the exhibition of their tribal weapons on the other side make it a carnival performance where boundaries are drawn and redrawn time and again like in the gallery of the collage arts.

More importantly, it is also for the individual exploration of the self and creativity. It gives the opportunity to understand and maintain the mutual relationship not only among the fellow cultures and communities, but also to the plants and animals memorizing their power and significance to their lives. As a space for the self exploration, it incorporates the individual members' participation with their personal creations like a participant in the performances of *Chaitra* 2063 B.S. and *Shrawan* 2066 B.S. presents himself in the disguise of an eagle riding a motorcycle. The participation is also a good example of the fusion of the nature and culture. Some of the *Thōte* performers in both the occasions present themselves in the disguise of the domestic animals like horse and the wild animals such as chimpanzee. In this way, the Gurungs of Pokhara exploits, as Marc Howard Ross views, the "ritual . . . not only [as] an alternative way of expressing certain beliefs, but [also as every] things can be expressed only in [it]" (67).

Thus, the historical journey of the *Thōte* performance from the time immemorial to the present time, from the rural setting to the urban, from purely tribal or 'Gurung-only' to the intercultural and glocal, from 'only *Thōte*' to all the Gurung cultures in a package, and from the ritual significance to the socio-political agendas reveal us the whole trend of Gurung identity formation and politics from past to the present. It exposes that, like the ritual performance, the Gurung identity has also been formed and reformed, contested and negotiated, and resisted and accepted in different historical contexts. The boundary setting and collapsing in the ritual implies the liminality in the Gurung identity in which many traditional boundaries are broken,

negotiated, and new boundaries out of the negotiation and fusion are set for temporary functions. So the Gurung identity, as the ritual performance dramatizes, is contested, multiple, and becoming more hybrid than in the past.

VII. *Thōte* as a Ritual Space of Reenacting Conflicts and Resolutions of Gurung Identity

The research, after the thorough analysis of *Thōte* focusing on its continuities and shifts explored out of the comparative study of the traditional rural and the modern urban versions, concludes that the performance is becoming a more politically contentious cultural space in a ritual disguise. The performance, especially the urban version in Pokhara, is not only the matter of continuing the Gurung heritage, but also a ritual space of enacting and reenacting the Gurung identity politics. The ritual site dramatizes the intra-communal, inter-communal, and glocal conflicts taking place in the community on the one hand, and the tribe's strategic use of tribal attributes, everydayness, aesthetics, homogeneity, and the politics of negotiation and fusion for the functionary resolutions of the conflicts on the other. So the ritual performance as a 'socio-aesthetic mirror' of the Gurung ethnicity exhibits both the tribal identity and the ritual performance in the shifting process. As a result, both of them are becoming more cross-cultural and glocal.

If the continuities in the ritual versions show the reiteration of the tribal identity, the shifts expose the identity in constant dialogue with the emerging socio-political forces and issues in the national and global societies. The dialogue between or among the forces in terms of regions, genders, ages, cultures, communities, religions, languages, media, and technologies has made the performance more dialogic. As an outcome of the dialogue, the ritual in Pokhara is performed as a 'cultural collage' including all the Gurung rituals, cultures, songs, and dances under the name of *Thōte* for preserving the tribal culture and tradition, addressing the voices in rise, and exhibiting the tribal unity and power to the world . As a consequence, the ritual is transforming into a carnival where the boundaries and hierarchies are

strategically questioned for the political purpose of democratizing the identities in difference.

The ritual performance as a dialogic carnival enacts the multiple voices rising within the community that counter each other in the forms of commentaries and met-commentaries, definitions and meta-definitions, and the identities in difference to the region, age, and gender within the functionary homogeneity of the tribal identity. Some voices in the performance reinforce the need for and satisfaction in the continuity of the ritual in Pokhara, while other voices give echo of the dissatisfaction to the ways it is transforming. Some of them claim the performance as a crucial step for the preservation of the tribal heritage and identity but others say it an occasion for unifying the Gurungs to publicize their power collectively. Some of the participants in the procession recite the unanimous name of the ritual *Thōte*; others utter their regional names like '*Ohore;*' and even others recite the names turn by turn making it a multivocal space where contradictory voices collude and collapse at each other but finally accept the tribal homogeneity strategically.

