

**Tribhuvan University**

**The Importance of Being a Pande:**

**A Performative Reading of the Shamanistic Practices in Chepang Community**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement  
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**By**

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**Letter of Approval**

This thesis entitled *The Importance of Being a Pande: A Performative Reading of the Shamanistic Practices in Chepang Community* submitted to the central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Rishiram Adhikari has been approved by the under designed members of the research committee.

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This thesis entitled *The Importance of Being a Pande: A Performative Reading of the Shamanistic Practices in Chepang Community* by Rishiram Adhikari has been completed under my supervision. I recommend it for acceptance and examination.

Supervisor

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## **Abstract**

This thesis makes a study of Chepang performance culture under the title of “The Importance of Being a Pande: A Performative Reading of the Shamanistic Practices in Chepang Community”. The research reveals that Pande as the leader of the Chepang community performs great many roles and responsibilities as part of fulfilling cultural demands. Discussing his or her roles in the continuity and change state of his or her communities can reveal to us great many features of the Chepang world. Pande, a performer of great many rituals that the Chepangs live by do not only help his people to communicate with their ancestors and gods but also can act to help people like us to know about the views that the Chepangs live by.



## CHAPTER I:

### Identities that Chepangs Live By

#### Introduction

Chepangs are marginalized ethnic groups living in Chitwan, Makawanpur, southern parts of Gorkha and Dhading districts, all located in the south-western-central part of Nepal. Geographically, this area is located on the outer foothills of the Himalayas. Most of the Chepangs villages are scattered at the altitude between 800-1500 meters in the very rugged and partially forested hill. But in the recent years, they have migrated to the plain area. The physical structure of Chepang is not different from that of other local ethnic groups. In this regard, Ganesh Man Gurung states, "They have flat and short nose, round face, dark and brown complexion, thin and medium ears, dark eyes and prominent eye brows" (6).

Chepangs take themselves as the children of some ancient farmers. According to their myths, they took to farming as their profession thousands years ago, though only few of them are able to solve the food crisis that they face round the year. Chepangs mainly eat *makaiko* and *kodako dhindo*. On special occasion, they eat *jand* and *rakshi* (local forms of alcohol), and meats, fishes and yams etc. *Gitaha* (air potato), *vhyakur* (cush cush), *tanki saag* (Baunhinea leaves), *sisnu* (stinging), *tarul* (yam), *pindalu* (taro root) are the roots or vegetables that the Chepangs love the most. Such vegetables or roots from the indigene part of the cosmos of the Chepangs. It is believed that every season before they eat such roots or vegetables they must offer them to their gods and ancestors. Every season, Pande conducts an 'offering ceremony' when such vegetables and roots are offered to gods and ancestors. Chepangs believe that Pandes have power to emit poison from such stuffs and change

them into eatable ones. Like other ethnic communities, the Chepangs have special knowledge and skill of preparing various dishes and liquor, of course.

In the past, Chepangs were known as a socially deprived ethnic community of the nation. But the socio-economic and political changes of the present times have created some important consciousness among the Chepangs. It has made them as much contemporary as other ethnic communities from Nepal. As the country is planning to go through the process of federal system of government, the issue of ethnic identity and equal participation has drawn the interests of the Chepangs too. In this context, the Chepang community has raised issues of ethnic identity and demanded autonomous identity and existence. They are conscious of their language and culture. This makes us realise a fact that the problems faced by the Chepang communities are very much contemporaneous. Their issues have also been discussed in the parliament, cabinet meetings and other public occasions. Importantly, the Chepang themselves have shown that they are interested to participate in discussions and put their problems in front of the state (Prime Minister, President and Ministers). In the past, the Chepang leaders rarely met the head of the state but such meetings are very common phenomena these days. Different social and political interactions and media's priority have surely helped them to assert their rights at the present times. But what are happening to their indigenous cultural practices that have enabled them to carve out separate identities? How are such performance cultures going to help them to survive in the present times?

