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Kauda Fold Dance: A Study of the Changes of Its Urban Performance

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Letter of Recommendation

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Abstract

In Nepal, the folk performances from stage to screen retrace a link from the country to the city, a circular movement of visual arts from the indigenous folk tradition to the world of popular culture. Popular among *Gurungs* and *Magars* in the western Nepal, folk dance, *kaura* is often performed at entertainment houses on hills and stages in theaters in cities, which have been promoted in films and television programs in recent decades. In recent years, the folk dance *kaura* in bars and hotels connect economics and culture, work and art, and country and city. In the past, folk performers on hills used to dance at nights after their daylong works; these days, professional dancers perform at clubs and hotels to entertain guests and visitors for their daily earnings. Nepal has a very rich tradition of folk dances. Every region manifests different cultural feature. Tanahun, the land of indigenous ethnic community, songs and folk dances, vividly depicts the life in its variegated color with joys and sorrows, ups and downs in melodious tunes. The present research work exposes the ways the indigenous ethnic performances become popular with economic interests and social functions. It retraces changes in folk dances when performed in restaurants, bars, colleges along with festivals, locally and abroad. What are the effects of the participation in community art? It also explicates how people's leisure time activities, such as singing and dancing have been connected to their economic interests and indigenous lifestyles.

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I. A Journey of Folklore and Popular Culture

I.I. Basic Notion on Culture

In order to define popular culture we first need to define the term 'culture'. In *Keywords*, Raymond Williams considers culture 'one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language' (87). Williams suggests three broad definitions of culture as a "general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development" (90). In this line of argument, we could first speak about the cultural development of Western Europe in terms of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic factors represented by great philosophers, great artists and great poets. Secondly, culture suggests a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group. Using this definition, if we speak of the cultural development of Western Europe, we would have in mind not just intellectual and aesthetic factors, but the development of, for example, literacy, holidays, sport, and religious festivals. Thirdly, Williams suggests that culture can be used to refer to works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity. In other words, culture here means the texts and practices that supposedly produce meanings (90). Culture in this third definition is synonymous with what structuralism and post-structuralism call signifying practices. Using this definition, we would probably think of novel, ballet, opera and fine art as embodiments of people and their cultures.

Culture exposes people's worldviews, and popular culture embodies the majority of people irrespective of their personal backgrounds. People live by the shared values, and they communicate other individuals through symbols rooted in the world they live in. People in one cultural group host their guests with tea, another with coffee, and the other with wine. Similarly, you are supposed to give tips to waiter, hair dresses and taxi driver in the American society. It indicates your identity

marker, generosity, and sense of reward to physical labor. Guest his considered god in Nepalese society, which still marks person's social manner. People dance together, and sing in the same tune. In group, they feast in their festivals and go on camping far away from their homes. Christians celebrate Christmas on December 25 followed by the New Year, and Hindus rejoice during Dashain by October or November. Similarly, Muslims continue prayer facing Mecca and Medina during Ramadan, the ninth month of Islamic calendar. Next, Buddhists observe the Buddha Purnima, the day of the first full moon in the Buddhist Calendar. People spend their leisure, watching movies, reading comics, and hosting parties. Precisely, all of these events are cultural practices that not only bind individuals together but also shape their worldviews, behaviors, and lifestyles.

I.II Folk Culture

Folk culture often refers to indigenous people's culture that truly embodies rural traditional lifestyles of local residents. In "What is Folk Culture?" George Foster retraces anthropologists' reworking of anthropology in past generations. Foster indicates how anthropologists have updated their traditional field of study in the primitive field in order to expand its scope. It now incorporates primitive, tribal societies to include larger social units, with more complex ways of life, with more complex historical origins, and with better historical documentation (165). The superficial characteristic which most of the communities so studied have in common is that they are neither "primitive" in the usual sense of the word, nor are they "civilized" in the sense of being integrated into modern industrial cultures. They appear, at first glance, to be scattered at varying intervals along the road which leads from a tribal type of society to modern urban society. Anthropologists like Robert Redfield have tended to use the terms "folk culture" and "folk society" uncritically, in

the sense of non-primitive but relatively simple culture types which are rapidly being modified out of existence by increasing contact with modern industrial civilization.

Most of us who have described folk cultures have been content to assume that the nature of such cultures becomes apparent from an examination of the subject matter.

In a descriptive sense he finds folk societies to be small, isolated, nearly self-succinct groups homogeneous in race and custom. Their components parts are closely interdependent, personal relationships are face-to-face, technology is simple and division of labor is slight. The family plays a large part in societal institutions, the sanctions which govern conduct are predominantly sacred, piety is emphasized, and ritual is highly developed and expresses vividly the wishes and fears of the people. Such a society is relatively immobile, change is slow, the ways of life form a single web of interrelated meanings, and habits of members tend to correspond to custom. The total list characterizes a hypothetical ideal society. Any particular real society would have most but not necessarily all of the elements.

In a theoretical sense he places folk societies in a logical system made up of two ideal polar types represented by urban and non-urban “folk” societies. The ideal folk society is a mental construction and presumably also the ideal urban society in that no society precisely corresponds to it, though primitive societies studied by anthropologists approximate it. It is rationally defined “through assembling, in the imagination, the characters which are logically opposite those which are to be found in the modern city . . . ” though this is possible only when we first have “some knowledge of nonurban peoples to permit us to determine what, indeed, are the characteristic features of modern city living” (294). The folk-urban continuum which results from these polar concepts provides a scale along which real societies may be

ranged, their position determined by the relative proportion of folk or urban characteristics which they display.

In contrast to the ideal “folk” type, the ideal “urban” type is characterized by social heterogeneity, personal individuality, secular rather than familial and religious institutions of control, division of labor, a money economy, and a general impersonality in interpersonal relationships.

Bob Simpson views that the similarity in concept behind Redfield’s ideal folk society, Emile Durkheim’s horde is an ideal type of society never seen in its pure form whose cohesion is marked by what is called “mechanical solidarity” which is based on a collective conscience. In opposition to the horde are those complex societies in which division of labor produces a system of differentiated parts which mutually complement each other, and which Durkheim describes as being marked by “organic solidarity” (106-229). He views that mass society has complementary each other to have the labour system and living status.

At least two assumptions appear to underlie this union of philosophical sociological theory and shirt-sleeve field research. First, the ideal types suggested have taxonomic value in that they aid in classifying real societies and they have heuristic value in that they provide us with tentative hypotheses against which more general problems of culture may be tested. Second, these ideal types presuppose a functional interrelationship between the elements characteristic of either type that explains their presence together; that is, the elements are not a haphazard aggregation historically determined.

With respect to the second point, accumulating field evidence suggests that at least some of the elements considered by Redfield to be interdependent variables characterizing the folk type are actually independent variables whose sometime

relationship is historically rather than causally determined. For example, Tax points out that Guatemalan Indians belong in any empirically determined working definition of a folk culture: they are illiterate, they have little knowledge of what goes on in the world beyond their own experience, they are physically and culturally homogeneous (within any one group), and they have a strong ethnocentric feeling (Tax, 1939). In spite of this they are not isolated, either as individuals or as cultures. They are inveterate travelers, they go to markets in distant and large towns, religious pilgrimages take them far from home, and they are used to seeing many different ways of doing things.

Tax writes that the principal activities of life-economic, social, political and religious-are “in a real sense secularized; individuals in all matters which give them relatively free choice act from thought of personal gain, and the necessities of the community must be filled by forcing individuals to contribute” (466). Tax feels that the unfolk-like qualities of Guatemalan Indian society are not due to recent contact with urban life, but that a stable rural social type can and does exist in which urban characteristics as described by Redfield are integral parts of the picture.

The definition of folk culture and society in terms of ideal polar types, urban and non-urban, has several logical consequences which inevitably, it seems to me, stereotype field research and obscure salient characteristics of the societies in which we are interested. First, this typological dichotomy groups all non-urban peoples together, the most primitive, isolated tribal groups, acculturated primitives, the mixed rural cultures of Latin America, and the peasant peoples of Europe. In fact, in his most recent statement Redfield uses the terms “primitive” and “folk” as synonymous.