Amidst the voices, the Gurungs, with no feel of clan hierarchy though practiced in their daily lives like in marriage and funeral ceremonies in some of the communities, participate in the performance where the repeatedly reenacted tribal identity markers like the tribal weapons, musical instruments, costumes, and the performers in the garlands of *ranijhar* with painted body and face collude with the power of the national and global forces. In this collision, the contradictions are born but resolved at the same time through the strategies of negotiation and fusion. The politics of negotiation and fusion leads the tribal identity and ritual performance in further transformation. As a result, the urban version is becoming more hospitable and open to the fellow cultures and communities than the traditional one. Instead of the

'Gurung-only' rural version of the ritual that maintains the strict village boundary line allowing no outsiders' entry during the performance, the modern version incorporates the religions like Buddhism and Hinduism, participants from the fellow communities, and the multilingual situations through code switching between/among the Gurung, Nepali, Hindi, and English languages in the same speech context.

Similarly, it also shows the dialectics between the tribal and global forces especially in the forms of media and other technologies. The ritual originated only in its oral performative form is now in fusion with the visual culture. In negotiation to the global force, the ritual performance is adopting a visual representation and broadcasting culture by using the global means strategically. In the local space, it is still oral and performative but in the national and global spaces, it is circulated in the forms of video records and photographs through TVs and Web Sites. The global print and exhibition culture like banners and play cards are also included as its components in the urban version to put forward their demands more forcefully. So the ritual performance is becoming a glocal space where the fusion of what is local/tribal with global is taking place after the dialogue and negotiation.

Thus, the ritual performance, especially the urban version, is becoming more and more a performative discourse of the Gurung culture and identity where different intra-communal, inter-communal, and glocal identities fall into the dramatic conflicts but reach at the resolutions through the strategic use of the tribal essentialism and the politics of negotiation and fusion. As a consequence, *Thōte*, a ritual simply performed for a village worship and defense in the past, is transforming into a socio-political drama of the Gurung ethnicity which reveals the tribal identity in the process of becoming more cross-cultural and glocal in formation.

Appendix

A Transcribed Text of Personal Interviews on *Thōte*

Following is the transcription of the personal interviews on *Thōte*. The four interviewees selected on the basis of purposeful sampling method are: Suk Bahadur Gurung (SBG), Santa Kumari Gurung (SKG), Tham Bahadur Gurung (TBG), and Ruk Bahadur Gurung (RBG). Their experience, gender, region, and age were the criteria set for their purposeful selection. The interviews were taken at Lumle V.D.C, Tamu Dhi Nepal, and *Andhikhola Tamu Samaj* in Pokhara on 1st and 2nd Magh, 2066 B.S.

Q.N.1. Have you heard about *Thōte*?

SBG: Yes.

SKG: Yes.

TBG: Yes.

RBG: Yes.

Q. N. 2. Did you ever perform or participate in *Thōte*?

SBG: Before I recruited to Indian army, I participated and performed it many times. Now I participate in decision making and counseling roles.

SKG: As the players are mainly adult and young male members of the village, I, being a girl in the past and a woman at present, have a wonderful observation and experience of how they prepare and perform it. Especially, I remember how the group of our brothers and adult village fathers visit every house collecting maize, millet, and rice. They sell it for money to buy cocks and other necessary materials for the ritual. They begin the performance from one direction and end it at the opposite. They produce loud sound by beating plates, drums, *jhurmas, dhyangros, kopres*, other instruments, and pots. The whole villagers involve in the performance. The young and

adult members participate in the performance, while aged people, women and children participate as the audiences.

TBG: I performed and participated in many *Thōte* performances in my village

YBG: I performed and participated in many performances of the ritual.

Q.N.3. How would you describe about it?