Until the *Rana* regime (1950) only Chepangs and Tharus lived in Chitwan area. But after the eradication of malaria in the mid of 1960s, the Indian immigrants and Nepali immigrants from the plains and hills started to settle down in Chitwan. The migration rate of the Chepang from Chitwan is virtually non-existing. They did

not like to leave their place of origin. However, some of them have migrated to nearby villages within the district. Historians and scholars believe that Chepangs have moved from *Puknathali* of Dolakha district and have spread across central southern hilly region of Nepal. There is no written history about Chepang although the great historical events that this nation went through in the past are the subject of the collective memories of theirs. Some of the important events which they have still memorised are Prithi Narayan Shaha's unification of this nation, the Anglo-Nepal war (Angrej Nepal Yudha, 1871-72 B. S.), hunting travel of Junga Bahadur Rana (1910 B.S.), the earthquake of 1990 B.S., and the great flood of 2011 B.S. among others. In this context, one of the Chepangs narrates that their land was captured by the *Nepale Raja* (king from Nepal) long ago. During the time when Jung Bahadur was de facto ruler of this nation, a *Chepang* Pande met him and also helped his troops performing the *Namrung puja* (for detail, please see the third chapter). In 2020 B.S. the King Mahendra met the Chepangs in Chitwan, Bharatpur, Diyala Bangala Darbar and in 2031 B.S. King Birendra met the Chepangs in Gajuri, Dhading and asked about their problems. Chepangs happily recall such major events.

Chepangs' daily needs and demands have also enforced them to come in contact with the outside world. Seasonal trading and government programs (*Praja Bikasha*) have remained as main sources of the bridge between Chepang and other communities. For job and business purpose, they temporarily come down to the plains and come in contact with the non-Chepang people.

### **Origins**

Chepang as a name of a race entered into the books and minds of the Western researchers in the mid-nineteenth century. *Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1847) mentioned about Chepangs and their language for the first time, "Interesting tongues of a

genuinely aboriginal characters, which are spoken in the East of the Kali by the certain forest tribes existing in scanty numbers nearly in a state of nature such as the *Chepang* and *Kusanda*” (1236). In his book published in 1857, a British diplomat to Nepal B. H. Hodgson describes Chepangs in ethnological terms in the following manner:

Amid the dense forest of the center region of Nepal, to the westward of the great valley, dwell in scanty number and nearly in state of nature, two broken tribes having no apparent affinity with the civilized race of the country, and seeing like the fragments of an earlier population. They have bows and arrows, of which the iron arrows –head are produced from their neighbors, but almost no other implements of civilization, and it is in the very skillful snaring of the best of the field and the blow of the air that all the little intelligence is manifested. (36)

Similarly, Eden Vansittart, captain of the Gorkha regime highlighting about nature and behaviours of Chepangs in the *Asiatic Journal* (1884), thus:

[...] apparent affinity with the civilized races of the country, and seem like fragments of an earlier population. They pay no taxes, acknowledge no allegiance, and live entirely on wild fruits and the produce of the chase. They hold no intercourse with the people about them, but are inoffensive; they appear to be gradually dying out, and will probably be extinct in a few generations. (73)

In recent decades especially after the last quarter of the last century, several books and research articles have been produced on Chepangs. In 1971, Ross Caughley compiled the first dictionary of the Chepang language. Dor Bahadur Bista, N.K. Rai,

Ganesh Man Gurung have researched about the Chepangs. However, only a few except Dina Riboli have worked on Chepangs' shamanistic culture.

Chepangs, one of the hundred ethnic communities in Nepal open up challenging theoretical and methodological issues for the research. Chepangs are divided into different clans based on geography, occupation and marital relationship with other ethnic groups. There is no concept of *jaat or* caste hierarchy in the Chepang communities. They believe that they all are equal. They believe that they have originated from the mother earth and have great many interesting myths to tell about it. In this regard, N.K. Rai states that they originate directly from the earth. "They are not migrants. When the ancestors came directly out of the earth, they came out different place. Thus their clan name was determined by the place of their origin" (122).

According to their myths, the Chepangs who are believed to have originated from the black soil and the red soil are called the *dovsirange* and *galsarange* respectively in their local language. In my research area, I came across more than twenty different clans of the Chepang though they do not see any major differences between and among such clans. In this regard, a shaman or Jankaji says, "There is no caste hierarchy among us like Brahmin" (Personal Interview).