Second, from the developmental point of view this concept presupposes that all human society must have been “folk” until the beginnings of city life which, over

an ever-increasing area encroaches upon and destroys folk culture. Therefore, since folk culture has always existed, a study of its origins is conterminous with the study of the origin of culture itself, and is not a particular facet of the dynamics of the folk culture problem. Redfield's interests in culture processes as exemplified in folk societies are primarily limited to what happens to folk societies, how they are "de-folke'd" by contact with urban centers and cease to exist. "When such [folk] societies," he writes, "undergo contact and communication with urbanized society (or at least with modern Western urbanized society), they tend to change in the direction of the opposite of these characters" (the cluster of elements characteristic of folk societies) (343). He argues that the society has the value for progressive life. They want to change themselves to the developed society and to use the facilities.

Third, the concept of polar types makes difficult the analysis of folk culture in the city. Since the characteristics of urban life are the logical opposites of folk life, folk culture can exist in cities only to the extent that in any concrete case the ideal scheme is violated by the facts. No orderly explanation of folk culture as an integral part of some types of cities seems possible.

According to this concept, a folk society is not a whole society, an isolate, in itself. It is a "half-society," a part of a larger social unit (usually a nation) which is vertically and horizontally structured. The folk component of this larger unit bears a symbiotic spatial-temporal relationship to the more complex component, which is formed by the upper classes of the pre-industrial urban center. In this sense folk and urban are not polar concepts; rather, they are both integral parts of the definition of a certain type of socio-cultural unit in which the pre-industrial city is a focal point. Far from threatening the folk society, this type of urban unit is a precondition for its existence. This makes clear why as anthropologists have recognized in practice it is

necessary to know a good deal about the history, structure, and content of the national cultures (including cities) of which folk communities are a part in order to describe such folk units.

To a certain extent this concept coincides with Redfield's description of peasant society, which is recognized as constituting, with urban society, a single stratified unit organized in terms of status (xv). But, though peasant societies are here defined as folk societies, they are not conterminous with folk culture, for folk culture is found outside peasant societies, particularly in certain types of cities, as will be pointed out later. By this definition true primitive cultures are excluded from the folk category. They are, in theory at least, isolates, which are complete in themselves. Some, such as the Polar Eskimo, in fact very nearly approach this ideal. To understand most primitive groups we need to know relatively little about other peoples, and what we do wish to know concerns relationships rather than culture, history, structure, and content.

Barabara D. Millar writes that the indigenous community has the strong bond than the homogenous cultures. He writes "in relatively homogenous cultures, ethnicity is a more important distinction than race (217). Millar views that the indigenous community has distinguished practice in the society. Those cultural practices bind the community. Community person has the feeling of positiveness. Miller writes "Activist groups are groups formed with the goal of changing certain conditions, such as political repression, violence, and human rights violations" (223). He views that indigenous community has the feeling of changing of their community as well as they formed the group to fight against the community people interest. It makes the changes to come out from the folk culture to

Folk cultures, it seems to me, may be analyzed from two points of view: their content, and how it came to be, and their organic relationships to more complex non-folk cultures. Redfield makes much of the point that folk societies are isolated, that they are remote from urban influences. Again, in "The Folk Society," he writes that folk societies are isolated in the sense that, being in most cases non-literate, they are remote from their own past. "The folk has no access to the thought and experience of the past, whether of other peoples or of their own ancestors, such as books provide" (296). He argues that the people have the passion to the modern and developed society but they do not have access and idea to make their life prosperity.

It is apparent that time depth is an essential part of the symbiotic relationships between folk and more complex societies. In large measure a folk culture is such because over many years' centuries in most cases it has been able constantly to absorb products and ways of socially superior groups. Rural cultures also have another type of contact with these groups: that of the present. As members, in most cases, of national units they are governed from above, pay taxes, perhaps have schools modeled after plans imposed from outside, occasionally make use of newspapers and magazines, receive in increasing quantities products of the industrial world, and through travel and transportation individual members of rural folk cultures know directly at least something of the complex nature of cities. The lower classes of some types of cities, who can be said to participate in a folk culture, are correspondingly on even more intimate terms with the non-folk culture of these urban centers.

The symbiotic relationship between folk and non-folk, here postulated as the key concept of folk culture, implies that the direction of culture flow is not alone outward and downward, from city to country and from upper to lower classes. Rather we are facing a circular phenomenon in which folk culture draws on and is

continually replenished by contact with the products of intellectual and scientific social strata, but in which folk culture continually, though perhaps in lesser degree, contributes to these non-folk societies. The dance is illustrative of this process. In the 17th and 18th centuries Western European dance masters introduced folk dances to social dancing, adapting them to the needs of the courts.

The concept of folk culture here presented accounts for the troublesome question of the “folk” qualities found among the masses of pre-industrial cities. It is difficult, of course, to tell to what extent the preservation of country values is a defense mechanism against the problems of the city which will rapidly disappear when a city oriented outlook on life is achieved.

The presence or absence of sizable amounts of folk culture in cities and towns appears to be a function of the type of urban center involved. In spite of the recent rapid industrialization characteristic of many Latin American cities, as social types they are still essentially pre-industrial. Forms of family organization, the status of women, relationships between worker and employer, formal and informal mechanisms for maintaining law and order, and attitudes toward religion are more nearly characteristic of pre-industrial commercial cities than those produced by modern science and technology. The growing pains of these great cities spring from the inevitable lag between rapidly changing manufacturing and marketing techniques, and less flexible socio-cultural forms which are increasingly unsuited to the dictates of modern economies.

If the arguments advanced in this paper are valid, a folk stratum is a part of a pre-industrial society characterized by social classes. In the rural setting the folk stratum is coterminous with the entire community; in the urban setting the folk stratum is merely a part of the community. This point of view permits a distinction

between the expressions “folk culture” and “folk society,” expressions, incidentally, which Redfield uses more or less indiscriminately. A folk culture may be thought of as a common way of life which characterizes some or all of the people of many villages, towns, and cities within a given area. It can never, by the definition here given, be a complete culture in the sense that a primitive culture may. A folk society may be thought of as an organized group of individuals characterized by a folk culture. In Central Mexico, for example, there appears to exist a more or less homogeneous folk culture. Each of the many small rural villages found within this area is a folk society, as much a discrete unit as any primitive society. But the urban classes which are characterized by an essentially folk culture do not constitute a distinct society, since the lives of individuals of these classes are geared to the organic functioning of a society which includes and is dominated by non-folk. Many elements of folk culture may occur in social aggregates which are not basically folk societies, but folk societies cannot exist apart from folk culture (170). Any specific folk society will be characterized by a greater or lesser number of the elements specified by Redfield as belonging to the ideal type. But such a society will not be “more” or “less” folk like depending on how nearly it duplicates the ideal type

By the definition here suggested, folk culture appeared with the urban revolution, when stratified city societal organization developed in which there existed an intellectual, scientific, and social elite. The dynamic conditions which produced this new form of human organization continued until the rise of modern industrial economies, and folk cultures continue today in those places where urban centers are not highly industrialized, where the dynamic conditions still prevail. The new forms of social and political organization which appear to be necessary concomitants of an industrialized economy, and the material products themselves of such an economy,

are not conducive to the continuation of folk culture. Hence, it can be assumed that folk cultures will disappear in those places where a high degree of industrialization develops. It also seems improbable, in view of the trends of the modern world toward industrialization in all major areas that new folk cultures will rise. The few remaining primitive groups probably will pass through an acculturated stage directly to assimilation with industrializing national cultures, and the existing folk cultures of the world will gradually lose their folk qualities as they are integrated with industrial societies.