SBG: Now we can define and take it as a part of Gurung culture. But it is traditionally performed as a defense mechanism to maintain the unity, stability, and prosperity of the community. So it is a performance for life and its well being in the whole village.

RBG: *Thōte* in Pokhara is performed since 2052 B.S. under the lead and management of Tamu Dhi Nepal. As an attempt of giving continuity to the Gurung tradition and culture, it is performed twice in a year on the last Tuesdays of *Chaitra* and *Shrawan*. In the past, it was celebrated after different names like *Thōte*, *Simlibar*, *Khane* in different Gurung villages. But in Pokhara, homogeneity is maintained among 42 Gurung Communities/*Samaj* under the name of *Thōte*. In the village, it is performed as a communal ritual practice of wiping evil spirits, diseases, and wild animals out of the village, while in Pokhara it is performed for eliminating injustice, corruption, discrimination, and violence.

TBG: It is a great Gurung festival celebrated twice after the names *Ubhauli* in *Chaitra* and *Udhauli* in *Shrawan*. It is performed in different names in the villages. For examples, it is called *Ohore*/*Syausyaure* in Syangja; it is called *Simlibar* in Lamjung and *Thōte* in Kaski.

Q. N. 4. Like the variations in its names, are there variations in its performing styles in different regions?

SBG: Gurungs of different villages celebrate *Thōte* slightly in a different way

though the basic meaning or purpose is the same. In Lumle area of Kaski, it is called *Thōte*, while in some parts of Lamjung, it is known as *Shimlibar*. The meaning of '*Thō-'* is a village or community and '*te'* means chasing the evils. Similar meaning is implied in *Shimlibar* as it means the protection of the fence made up of a '*Shimli'* plant.

Q. N. 5. Would you clarify the ritual significance of using the plant and its wood called *Bhakimlo/Shimli/Tibru*?

SBG: In Gurung culture, *Bhakimlo* is taken as a plant of protection and it is used in house and village worships.

Q. N. 6. Is there any mythical/ritual story implied in the *Thōte* performance?

SBG: According to the oral stories handed over by our ancestors, lamas and *Jhankris* were called for performing the ritual to avoid diseases and evil spirits like witchcrafts, satanic forces, and casualties like accidents and natural calamities by every house on the same day in the past. But as the time passed, the number of houses and villages increased and accordingly there emerged the scarcity of lamas and *jhankris* (shamans). As a result, it has turned out to be a communal and collective performance gradually. Despite the shifts, the basic ritual purpose to wipe out the evil forces from the house and the village remained the same though the performing style gradually took the nature of communal form.

TBG: Instead of having a very spiritual and supernatural myth, it has a very practical story behind performing it in *Chaitra* and *Shrawan*. As we know, *Chaitra* is a month of draught and parching heat. Plants are almost dry and trees are leafless. The haze of dust causes different diseases. People and cattle in the dry month become feeble. However, it is also the month of hope for new life, vigor, and energy. So on the three Tuesdays of *Chitra*, the ritual is celebrated with a wish of chasing away the

evils for the good health and wealth, and also as a marker of the beginning of new lives of people, plants, and cattle. Similarly, in *Shrawan* too, people and cattle suffer from different diseases because of water pollution. The village already faces flooding, landslide, and soil erosion during the rainy season. In such a condition, villagers get together and celebrate it as an occasion for managing the damages, wishing better crops, good health and lives to people and cattle for the whole year.

Q. N. 7. How would you explain about the origin of this performance?

SBG: In the absence of any written record, we cannot have a fixed claim. However, according to our oral tradition, it is believed that the *Thōte* performance originated along with the beginning of our social or agriculture based life. In that sense, it also implies the practice of communal life and stability. When the Gurung tribe shifted their life from hunting to the agrarian life, there were many problems like the danger of natural calamities that could easily destroy their crop fields, human lives, and cattle. Similarly, there was also the danger of different epidemics, famines, and risks of wild animals' attack. In such a situation, communal unity and sense of group responsibility in each members of the village becomes inevitable for their security, good health, stability, and sustenance. As a response of the need, the ritual might have been performed with a purpose of making natural and supernatural forces satisfied by offering sacrifices and chasing the wild animals away by producing loud noise. It is also a ritual of wishing good health, better farm production, and no calamities but communal prosperity and happiness in the village.