There are several hypotheses about the origin of the Chepangs. They are based on legends, conjectures and sayings. One of the senior researchers, Ross Caughley writes that the word 'Chepang' has originated from the original word 'Che-Wang'. He further writes, "In the Chepang language 'Che' means dog and 'Bang' means stone or bow and arrow. So that those who live in the cave or stone with dog or arrow are known as the 'Chewang' ultimately that appears as word 'Chepang'" (4). Similarly, Bayju writes, "The Chepangs are the progeny of a holy man called 'Chewan' and that

later the word '*chewan*' is pronounced '*Chewang*' and ultimately becomes 'Chepang'" (10). Some anthropologists also regard the Lohari and the Kushari myths as origin sources of the Chepang. There are greater versions of the *Lohari* and *Kushahari* myth. One of them goes:

The Chepangs are the offspring of Sita's son *Lahari* or *Lava* who is famous in the Hindu epic *Ramayana*. During the exile of Sita, she had to stay in the cottage of a hermit named *Balmilki* near the Narayani River. Sita gave birth to a son named *Lohari*. One day she saw some monkeys playing with their babies. The scene was very moving. She too took her baby to the river to show the monkeys playing and entertaining with each other. But she forgot to inform about it to *Balkimi*. The *rishi* became restless as he did not find the baby in the cradle. He thought that Sita will be angry. Therefore, he created a new baby out of the '*Kuss* Grass' and the baby exactly looked like *Lava*. But as Sita was back she got surprised to see another baby in the cradle. *Rishi* explained the events. Chepangs widely believe that they are the descendants of *Lohari*, the first son of Sita. (3)

Many senior scholars such as Ross Caughle, Dor Bahadur Bista and others also mention the Lohari and the Kushari myths as the origins of the Chepangs.

However, some researchers disagree with the view that the *Lohari* myth is the origin of Chepangs. They blame the researchers for unnecessarily Hinduising Chepangs. According to them, the word 'Chepang' is used by the Nepali speakers to address the ethnic community who lived in the narrow area or cave. In Nepali, any narrow area or space is called '*Chep*'. They argue that the forefathers of the Chepangs lived in the narrow area (Cheps) of Mahabharat range therefore locals might have



started addressing them by using the word 'Chepang'. Similarly other argues that the word 'Chepang' has originated from the Nepali verb "*Chepinu*" which means to remain being sandwiched. So the people living in the domination are addressed by the Nepali speakers as 'Chepang'.

But many Chepangs believe that they were born from the Earth. According to their myths 'Chepang' were created from the stones particularly those found underneath the ground call 'Patal.' In this regard, one of my respondent shamans Jankaji Chepang states, "We Chepang lived in stone or cave with dog in former days so we are addressed by using the word Chepang where as '*Che*' means dog and "Bang" means stone" (My Personal Interview). Several senior Chepangs claim that they are the children of the land (*Bhumi putra*) or therefore they are the aboriginal people. This common belief held by Chepangs helps us to justify a point that they have strong relationship with the Mother Nature. It also points out some cosmogonic relationship between the life of the Chepang and the nature.

In their myths, there is an account of competition of archery between the two brothers. *Lohari* is supposed to have used some tricks to overcome his brother in the competition. As a result, there arose some cold relationship between them and they got separated as one took farming as his profession, and the other to hunting. *Lohari*, the farmer attempted to convince *Kushari* to become a sedentary farmer. *Kushari* stole all the valuable things and escaped into the jungle. The children of the one who escaped into the forest were know as who Kusunda started carrying bow and arrows as means of their livelihood. They hardly crossed the Narayani river because they believed that their rivals, the children of the other brother lived in the areas. The cause of rival was the knowledge of their origin because the mother Sita could not keep it as the secret. One day both knew their origins.

The myths that the Chepangs live by reveal to us that the earth in form of the forest is at the centre of their faith and life. In both narratives mentioned above the twins *Kush* and *Lova* were born when Sita was in exile in the forest. It means Chepangs emphasize the space that is the forest. According to the Hindu version of the epic, Ram to please common folks from his kingdom exiles Sita though she had always remained virtuous and innocent. By locating their origins to this background, the Chepangs, one can argue are trying to assert their identity that is partly Hindu and partly different from the mainstream Hindu. Moreover, the Hindus believe that Sita was the daughter of Janaka one of the kings of *Bideha* (Mithila). Sita is often taken as the sign of the furrowed earth, a persona in the form of a female goddess of the agriculture, and was often symbolized by the ploughshare. For this reason, Sita someone born out of a furrow during the ritual ploughing, she bears the surname “Ayonija”, which means someone who is not born of womb. This further strengthens cultural and philosophical values that the Chepangs are originated from the earth.