Historically, folklore has been thought to be the life culture of the mass that made up the majority of any population's present or past. Folklore is the manifestation of some element of historical development, generally presented in an artistic form. It was nostalgia to some degree, a desire to revisit the time and place in which the culture occurred. People in any culture other than their own, wished for the imagined good old days, places, and societies. Robert Browne views that:

Folklore is a yearning to return to yesteryear, yesterplace, and yesterculture. People may or may not feel a stirring in their blood for the beauty and magic of some element of folklore but they feel they can hold onto the past through the reenactment of its lore. It is especially appealing when the society one finds oneself in is a polyglot of hundreds or thousands of bits of cultures congregated from all over the world. (165-167)

As time has compressed the boundaries of mixed countries and cultures, folklorists have increasingly looked upon folklore as the magic heritage of people, which defined them, and were to be used by scholars as a cultural store which old ways of life could be extracted. This trip down memory lane has been a kind of cultural security blanket

from which old ways of life, which we have raised to the level of ideal, have become the practice of dealing in antiques, a practice which actually bled the life from the lore and left skeletons from which DNA had to be extracted to provide paleontological evidence of the locale and tribe of the past.

But the past is past though not dead, and cultures have been modified or changed. That means folklore is surviving in and being influenced by different dynamics- the mass media, new cultural concepts, different ways of life. This changed world forces a modified folklore. Culture is broader and deeper, civilizations march to different drums, the “lore” of culture, whatever that is, has changed. American society is now the result of, and ruled by, its popular culture. Popular culture consists of the aspects of attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, customs, and tastes that define the popular of any society. Popular culture is, in the historic use of the term, the *culture of the people*.

Popular culture and folklore are twin bodies joined at the heart and head, popular culture looking to the present and past, folklore viewing reality from the past to the present. Folklorists are beginning to recognize the attachment.

I.III Popular culture

There are various ways to define popular culture. But first a few words about the term ‘popular’. Williams suggests four current meanings: ‘well liked by many people’; ‘inferior kinds of work’; ‘work deliberately setting out to win favor with the people’; ‘culture actually made by the people for themselves’ (237). Clearly, then, any definition of popular culture will bring into play a complex combination of the different meanings of the term ‘culture’ with the different meanings of the term ‘popular’. The history of cultural theory’s engagement with popular culture is,

therefore, a history of the different ways in which the two terms have been connected by theoretical labour within particular historical and social contexts.

An obvious starting point in any attempt to define popular culture is to say that popular culture is simply culture that is widely favored or well liked by many people. And, undoubtedly, such a quantitative index would meet the approval of many people. We could examine sales of books, sales of CDs and DVDs. We could also examine attendance records at concerts, sporting events, and festivals. We could also scrutinize market research figures on audience preferences for different television programs. Such counting would undoubtedly tell us a great deal. The difficulty might prove to be that, paradoxically, it tells us too much. Unless we can agree on a figure over which something becomes popular culture, and below which it is just culture, we might find that widely favored or well liked by many people included so much as to be virtually useless as a conceptual definition of popular culture. Despite this problem, what is clear is that any definition of popular culture must include a quantitative dimension. Bennett defines the *popular* of popular culture would seem to demand it. What is also clear, however, is that on its own, a quantitative index is not enough to provide an adequate definition of popular culture. Such counting would almost certainly include 'the officially sanctioned "high culture" which in terms of book and record sales and audience ratings for television dramatizations of the classics, can justifiably claim to be "popular" in this sense' (20–21). Popular Culture makes the thing more popular and it increases the selling quantities of things.

A second way of defining popular culture is to suggest that it is the culture that is left over after we have decided what high culture is. Popular culture, in this definition, is a residual category, there to accommodate texts and practices that fail to meet the required standards to qualify as high culture. In other words, it is a definition

of popular culture as inferior culture. What the culture/popular culture test might include is a range of value judgments on a particular text or practice. For example, we might want to insist on formal complexity. In other words, to be real culture, it has to be difficult. Being difficult thus ensures its exclusive status as high culture. It's very difficult literally excludes, an exclusion that guarantees the exclusivity of its audience.

This definition of popular culture is often supported by claims that popular culture is mass-produced commercial culture, whereas high culture is the result of an individual act of creation. The latter, therefore, deserves only a moral and aesthetic response; the former requires only a fleeting sociological inspection to unlock what little it has to offer. Whatever the method deployed, those who wish to make the case for the division between high and popular culture generally insist that the division between the two is absolutely clear. Moreover, not only is this division clear, it is trans-historical fixed for all time. This latter point is usually insisted on, especially if the division is dependent on supposed essential textual qualities. There are many problems with this certainty. For example, William Shakespeare is now seen as the epitome of high culture, yet as late as the nineteenth century his work was very much a part of popular theatre.

A third way of defining popular culture is as 'mass culture'. This draws heavily on the previous definition. The first point that those who refer to popular culture as mass culture want to establish is that popular culture is a hopelessly commercial culture. It is mass produced for mass consumption. Its audience is a mass of non-discriminating consumers. The culture itself is formulaic, manipulative (to the political right or left, depending on who is doing the analysis). It is a culture that is consumed with brain numbed and brain numbing passivity. Those working within the mass culture perspective usually have in mind a previous 'golden age' when cultural

matters were very different. This usually takes one of two forms: a lost organic community or a lost folk culture. But as Fiske points out, 'In capitalist societies there is no so-called authentic folk culture against which to measure the "in authenticity" of mass culture, so bemoaning the loss of the authentic is a fruitless exercise in romantic nostalgia' (27). This also holds true for the 'lost' organic community.

There is what we might call a benign version of the mass culture perspective. The texts and practices of popular culture are seen as forms of public fantasy. Popular culture is understood as a collective dream world. As Richard Maltby claims, popular culture provides 'escapism that is not an escape from or to anywhere, but an escape of our utopian selves' (14). In this sense, cultural practices such as Christmas and the seaside holiday, it could be argued, function in much the same way as dreams: they articulate, in a disguised form, collective (but repressed) wishes and desires. This is a benign version of the mass culture critique because, as Maltby points out, 'If it is the crime of popular culture that it has taken our dreams and packaged them and sold them back to us, it is also the achievement of popular culture that it has brought us more and more varied dreams than we could otherwise ever have known' (ibid.). It makes the thing popular comparative to the newly things.

A fifth definition of popular culture, then, is one that draws on the political analysis of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, particularly on his development of the concept of hegemony. Gramsci uses the term 'hegemony' to refer to the way in which dominant groups in society, through a process of 'intellectual and moral leadership' (75), seek to win the consent of subordinate groups in society. What I want to do here is to offer a general outline of how cultural theorists have taken Gramsci's political concept and used it to explain the nature and politics of popular culture. Those using this approach see popular culture as a site of struggle between

the 'resistance' of subordinate groups and the forces of 'incorporation' operating in the interests of dominant groups. Popular culture in this usage is not the imposed culture of the mass culture theorists, nor is it an emerging from below, spontaneously oppositional culture of 'the people' – it is a terrain of exchange and negotiation between the two: a terrain, as already stated, marked by resistance and incorporation. The texts and practices of popular culture move within what Gramsci calls a 'compromise equilibrium' (161). The process is historical (labelled popular culture one moment, and another kind of culture the next), but it is also synchronic (moving between resistance and incorporation at any given historical moment). For instance, the seaside holiday began as an aristocratic event and within a hundred years it had become an example of popular culture. *Film noir* started as despised popular cinema and within thirty years had become art cinema. In general terms, those looking at popular culture from the perspective of hegemony theory tend to see it as a terrain of ideological struggle between dominant and subordinate classes, dominant and subordinate cultures. As Bennett explains:

The field of popular culture is structured by the attempt of the ruling class to win hegemony and by forms of opposition to this endeavor. As such, it consists not simply of an imposed mass culture that is coincident with dominant ideology, nor simply of spontaneously oppositional cultures, but is rather an area of negotiation between the two within which – in different particular types of popular culture – dominant, subordinate and oppositional cultural and ideological values and elements are 'mixed' in different permutations. (96)

The compromise equilibrium of hegemony can also be employed to analyses different types of conflict within and across popular culture. Bennett highlights class conflict,

but hegemony theory can also be used to explore and explain conflicts involving ethnicity, 'race', gender, generation, sexuality, disability, etc. – all are at different moments engaged in forms of cultural struggle against the homogenizing forces of incorporation of the official or dominant culture.