TBG: Nobody can tell its origin in certainty as we lack the written record. However, from the very nature of its performance, we can easily guess that it must have begun with our initiation into social life with more stable farming and animal husbandry than the hunting profession during the nomadic life. While settling in the

hilly and upper-hilly regions amid the dense forest, their lives including crop plants and cattle were under the threats of the wild animals, natural calamities, and diseases that they considered being caused by the evil spirits. To save the lives from such threats, to prevent the calamities, and to heal or prevent the diseases, our ancestors might have initiated this communal practice as a means of scaring, chasing, and satisfying the spirits and wild animals through the exhibition of their power and sacrifice. It has also the social significance of unifying all the villagers for the communal works such as cooperating in the village sanitation, well wishing, and worshipping for the survival collectively.

Q. N. 8. How is it performed in the village?

SBG: It is performed twice in a year after the names of *Ubhauli* in *Chaitra* and *Udhauli* in *Shrawan*. In both the months, we perform it three/three days on Tuesdays. On the first and the last Tuesdays of the months, it is performed compulsorily. But one of the remaining Tuesdays in the months is optionally selected and performed according to the convenience and decision of the villagers.

Traditionally it is less considered a festival than a defense mechanism of the whole community and village against the possible evil spirits, natural calamities, and the destructions that can be caused by the wild animals. The performance begins with the sanitation program of clearing the routes of the village in all four directions and digging out or managing the drainages wherever needs be so that the village remains safe from the possible flooding and other epidemics during the rainy season.

Q. N. 9. How would you explain the ritual significance of performing it in the months of *Chaitra* and *Shrawan*?

SBG/SKG: The month *Chaitra* signals to *Ubhauli* that is growing or beginning of the Spring Season and new lives. It is a time of new twigs, plants,

flowers, and bearing fruits. It is also the beginning of gestation of animals and cultivation of crops like maize in rural area. So the performance in *Chaitra* also signals the beginning of preparation for plantation during the rainy season. In such a crucial juncture of seasonal change, the Gurung villagers play the ritual wishing for good rain and plantation with no draught, no hailstorm, no natural calamities, and diseases. We perform the ritual in the month as a communal occasion of keeping the village clean and managing drainages for possible inundations during the rainy season. It is also the occasion to inform and unify the villagers about their physical and psychological readiness for cultivation.

Similarly, the month *Shrawan* stands for the *Udhauli* means ending, aging, or maturing of lives with decreasing temperature. It signals the ending of rainy season and cultivation. The crops and fruits are gradually aging and ripening. In such a seasonal context, we perform it by maintaining the village sanitation. We clear the weeds on the routes and around the surroundings of the houses. We repair the damaged drainages and maintain the village borderline intact. We wish for the well being of the whole village, crops, and cattle. We wish for wiping all the evil spirits and wild lives out from the village. We also worship natural forces for preventing the possible natural calamities so that we can harvest abundant production from the field. In this sense, the performance in this month marks the ritual of preparation for good harvest and better lives to us and cattle.

Q. N. 10. Are there differences in the ritual performance of *Chaitra* and *Shrawan*?

SBG/SKG: Most of the performing styles and the materials are similar. However, the differences are in the sanitation campaign, mode/direction of the performance, and in the ritual motifs. The *Ubhauli* in *Chaitra* is performed from the South to the North that is from the lower height to higher, while the *Udhauli* in

Shrawan is just the opposite. The former carries the motif of initiation or beginning of the Spring Season and life, while the latter is about the maturing and ripening of life or ending of the Summer Season.