There is another aspect of popular culture that is suggested by hegemony theory. This is the claim that theories of popular culture are really theories about the constitution of 'the people'. Hall (2009b), for instance, argues that popular culture is a contested site for political constructions of 'the people' and their relation to 'the power bloc': 'the people' refers neither to everyone nor to a single group within society but to a variety of social groups which, although differing from one another in other respects (their class position or the particular struggles in which they are most immediately engaged), are distinguished from the economically, politically and culturally powerful groups within society and are hence potentially capable of being united – of being organized into 'the people versus the power bloc' – if their separate struggles are connected (20).

This is of course to make popular culture a profoundly political concept. Turner argues that:

Popular culture is a site where the construction of everyday life may be examined. The point of doing this is not only academic – that is, as an attempt to understand a process or practice – it is also political, to examine the power relations that constitute this form of everyday life and thus reveal the configurations of interests its construction serves (6).

A sixth definition of popular culture is one informed by recent thinking around the debate on postmodernism. The main point to insist on here is the claim that postmodern culture is a culture that no longer recognizes the distinction between high

and popular culture. As we shall see, for some this is a reason to celebrate an end to an elitism constructed on arbitrary distinctions of culture; for others it is a reason to despair at the final victory of commerce over culture. An example of the supposed interpenetration of commerce and culture (the postmodern blurring of the distinction between 'authentic' and 'commercial' culture) can be found in the relationship between television commercials and pop music. For example, there is a growing list of artists who have had hit records as a result of their songs appearing in television commercials. One of the questions this relationship raises is: 'what is being sold: song or product?' I suppose the obvious answer is both. Moreover, it is now possible to buy CDs that consist of the songs that have become successful, or have become successful again, as a result of being used in advertisements. There is a wonderful circularity to this: songs are used to sell products and the fact that they do this successfully is then used to sell the songs. For those with little sympathy for either postmodernism or the celebratory theorizing of some postmodernists, the real question is: 'What is such a relationship doing to culture?' Those on the political left might worry about its effect on the oppositional possibilities of popular culture. Those on the political right might worry about what it is doing to the status of real culture. This has resulted in a sustained debate in cultural studies. The significance of popular culture is central to this debate.

Finally, what all these definitions have in common is the insistence that whatever else popular culture is, it is definitely a culture that only emerged following industrialization and urbanization. As Williams argues in the 'Foreword' to *Culture and Society*, 'The organizing principle of this book is the discovery that the idea of culture, and the word itself in its general modern uses, came into English thinking in the period which we commonly describe as that of the Industrial Revolution' (11). It

is a popular culture as *other* definition of culture and popular culture that depends on there being in place a capitalist market economy. There are other ways to define popular culture, which do not depend on this particular history or these particular circumstances, but they are definitions that fall outside the range of the cultural theorists and the cultural theory discussed in this book. The argument, which underpins this particular periodization of popular culture, is that the experience of industrialization and urbanization changed fundamentally the cultural relations within the landscape of popular culture. The result was the production of a cultural space for the generation of a popular culture more or less outside the controlling influence of the dominant classes.

People make them parts of their lives when specific human activities become popular. Popular culture incorporates actions and things in which people spend much of their time and energy. Games and sports, fashion, foods and electronic media become increasingly popular all over the world. Ethnic dances, ethnic culture and ethnic foods entered the city, hotels and restaurant of the country. Sound and images of disco, jazz, hip-hop, and pop-rock have entered the streets and hotels equally in cities of the industrial world to developing countries, from New York to Kathmandu. People spend money and time in concert, disco, dohori and dance bars. Young people in t-shirts and jeans with images of celebrities visit colleges, public place and fashion centers. In today's world media performed the celebrities and model motivated by commercial and popular appeal. Media as well as social organization declared celebrities as the brand ambassador of social awareness.

Popular culture refers to common practices that unite people with similar belief systems, lifestyles, and worldviews. In *Popular Culture Profiles*, Ray Browne and Pat Browne define popular culture as people's activities and engagements, incorporating

rite and ritual, myth and media, and feast and festival. It is what people do while they are awake, and what they think about and what they dream of while they are asleep. It is the way of life individuals inherit, practice, change, and pass to their descendents (3). Understanding a people's culture requires a closer observation of their actions and leisure activities. Knowing specific patterns of lives and their belief systems allows observers to understand those people engaged in those activities.

Popular culture is not a product in itself, but a process of representing any cultural object. It is culturally constructed from interactive processes between humans and media representations. Studying popular culture connotes an in-depth investigation into food the majority of the people, eat dresses, they wear, magazines they read, and movies they view. In the fashion world certain dresses they wear, magazines they read, and movies they view. In the fashion world, certain dresses, such as t-shirts or sports shoes become popular once they are worn by celebrities, and they become even more popular after the hero and the heroine wearing them appear in the televisions commercials. It unfolds connections between the hero and culture, business and aesthetics, and icon and technology. For an example, blue jeans are, originally rough dresses designed for American cowboys, have become fancy wears for special occasions for people of all age ranges. Similarly, fast foods, including McDonald, Pizza and KFC have become special snacks for youngsters and adults and ordinary folk and the rich elite across the world.

Popular culture has become one of the most vibrant subjects in the new humanities ever since the 1960s. A pertinent program requiring sincere scholarship and rigorous intellectual debate in the American discourse, popular culture opens up avenues for an in-depth understanding of life and culture of the mass.

It is generally recognized as the *vernacular* or *people's* culture that predominates in a society at a point in time. As Brummett explains in *Rhetorical Dimensions of Popular Culture*, pop culture involves the aspects of social life most actively involved in by the public. As the 'culture of the people', popular culture is determined by the interactions between people in their everyday activities: styles of dress, the use of slang, greeting rituals and the foods that people eat are all examples of popular culture. Popular culture is also informed by the mass media.

There are a number of generally agreed elements comprising popular culture. For example, popular culture encompasses the most immediate and contemporary aspects of our lives. These aspects are often subject to rapid change, especially in a highly technological world in which people are brought closer and closer by omnipresent media. Certain standards and commonly held beliefs are reflected in pop culture. Because of its commonality, pop culture both reflects and influences people's everyday life. Furthermore, brands can attain pop iconic status. However, iconic brands, as other aspects of popular culture, may rise and fall.

With these fundamental aspects in mind, popular culture may be defined as the products and forms of expression and identity that are frequently encountered or widely accepted, commonly liked or approved, and characteristic of a particular society at a given time. Ray Browne in his essay 'Folklore to Popular' offers a similar definition: "Popular culture consists of the aspects of attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, customs, and tastes that define the people of any society. Popular culture is, in the historic use of term, the *culture of the people*."

I.IV Integration between folk culture and popular culture

Popular culture allows large heterogeneous masses of people to identify collectively. It serves an inclusionary role in society as it unites the masses on ideals

of acceptable forms of behavior. Along with forging a sense of identity which binds individuals to the greater society, consuming pop culture items often enhances an individual's prestige in their peer group. Further, popular culture, unlike folk or high culture, provides individuals with a chance to change the prevailing sentiments and norms of behavior, as we shall see. So, popular culture appeals to people because it provides opportunities for both individual happiness and communal bonding.

A key characteristic of popular culture is its accessibility to the masses. It is, after all, the culture of the people. High culture, on the other hand, is not mass produced, nor meant for mass consumption. It belongs to the social elite; the fine arts, opera, theatre, and high intellectualism are associated with the upper socioeconomic classes. Items of high culture often require extensive experience, training, or reflection to be appreciated. Such items seldom cross over to the pop culture domain. Consequently, popular culture is generally looked (down) upon as being superficial when compared to the sophistication of high culture. (This does not mean that social elites do not participate in popular culture or that members of the masses do not participate in high culture).

Through most of human history, the masses were influenced by dogmatic forms of rule and traditions dictated by local folk culture. Most people were spread throughout small cities and rural areas – conditions that were not conducive to a 'popular' culture. With the beginning of the Industrial era (late eighteenth century), the rural masses began to migrate to cities, leading to the urbanization of most Western societies.

Urbanization is a key ingredient in the formation of popular culture. People who once lived in homogeneous small villages or farms found themselves in crowded cities marked by great cultural diversity. These diverse people would come to see

themselves as a 'collectivity' as a result of common, or popular, forms of expression. Thus, many scholars trace the beginning of the popular culture phenomenon to the rise of the middle class brought on by the Industrial Revolution.

Industrialization also brought with it mass production; developments in transportation, such as the steam locomotive and the steamship; advancements in building technology; increased literacy; improvements in education and public health; and the emergence of efficient forms of commercial printing, representing the first step in the formation of a mass media (e.g. the penny press, magazines, and pamphlets). All of these factors contributed to the blossoming of popular culture. By the start of the twentieth century, the print industry mass-produced illustrated newspapers and periodicals, as well as serialized novels and detective stories. Newspapers served as the best source of information for a public with a growing interest in social and economic affairs. The ideas expressed in print provided a starting point for popular discourse on all sorts of topics. Fueled by further technological growth, popular culture was greatly impacted by the emerging forms of mass media throughout the twentieth century. Films, broadcast radio and television all had a profound influence on culture.

Ultimately, the exact nature of popular culture is so difficult to pin down because it is applied in broad terms, to include ritual, art, literature, and cosmology. Many popular beliefs, rituals, and customs of the ordinary people were also shared by members of the social elite, clouding the boundaries between the two traditions. Tentatively, we can summarize popular culture as an expressive and shared system for the production, transmission, and consumption of cohesive yet simple values readily accessible to and accepted by most members of a given society at any given time, simultaneously fulfilling both normative and practical social interests. In the end,

however, popular culture continues to elude precise definition. Perhaps the very ambivalence of the term renders it so theoretically flexible and at the same time dangerously seductive.

II. Changing Paradigms of Folk Culture and Popular Culture

Folk dances are dances developed by groups of people that reflect the traditional life of the people of a certain country or region. The terms "ethnic" and "traditional" are used when it is required to emphasize the cultural roots of the dance. In this sense, nearly all folk dances are ethnic ones.

More controversially, some people define folk dancing as dancing for which there is no governing body or dancing for which there are no competitive or professional institutions. There are a number of modern dances, such as hip hop dance, that evolve spontaneously, but the term "folk dance" is generally not applied to them, and the terms "street dance" or "vernacular dance" are used instead. The term "folk dance" is reserved for dances which are to a significant degree bound by tradition and originated in the times when the distinction existed between the dances of "common folk" and the dances of the "high society".

Kauda is a very attractive dance and it belongs to the Magar Community in the western part of Nepal. The Magar community is one of the ancient ethnic groups in Nepal which are settled in the southern and western part of the Mahabharata. Smoothness of dancers and their movements are a delight to any spectator. *Kauda* dance is performed by the *Magars* and *Tamangs* in groups: men and men, women and women, men and women can perform this dance in circles.

Popular among *Gurungs* and *Magars* in the western Nepal, *Kauda* usually performed throughout the year, excepting the rainy summer. Young *Gurung* and *Magar* boys and girls sing and dance at nights in their villages on hills in their warm reception to the other bands from the neighboring communities, sharing food and materials, feasting and rejoicing to develop relationships through conversations.

Dancers and Dances perform *Kauda* around Gandaki zone of Nepal, primarily after farming season. This dance has been practicing on the rural areas of Tanahau district. In this dance, more than four people participate. The boys dance wearing the *Dhaka Topi*, *Kachhad*, *East Coat* and *Patuka* and girls dance wearing *Jharra*, *Shirful*, *Dhungree*, *Bulaki* and *Pote*. My purpose of this research is how the indigenous ethnic dances have been popular and it becomes the economic interest and social function. How the changes of the folk dances has been occurred in the Restaurant, Bar, Disco, Colleges and National days as well as international cultural program. What are the effects of the participation in community art? How can factors like entertainment, leisure, socializing or having fun be useful for poverty alleviation and development?

Amongst the art, dance is the most primeval and classy and scarcely there is any civilization where the wakefulness of human movement as a vehicle of expression, ecstasy and grief is not evident. Dancing, which is dependent on human habits and action is the most impressionable and changeable. Nepal has a very rich tradition of folk dances. Every region manifests different cultural feature.

Tanahu – the land of indigenous community and folk dances vividly depicts life in its variegated color with joys and sorrow, ups and downs in melodious tunes and fascinating ways. But this folk art is dialing for renaissance sunshade as it has been replaced by dark and loud clouds named filmy and English songs and dances. The present paper has made an attempt to highlight folk dances of indigenous community with its changes over the years to economic interest and social function.

The word folk dance comprises two meaningful words ‘folk’ and ‘dance’ which stands for a comprehensive concept. Evolution of folk dance is intimately connected with the growth of cultural life of the people. The creators of folk dance

were the people who would not find it possible to think in abstraction from the process of their daily tasks or in isolation from their community life. The folk dances of Nepal reveal not only the individual talents of our people, but the collective tradition of each part of our country side, the characteristic of the community, and a love for rhythms almost as atmosphere have brought about a great variety of rhythms, of musical compositions, of costumes and dance styles.

Dances and dancing style lie at the heart of much Aboriginal ritual life. Consequently, changes affecting ritual are felt with particular force by those wishing to preserve the meaning and significance of traditional performing arts. A growing number of people understand the essential role of these performances as carriers of the identities and unwritten histories of Aboriginal peoples. A smaller number are aware of the religious, revelatory and initiatory nature of knowledge and power which characterizes the Aboriginal model of danced events.

Contemporary Aboriginal dances include several major areas of activity which may overlap in some cases. There are traditional dances, which are presented in what may be their original forms or in adaptations; new (non-traditional) dances and songs created by and for Aboriginal people; Aboriginal dance styles incorporated into European / modern city dance styles; and entirely Europeanized dance forms in which contemporary Aboriginal performers with appropriate training take their places in professional presentations.

Traditional dances have been adapted for non-Aboriginal audiences to broaden understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal ritual and beliefs and provide some financial independence. As a result, demand for these performances has continued to grow in nationally and internationally.

Within an essentially conservative framework, old dances have been adapted and new ones invented to accommodate changing circumstances. Traditional dances have been used, for instance, as a means of substantiating claims to land, and have acquired entirely new religious contents, as in the new Territory. New dances have emerged by the fusion of modern city life of people and the indigenous ethnic dances people. The style and degree of this kind of innovation varies widely between groups.

Around Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal, there is a number of schools which teach dancing and draw their inspiration from traditional Aboriginal performance. The major centre is the National Aboriginal and Modern dance concept which now has an academic program and a performing arts program.

Every year, students of Arts (film, theatre and television) mount a production around an Aboriginal theme. Art's students learn traditional dances and perform them as separate items or include them in their entirety within major dance works. They also use ideas from the themes (mythology and beliefs) underlying traditional performances. Aboriginal movement styles are used in choreography in combination with other modern dance.

The Aboriginal and Modern city dance is associated with National performing arts program and is a full-time professional dance company in its own right. Its members responded to the growing demand for Aboriginal performers and travelled widely in Nepal and overseas. Aboriginal dances and danced movements have inspired and been incorporated into works by Modern dance choreographers. The creative activity that occurs within Aboriginal dance communities is a crucial element in the emergence of distinctively Nepali dance idioms.

Indigenous ethnic dances are now held in the Western Region of Nepal. Initially these were events at which dances, stories and songs were shared and social

networks established. Each group had its own dance ground, performed in turn, and also assisted other groups. More recently a competitive element has been introduced and some performances have been adapted to meet the requirements of the tourist and entertainment industries.

II.I Changing Form of Folk Dance

. In the past, folk performers on hills used to dance at nights after their daylong works; these days, professional dancers perform at clubs and hotels to entertain guests and visitors for their daily earnings. Nepal has a very rich tradition of folk dances. Every region manifests different cultural feature. In the past, the dancer of indigenous ethnic community used to dance by wearing the original clothes costumes but now the dancers do not care on cultural costume. The people from every society can have dance and feel entertain instead of caring on costume and dance group. There is no marginal line between ethnic community and others.

Folk dance involves many issues arising from the effects of Modern city settlement on Aboriginal performance, including ownership of dances and songs; the acceptability of preserving or recording change significance of ritual life; and the consequences of exploitation for commercial purposes. Dances lie at the heart of much ritual life. This means that the difficult nature of changes affecting that ritual life is felt with particular force by those wishing to preserve its meaning and significance. Some financial assistance for these events comes from the Aboriginal Cultural Foundation. The Institution of indigenous arranges regular festivals in the region at which Aboriginal dance groups have been celebrated performers.