Q. N. 11. How is the program of three day performance in the months arranged or organized?

SBG: The program begins with conveying information of the performance to the villagers through a village voice messenger (*Katawal*). After the information conveyed, we are not allowed to have our field works. We gather with our commitment to involve in the preparation of the performance. The roles and duties are allocated according to the age and gender by the village head (*Muli*) and his group members. Generally the responsibility of the preparation and management goes to the male youths and adults. The village seniors' role is to provide the necessary advises and suggestions. But the women and children involve in clearing the routes and digging out the drainages. In the performance, they basically participate as the audiences.

According to the number of houses in the village, the preparation and arrangement of the materials or goods begin one or two days earlier than the actual day of the performance. The first step is to collect grains like rice, or millet, or corn that we use for food during the performance and sell some of it for money to buy cocks and other materials for the performance. In the second step, a group of male youths and adults go to jungle and collect required branches and woods of *Bhakimlo/Tibru*, a wild plant, and a wild weed called *ranijhar*. Out of the branches we prepare *linghas* and set them on both sides of the main entry and exit routes of the village and by setting the sticks of the same branches we make gates there. Out of the woods, we make *fitlees* (thin slated pieces of the *bhakimlo* wood). We hang five

fitlees on each gate and place a set of three *fitlees* at the top of the door of each house for security. Some artificial weapons like knives and swords are also made out of its woods which we use along with the real weapons in the performance.

The third phase is to arrange and collect the tribal musical instruments and all the loud sound producing materials like plates, tin canes, utensils, pots, *madals*, *dhyangros*, drums, *jhurmas*, *kopres, dholaks,* and others which we play and beat during the performance with a belief that the loud sound frightens the wild animals and evil spirits and make them run away from the village. Similarly, we collect all types of domestic weapons like axes, spades, sickles, knives, swords, bows, arrows, *sunasies*, shields, *bhallas*, *banduks*, and others which we exhibit and carry throughout the performance as the means of self protection against the enemies.

The fourth step is to prepare the performers. The basic feature of the performers is the use of camouflage or disguise. For that we use face and body paintings with the help of charcoals, turmeric, and rice floor or white soil (lime soil/*kamero*). The performers wear rags and oversized clothes covered here and there with *ranijhar*. Some of them disguise themselves as jokers, wild animals, and as the evil spirits like ghosts. Some of them even cross dress and play the role of women and some others play the role of security guards and protectors. The fifth step is to arrange *dhupari.* It is a chandelier like a portable pot with burning charcoals to burn the purifying natural incense like *sikridhup* or *paatee* mixed with ghee which we carry at the front of the procession.

After all these preparations and arrangements, the highly awaited day of the performance arrives with great vigor and zeal. It is the performance that begins in the evening and ends at midnight. All the villagers gather at the entry gate of the village. We decide who is to carry the *dhupari* and lead the performance. Certain members

are to carry and play the musical instruments and beat other pots and plates, and some others to carry and exhibit the weapons mentioned earlier. After all these decisions, the performance begins building a fire in the *dhupari* at the entry gate.

The person with *dhupari* leads the performance and he is followed by the performers. The performers are followed by those who carry weapons and those who play musical instrument, and other participants follow them whistling and shouting. With loud sounds and noises, we visit each house; encircle the house, and some of us with *dhupari* enter into it. In the entry, the head of the family puts some incense on the fire and wishes for the purification and redemption of the house and the whole village. The entered group visits every nooks and corners of the house exclaiming "*bhago*, *bhago*" (run away, run away) to all the evil spirits. When the group comes out of the house, the head of the family throws a palmful of ash towards them so that the evil spirits do not return. This rite repeats in every house and barn of the village.

As the ritual act in every house and barn is finished, we move to the exit gate where we sacrifice a cock on behalf of the well being and good fortune of the whole villagers. We offer other foods and domestic wine to the gods, deities, and the evil spirits familiar in the village. The remaining food, alcohol, and chicken are prohibited to bring back to the village with a belief that they will allow the evils' return to the village. So, it has to be eaten out of the exit gate. So, the participants' merrymaking and fun begins with cooking food and serving it to each other with domestic wine. After the end, we return to our homes with a full conviction that we got victory over the enemies and redemption from the defilements. We hope and wish for better production, better life to ourselves and cattle. Similar ritual we repeat even in the remaining two Tuesdays of the month.