Many people have made efforts to revive and preserve dances in a form as close as possible to the original. These activities include visits by dancers and musicians from distant parts of Nepal to urban schools and dance companies, and

programs to teach dances to Aboriginal children in their own communities. These dances have also been adapted for non-Aboriginal audiences, to broaden understanding and appreciation of ritual and beliefs and to provide financial independence. As a result demand for these performances has continued to grow in Nepal and internationally.



Figure 1: Dancer performing *Kauda* at Night in the village (photo from Prakash Neupane).



Figure 2: Dancer performing the dance in the open space even in the rainy time (Photo from Field study).

Indigenous dance mirrors traditional indigenous culture. Culture diffuses from the lowest levels of simplicity to the strata of complexity. The ritualistic tradition of worship through dance and music has permeated Nepali life providing a picturesque perspective on their culture. Initial dances that were folk traditions, mere ritualistic performances performed in villages, eventually attained the stature of theatre. Even today, folk dances are performed in villages during the festive season. Those dances have been performed in city area as a means of having money.



Figure 3: Indigenous community men and women performing *Kauda* dance (Photo from Shyam Tamang)



Figure 4: *Kauda* dance performing in the Dance Bar in Kathmandu (Photo from field study).

In the past *kauda* dance used to performed under open sky. There was no light. They had to perform and practice even they are not interested to perform due to the daylong work. They have to manage their costumes and should compose song in the time of kitchen and working hour. But now dances are performed in the Restaurent , Bar, Colleges, cultural program. People from every society perform the dance. It

becomes the source of earning. People do not care on cultural dress. They perform it whatever they feel comfort. It is a subject of entertainment. People can understand its language and sense of the song.

Traditional dances are still performed but with decreasing frequency. Often referred to by modern city life performers in restaurant, Bar, College, theatre and national days these dances can occur in traditional settings or in large scale Dance Festivals where many local groups from a wide area perform their own dances. Some adaptation and innovation occurs within traditional repertoires: dances can change their status from secret or restricted to open or public status; new dances and songs are received from spirit ancestors and old dances (no longer performed) are re-invented. As clan groups have settled in larger communities, collective performances have drawn people from a much wider area, although attendance has always been governed to some extent by kinship, language ties and relationships to country.



Figure 5: People dancing *Kauda* in *Deusi Vailo* (Photo from field study)



Figure 6: *Kauda* dance performed by various community men and women (Photo from field study)

Culture is a means to express and communicate what is going on in people's lives using spiritual, intellectual or emotional features. Whatever happens inside or around a community will affect their culture. The transformation of culture can occur alongside changes in the social-economic situation of a society, such as the growing urban drift and the subsequent urbanization of former rural societies. The following example from indigenous society illustrates how such external changes of social, economic and political realities influence the transformation of dance culture.

Dance, the most delicate expression of human culture, is supposed to be an undiluted enjoyment for the art lover. As Lord Brahma communicated to Sage Bharata who wrote it as the *Natya Shastra* (the art of the play), the significance of dance "is not to flatter any party but to represent the true and essential character of the world". Ideally, the symbolism of its postures and gestures, the stories the symbols tell, and the myths behind these stories, gives the audience the opportunity to study the world of experience and learn the interpretation it offers.



Figure 7: Indigenous females performing *Kauda* dances (Photo from field study)

Culture is not a static set of traditions and art forms but rather as a media to express actual and contemporary joys, sorrows and ideas, using existing forms enriched with the thoughts and ideas that will eventually develop into some of the future's cultural affluence. This interconnection, through culture, of the past, the present and the future accentuates the continuous transformation that any vivid culture is constantly undergoing.

The various definitions of culture show that it is intrinsically a variable concept. It is not always an agreeable, positive force but since it is inseparable from humanity it might reveal destructive energies of human nature as well. It can become a source of division and therefore plays an important role in conflicts around the world. It is certain though that culture is a fundamental element in the life of every individual and community; it is what we share with those who live around us, it is what makes our social being, what joins us to a group. Thus the concern with culture provides insights into social life.

People attracted by the prospect of wage labour left their villages and moved to the cities. Prior to this, dances in the cities were either European dances performed in rather fashionable colonial dance clubs and dressed in European 'elegance' which expressed predominately affiliation to a specific ethnic group trying to renegotiate new identities in an urban environment. Since Indigenous women in Nepali society were excluded from wage labour they depended on male company in order to have access to money. Money and male-female relationships became strongly interconnected. Under these conditions music and dance became the ideal vehicle to show off, seduce and subsequently negotiate individual economic matters.

Unlike men, once women got married they did not frequent dance at bars any more. For men, however, they became a location where they could confront their maleness amongst each other and test their masculine power of seduction on women through dance. These dances, which developed out of the new habit to going out to bars in order to impress and seduce, were exploring new method of extension.

This is just one of countless examples of how external factors influence people's lifestyle, knowledge, resources and beliefs, and the evolution of their culture. Such factors include the transformation of the environment as well as social, economic or political changes, improvement of education and development of new technologies. Urban drift and migration influence culture and art considerably as different groups and cultures mix and hybrid forms of expression evolve. New experiences and living situations might enlarge modes of expression and improve the creativity of groups and individuals. At the same time they might let people forget or neglect techniques and activities that used to have great importance in their culture before.

The dynamic of culture and its ability to adapt to new situations are crucial tools for people to make sense of their lives, find guidance and control modes of expression. Especially as globalization accelerates processes of economic and technological change culture has to be given the attention, the freedom and the means to develop alongside (10). Petrella argues that our societies need direction and that this fundamentally concerns cultural development. It is crucial though that cultural development does not only concentrate on object culture (buildings, infrastructure, goods and capital) but much more on subject culture, which is committed to make sense of things, to develop links and social skills between people and create new forms of coexistence.

II.II Culture and Development

By underlining the transformative character of culture its connection to development becomes obvious. Although development has many different notions it intrinsically contains an element of progress or 'good change' (1) – a (positive) transformation of the present situation. Development can also generally be associated with the reduction of poverty and the stimulation of economic growth. The question remains as to which efforts have the potential to achieve change for the better and reach those people who most need it.

The frequent failure of large-scale investment and development projects shows that the concentration on economic and technological progress alone is likely to leave out the human side of development. The poorest and most disempowered people's needs and problems tend not to be considered and risk gaining nothing out of large-scale projects. Amartya Sen proposes that poverty should not only be seen as a situation without financial and material means but also as a vulnerable position of people without choices and capabilities (14). Today there is growing recognition that

development cannot just be done to people but on the contrary people have to become its agents and set their own priorities.

Parallel to the recognition of participation of people in development over the past twenty years, the understanding of culture has moved slowly from some kind of 'beautification factor' to an aspect to be considered in development alongside gender equality, environment and sustainability. Culture should develop parallel to economic, political or social changes. Therefore Verhelst and Tyndale claim polemically that 'any development process must be embedded in local culture, or development will simply not take place' (11). Culture has velocity on its own speed to cover the area in the community. It makes the people to sustain on their leg.

The introduction of a cultural dimension into the overall development effort shows evidence in the launching of new cultural policies as has been done by a number of development agencies and NGOs. These are good intentions and a number of sound and useful cultural projects are carried out as a consequence of the increasing awareness of the importance of culture for development. The research of cultural approaches to development within several agencies, demonstrates that the success and sustainability of such projects depends on the effort that is made to analyse and understand local culture.

Culture as 'context' is concerned with the under lying values, beliefs, and traditions of a community. The understanding of such concepts opens possibilities to integrate people's potential and power in the project design. The 'content' of culture is related to the local cultural resources or the concrete translation of the cultural context in life with its symbols and practices as ways of working, social organization and traditional heritage. The tangible expression of culture is its 'method' and refers to the use of any cultural form including song, drama, dance, music etc (15).