Q. N. 12. How would you explain the significance of the performers' disguise?

Ans:

TBG: Disguise or camouflage is a power. It is also related to warriorship, especially guerilla war. In this ritual, the performers disguise themselves because they are like the avant-gardists in war filed where they must hide themselves and look terrific to scare the enemies making them psychologically weak. They also should adopt the natural concealment technique so that they disappear in the natural color and the enemies like wild animals cannot easily figure out and attack upon them. For this purpose, they wear *ranijahr*, face painting, and other techniques.

Q. N. 13. Could you please explain the reason behind the active participation of the male youths in the performance?

SBG: It is not only a festival of entertainment and merrymaking. It is more like a battle in a form of ritual. It needs energy, vigor, and zeal with enthusiasm. The youths with power and vigor fit for the battle like performance. This performance also includes the elements like joking, flirting, and poking to the girls which do not suit to the aged people because of their age bar. Moreover, today's youths are tomorrow's leaders of the village for which the performance is the right initiation.

Q. N. 14. Could you please discuss some of the changes you have noticed in the performance of *Thōte* in rural and urban settings?

SBG/SKG: We can notice drastic changes in these two performances especially after Tamu Dhi Nepal's decision to initiate the ritual performance in 2052 B.S. by uniting all the 42 Gurung communities of Pokhara and Lekhnath municipalities. It is performed in the evening in the village especially after the return of the birds in their nests, while it is performed during the daylight in Pokhara. Similarly, in the village, most of the weapons we exhibit are real. But in the city, the artificial weapons made out of the *Bhakimlo* woods are used symbolically. The

performance in the rural setting is not only communal, but also individual in a sense that performers visit each house and barn. This is not the case in Pokhara; since the mass procession marches only on the streets. The house of Tamu Dhi represents the house of all the Gurung houses in Pokhara.

In the village, we perform only *Thōte* with a purpose to wipe the evils out of the community. But this concept of enemies has been changed into human follies and modern malaises like injustice, discrimination, corruption, political instability, loss of tribal culture, and identity in the urban performance. It has been a package of all the Gurung cultures, rituals, language, costumes, and customs in Pokhara. It includes other cultures and rituals like *Ghantu*, *Sorathi*, *Dohori*, *Chyatu*, *Maruni*, *Rodhi*, *Chudka*, and others. Similarly, the three/three day performance in *Chaitra* and *Shrawan* has been made one/one day in Pokhara.

RBG: Regional variations in the rural performance have been homogenized in the urban performance for unity.

Q. N. 15. Would you explain the reasons behind such changes that the urban form of the performance is undergoing?

SBG/SKG: Pokhara is not the Gurung-only city like the village. As it is the city of all castes, cultures, and people, the performance must respect other peoples' problems, needs, and interests. So modifications in the performance according to the time and place are must. In the name of celebrating our ritual, we cannot ignore others' problems. Keeping such considerations in mind, the three day performance is cut off into one day in both the months. Similarly, evening to night is not suitable time of performance in Pokhara because of the security reason and also because of the change in its purpose. As the purpose has become the exhibition of our unity and power through the cultural performance, the day time has become relevant in Pokhara.

Similarly, the urbanized form of the Gurung settlement is another reason behind limiting the performance only on the street rather than visiting each house. The use of real weapons is legally impossible as it brings the security threat. Another problem is the decline in youths' interest to such ritual performance. Their lack of interest and rapid increase in their movement to abroad sometimes creates a problem in finding performers. The great challenge in the urban setting is also to make the performance a national level. So the inclusion of other cultures and rituals has been so important.

TBG: The change is a need of time. Now we cannot go on celebrating each and every cultures and rituals separately due to the lack of time and space. But also we cannot discontinue them as they are the breaths of our identity. As a result, *Thōte* as a package of all the Gurung cultures and rituals is the solution we have found in Pokhara.