The specific section ‘culture and development’ I want to look at the participation in community art (culture clubs and associations or informal cultural activities) and more specifically the impact of (traditional) dance groups and their activities on the communities. According to my observations in indigenous dance (*Kauda*), participation in culture clubs and associations is very common. A single village can have up to ten dance groups. People’s engagement and activities in those groups are an essential part of the recreational, spiritual and hospitable life of communities in rural as well as urban environments. Dance groups can be very stable and reliable organizations, which continue to exist despite of major political changes or armed conflicts.

II.III Dance and community dance

Dance is a very old art form and is an element of the performing arts in every culture around the world. It is a language in its own right, not in the way that speech is, it is rather like thought without discursive logic – thought beyond language. It demands that one give oneself over to sensations. It follows a path, a channel of thought – and of meaning. It is about learning to move, to act and react with one’s body, to channel emotions and to understand how emotions travel through the body. It is a way to learn to free oneself and to think. Dance teaches how to see what is hidden, secret, concealed beneath the layers.

There are a lot of possible and sometimes contrasting origins of dance that are mentioned in the literature. Wherever it might come from, dancing satisfies a variety of essentially human needs and fulfils functions in the spiritual and recreational life of a community. It offers opportunities to explore one’s own or a group’s creativity and capacities without needing anything else other than the human body as an instrument.

Someone can list plenty of reasons for people to dance which give an overview of uses and opportunities of dance. People dance for leisure and entertainment, to relax and have fun. Through dance they communicate with other people and express emotions. Expression through dance can be a symbolic activity divorced from real life and thus can become a stylized artistic language. Moving in general is an emotional and physical outlet or an organic or instinctive need in order to release tension.

Traditional and contemporary art tend to be separated from each other. In non-Western cultures contemporary art is often associated with Western art only. Contemporary art is looked at as foreign, a threat to local tradition; links between contemporary and traditional artistic expression are denied. I do not share this view at all. On the contrary, I am convinced that contemporary art is possible everywhere in the world. It is intrinsically art of the present time. Therefore contemporary dance is nothing other than dance which reflects present times. Such reflections might for example question conventions of the past and transform existing tradition.



Figure 8: Boys and girls performing *Kauda* dance on Japan in College Cultural Program (Photo from www.google.com)

I would argue that contemporary dance is art-dance and the result of the resistance of an artist with the time he/she lives in, based on his/her experience and culture; while traditional or popular dance is a non-art-dance and evolves out of a collective rather (un)conscious creative process of a group reflecting its cultural and social identity.



Figure 9: Indigenous community organizes the *Kauda* dance performance (Photos from Nepali life UK)

Consequently, the indigenous dance groups, like the ones I visited in Tanahu, truly belong to the category ‘non-art-dances’. The function and motivation of the dances and dance groups are closely linked to the notion ‘community dance’, which is a term used in the western world to describe various dance practices of communities. It is defined to increase access to dance for the benefit of all kind of people, emphasis participation, and the ‘main’ product of community dance is the process in which participants are involved.



Figure 10: Indigenous people performing *Kauda* on the occasion of 17th world indigenous day (Photo from Keshab Chhetri)

Community dance is non-professional although professional dance has an important role for the development of community dance activities. Professional artists are likely to have completed a formal arts education and tend to make a living from it. In developing countries though, studies in the arts do often not exist. This applies well to the situation in *Kauda*. Although income generation is an issue for members of many of local, non-professional dance groups, the main focus of their activity is not the performance itself but the fun of the dancing as such. Dance is their emotional and physical outlet. They dance to relax and enjoy, express emotions and communicate with others. They appreciate the company of a group, which shares the same passion and interests and like the contentment of being part of a social network. At the same time offers them the contact with members of ‘professional’, more skilled groups, interesting links with the world outside their community by providing them with important input and inspiration for their practice and the development of their dances.

II.IV. Dance and development

In what ways can dance contribute to development? Apart from the impacts of community arts in general as described it seems important to me to give some examples and ideas of how dance can be useful in development and what possible problems have to be considered. In many non-Western cultures dance has a particularly important role in people's lives. Shyam Tamang, a choreographer from Katmandu, states that dance in Nepal accompanies men and women, children and old people through their lives every day. It is their medium to express joys and pains, their tool to link the spiritual to the physical world.

It is argued by Prem Thapa, director of National dance center that in *Kauda* the art form of dance is practiced by more people than any other art form. But dance is easy to understand and decode especially for people without much knowledge and experience in this field. In order to illustrate better what dance might be able to stand for I recount the experiences of two practitioners:

The modern dance therapist Tilak Chhetri observed during his workshops in Tanahu how the people of Brahmin and Chhetri overcame their attachment and love for members of the other ethnic

Many felt they had communicated with each other at a deeper level than they have ever done before. We hardly used any words while the movement experiences were happening. This is what they liked best and felt that it was a happy experience in which they got in touch with themselves, their emotions and that of the others. The bonding that happens when we work together physically is strongest, because we find it easy to communicate through words as well as with our bodies.

This example gives an idea the use of dance in the context of reconciliation work after or during an armed conflict. But most of the features mentioned can be detected in peaceful circumstances as well: The choreographer Bipin Chhetri reviews his experience of dance work with communities, especially in a development context:

In dance we take away words. Often we use words to say what we don't mean, as a protection from revealing who we are. [...] [The body] always responds to our state of mind. [...] Changes in movement make people change the way they think and behave. [...] It becomes harder to be violent to other bodies, hard to maintain prejudice when you are involved in the intimate, physical, emotional process of problem solving with another human being.

Marginalized or traumatized people tend to only claim minimal space, thus make them as invisible as possible. As Krishna Khadka points out, the changes in the movement of people reflects the way they think and perceive themselves in the world. Therefore dance can help them to take up more space and make themselves seen and heard.

To finish I want to add one concrete example in order to illustrate the value of community dance interventions especially amongst very poor and disadvantaged communities: as a part of the Magar Community Dance Theatre's Program in Kathmandu young dancers of *Magar* were assigned to teach a weekly dance class for older people in one of the slums of Tanahu. Elderly poor people normally have no opportunities to escape grinding poverty at all. They might just be tolerated in the households of relatives and try to take up as little space as possible in a small corner of a shack. The weekly dance class brings some alternation and enjoyment into their deserted existence. It provides entertainment, fitness and companionship. One dance

class a week might improve the quality of those older people's lives because it increases their physical and mental wellbeing, they gain the opportunity to communicate with other people, reinforce their social network and obtain a feeling of still being able to do something at last.

Dance and development might seem an odd combination at first. The look at the opportunities that dance has to offer in empowering people by developing their creativity and self-esteem, their abilities to communicate and interact beyond language and to take up some space at last, shows that dance has a lot to offer though it has been changing its form in performance.

The dance groups fall into two categories: The local groups in villages and cities which practice one dance only. Their members normally have the same ethnicity and cultural background even though this does not seem to be compulsory. Comparable to the definition of community dance, they mainly focus on 'the process in which participants are involved' and provide access to dance for all kinds of people. These groups are the main actors in fostering and transforming traditional dance. They are true amateurs who own the freedom to create and perform the dances as they please.

The groups of the second category have a very different role. They have modern concept which refers to the variety of dances that they have in their repertory. In some cases as for example the dances of *Magar* represent the music and dance culture of their region. Ideally this would mean that they have frequent contact with many local groups and do fieldwork on a regular basis in order to document and collect dances and update their repertory. Based on this broad knowledge of dance and music they adapt traditional dances for the stage and also create theatre-dance pieces.

Many of those groups produced programs for civil education (often about HIV/AIDS and Democratization). In fact their regional role resembles the role of awareness nationally. They function as leaders of dance culture in their region and are an important link between modern dance group and local groups – the link between local, traditional, communities based non-art dance and national, professional, art-dance. They recruit dancers and musicians from local groups by inviting talented young dancers to join and teach them an extended repertory of dances, songs and music.

Local groups as well as modern dance group perform for private parties, national holidays, religious holidays, official visits, initiation rites and other events. Normally they are paid for performances. In towns payment tends to be in cash whereas in rural areas it can also be food and drinks or other payment in kind. The prices depend on the reputation and popularity of a group. The fact that members of dance groups have opportunities to earn some money from time to time is very important. Especially in female only groups income generation is an important argument for women to negotiate their absence from children and household duties for rehearsals.



Figure 11: *Gurung* boy and girl performing *Kauda* dance on occasion of *Lhosar* (Photo from field study)



Figure 12: Girls performing *Kauda* dance on the occasion of *Lhosar* programme
(Photo from field study)



Figure 13: Indigenous people performing *Kauda* dance on the occasion of Magar day
(Photo from Khadak Thapa Magar)

Many dance groups are constituted as associations and registered in their Indigenous community. Although setting up the articles of association poses difficulties at times and registration of an association costs some money, most groups seemed to be eager to get officially recognized because their registration makes them known locally and might provide opportunities to perform at regional or national festivals. In remote rural areas groups are less interested in registration and formal status.

The financial resources of all dance groups are very limited. Local groups sometimes ask an entrance fee from new members but most of the income results

from performances at various events. If the payment is very low group members are paid first, if the income is better, it is split and a part of the money goes towards the group to be invested into mending or purchase of instruments. Costumes generally have to be provided by the dancers themselves. As mentioned before, some modern dance group managed to receive funding for specific projects from international NGOs. Some modern dance groups have already been invited to perform in other regions, neighbouring countries and even in Europe. Generally though opportunities to perform are rare and often groups do not have the means to replace broken drums or help poor members to buy fabric for their costume.

Fortunately national and regional institutions for culture are well structured and linked. The Bigul Thapa in Kathmandu appointed an instructor for dance who is at the same time director of creative dance Culture in Kathmandu. He has to observe and support the groups in Kathmandu and advise them artistically whenever they are asked to perform for official events. The municipality of Tanahu employs two women who organize the dance groups on the Byass, arranging their repertory and preparing them for performances.

In Myagdi the situation is less ordered. There are unpaid dance experts in every village. I visited who have regular contact with local dance groups and keep local registers. Due to very limited access to communication technologies and transport there is no updated summary of those registers at the central administration of the region and the activities of local dance specialists are rarely monitored or controlled.

All interviewees mentioned that contacts between dance groups were too irregular in order to establish relationships and define common interests or activities. The isolation obstructs effective networking in order to set up regional meetings and

festivals of traditional dance. Structures for the organization of such events partly exist but their financial and management capacities are too limited.

An important focus of this research lies in the creative processes of the dance groups in order to understand the transformation and creation of traditional dance. I therefore tried to ask the groups to explain me how modifications of the repertory were done or how new songs or even dances were created and which individuals of a group took responsibility in this process. In this context ‘song’ means not just text and melody, but one ‘number’ of the repertory including rhythm and steps, as opposed to ‘dance’, this stands for a dance style.



Figure 14: *Kauda* dance and song performing in the UK by indigenous community (Photo from magarusa.org)

The groups continuously enlarge their repertory. This normally starts with the creation of a new song (text and music) and then continues with the arrangement of movement and steps. All the groups have a ‘creative team’ of two to four motivated and engaged group members, who have the necessary knowledge, experience and special talents to create music and choreography. The women of indigenous

community reported that the inspiration for text and melody of new songs come during household work and develop slowly until songs were ready to be introduced to the whole group (interview). Other groups improvise together and progressively create a new song. The melodies are based on the rhythmic patterns and structure of the dance in a call-and response model, which is typical of singing all over Nepal.

The research was too short and superficial to find out how fast dances develop. Dances with a long tradition and history like community dance tend to vary less than new dances as western dances, which are still in a state of innovation. A majority of groups had very little contact to other groups and had rarely ever seen other groups dancing the dance they practiced themselves. Although outside influences are few they play a very important role for the development of the group. The indigenous group in Tanahu was chosen to represent Indigenous culture during the *Festival of National*. On this occasion members of modern dance group coached them. As a result they had changed the structure of their choreographies with a new awareness for spatial setup and audience interaction (interview).

To my surprise, in some districts, mainly in urban area and especially amongst the Restaurant and Bar, new dances are conceived every year. Groups or individuals create not only new texts, melodies and steps but entire dances. It is the pure enjoyment to play, improvise and move that motivates the creation of these dances. They express the physical and mental states, ideas and thoughts reflecting collective and personal realities.

III. Folklore and Popular Culture: Continuity and Transformation

The research in indigenous dances shows an astonishing variety and number of dance groups and dances. These dance groups are not just preserving tradition but are inventing and transforming dance day by day, shaping the tradition of the future. They have great creative potential to do so and they are proud and self-confident practicing dance and music in their communities. Those dance groups strengthen the identity of communities and link them to other communities, cities, countries and people and provide at the same time a frame for creative expression and innovation of their members. Dancing seems central for a healthy and active community life and is the imperative leisure activity for a large part of the population. Dance groups prove to be the basis of the affluence of indigenous dance (*Kauda*) culture and its variety, vitality creativity and needs and deserves care and attention.

Looking at the difficulties and needs that the groups expressed it seems first and foremost important to give them opportunities to meet and define their own priorities and visions. Considering the large number of groups and active dancers, support in form of a project can only involve a selection of groups. The existing leadership of *Kauda* dance provides a useful basis therefore and has to be taken into account. The isolation of indigenous people in terms of knowledge around artistic work and technical skills in dance and music should be challenged.

The most efficient and practicable way to support and encourage dance groups seems to be by transmitting skills and know-how and at the same time giving groups possibilities to meet and network. Such workshops should contain a wide range of information around dance involving training in different dance styles, body conditioning, composition and improvisation, teaching skills and basic knowledge of fieldwork.

Like everywhere in the world, the arts in the indigenous community needs continuous financial and structural support in order to build and maintain high artistic quality, encourage young creators and preserve the existing affluence of culture. A poor country like Nepal's indigenous community is unlikely to have the means to do so, in particular outside economic and political centers. Nevertheless I am convinced that dance groups in the provinces can gain access to additional opportunities and support if they manage to improve artistic and organizational skills and enforce a network and practice communication between them.

Which opportunities does traditional dance offer for development?

This simple question led to a broad reflection about the links between culture and development. Changes in the ways of living, the political, social or economic environment, can affect existing culture and vice versa. Development might stimulate the transformation of traditional modes of expression, beliefs and customs but at the same time it needs to be embedded in local culture, otherwise it risks to fail. Thus it is important that culture is considered in development. Good culture and development work has the capacity to let people become the actors of development and set their own priorities. Community arts activities have the potential to increase people's ability of self organization, their self-esteem and social networks. Good social organization and the competence of people to organize and create independently have positive impact on poverty alleviation and development, and even seem to have positive effects on economic growth as well.

A very common arts activity, especially in Nepali communities, is dance. Dance is a language in its own right, it offers modes to think and express thoughts and emotions beyond spoken language. It therefore is difficult to understand for outsiders and its social and individual value is difficult to assess. The examples cited of the

integration of dance in development processes reveal various effects from empowering people by developing creativity, self-esteem and physical and mental strength, to the ability to communicate and interact beyond language show that dance has a lot to propose.

The research in Western Nepal's indigenous ethnic dances proves that dance groups have an important cultural role and are not just preserving tradition but creating and transforming dance. They are a frame for creative expression and innovation and strengthen the identity of communities and link them to other communities and people. Dance groups and dances there are very numerous and of diverse size and quality.

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Appendix:

Questionnaire for interviews with dance groups:

1. General information about the group:

- Name of group
- Name of dance
- Reason for foundation
- Number of members (active / passive, men / women, dancers / musicians)
- Organisation and leadership (association, registration)
- Membership fee / entrance fee / other conditions
- Number of performances a month (estimation)
- Event of performances / payment / transport / food
- Who can become member of this group?

2. Creative work:

- How did you originally learn the dance?
- Responsible persons for music / songs / movement
- Where does the inspiration for a new song come from?
- Did the dance change over the years?
- Do old songs stay in the repertory or do they drop out?

3. Information and networking:

- Do you know other dance groups? Who are they?

4. Needs and problems:

- What kind of support would your group need?

5. Personal views:

- What does it mean to you personally to be member of this group? Why are you member of this group?