It is not a coincidence that in the myths that the Chepangs live by and the myth of Sita’s origin bear proximity. According to a myth that the Chepangs often narrate, the ground or land is the mother of Lohari, the forefather of the Chepangs. Similarly, Sita was not only born from the land but also disappeared or died by jumping into the hole that the mother Earth. Sita is the goddess that separates the world of agriculture from the hunting. As the myth goes, Lohari is the real son of Sita while Kushari belongs to the world that is savage and symbolizes by the Kush grass is. Kush is often used as an effigy “Kush Patrika” that is burnt on the funeral pray. Sometimes *Kush* is used as a symbol of human body in the Brahmin culture. Lohari and Kushari myths can also be taken as mirror images of two realities of a person. The forces that these myths evoke operate not only in the nature but also within human self. But these

myths provide some grounds to assert that the Chepangs cannot simply put as the Hindus. Important thing is how they do perform their wisdom, philosophy and rituals to assert their identities, the subject of this research.

### **Pande and the Chepang Worlds**

Pande performs various cultural and intellectual roles within the Chepang communities. In modern term, he or she is called a shaman. His/her identity is marked by the shamanic knowledge and wisdom that he or she possesses. The term shaman is often taken as word that developed from the *Tungus* language (shaman). But it is also taken as a term that could have developed from the Sanskrit terms 'Sramana' and 'Sramanera'. Both of the Sanskrit terms denote ascetic the Buddhist monk. Shaman refers to a person who is responsible for communicating with spirits, gods and forefathers for the people living in communities. The shaman is usually taken as a diviner, therapist and psychopomp, and it is he/ she, who can accompany the dead soul to the world of his or her forefathers and foremothers. He/she is also the custodian of the local myths and therefore the culture of the community. In Nepal, shaman is known as 'Jhankri' who is a ritual or religious expert. Jhankri is supposed to have possessed abilities to cure patients of every type. He or she moves quite freely between 'this' world and 'that' world, and marches through cosmic worlds in a manner similar to the ways protagonists in different epics do.

Russian ethnographer N. Mikhailavski is often taken as the first scholar who put forward the definition of shamans. He puts, "The Shamanism as being an in liaison in the relationship man as with the world of the spirit" (67). A shaman is always and already in-between world. He is supposed to be dwelling in the borderland between the two worlds: one where humans live and the other habituated by supernatural beings. Dina Riboli who has conducted some extensive researches on

Raute, another indigenous community in Nepal, states that a shaman is a doctor in cultural sense though not according to the cannon and context of modern or western culture. She says, “He lives amongst as well as being therapist not the limited western sense of world, but in much wider and complex sense the cures various types of crisis that happen into the individual or the collective” (53).

Shamans owe their power and knowledge primarily to the supernatural worlds. They never use any doctrines or dogmas. Shamanistic knowledge is mainly passed on orally with very few exceptions. Shaman has no need to worship any sacred images such as temple, church and other religious icons. In the past, shamanistic knowledge was suppressed by the state and it was compared with witchcraft. In this regard, Robert N. Hamayan observes, “Shamanic phenomena in the context of Siberia can be found both in tribal societies where they are very diffused as well as in societies though Shamanism is never given as the state religion” (11). Shamanism does not believe in priesthood as well does not recognize any solid hierarchical structural power amongst religious experts. In Chepang community, a shaman is known with the name of Pande. The term Pande has derived from the Hindu *Pandit* or from the word ‘*panda*’ which is defined in the dictionary as a religious official who has inherited this function and presides over a temple. One of the most important things about Pande is that he or she can make a journey through liminal states of trance which may vary in intensity. He or she makes cosmic journeys to the heaven or into the underworld, mainly in order to encounter the divinities and spirit who have brought in some sort of critical situations in the world of their men and women. In this regard, Elide sates:

Shamanic techniques consist of the passage from one cosmic region to another from the Earth to the Sky, or from the Earth to the Underworld. The shaman knows the mysteries of how to break through

the levels. The communication, which place between the cosmic zones, is made possible by the very structure of the universe. In fact, it is quite clearly divided up into three levels, the Sky Earth and underworld, which are connected by a central axis. (71)

The Chepang Pande often goes into a long silence trance. This is not only a private moment in his or her life but also a collective and cultural time the people who watch him or her in such state. He or she lives two world and two times simultaneously. The Pande or shaman reaches to the heavens or underworld, which function as a liminal phase between two different states – one connected to the divinities and another to the human – which require silence. It is believed that all initiations take place in the dream of Pande into the presence of spiritual gurus. Dreams for Pande are supposed to play some important roles in their professions. There are two phases of dream: one is very short which enables them to prepare to accept the shamanic knowledge and next is long and complete dreams which enables a Pande to acquire more maturity.

In the Chepang language, “*Jhankri*” is known as ‘*Tunsuriban*’, which means the person who is involved in treatment activities. Generally, Pande plays a role of therapist within the Chepang community. The Chepangs make no distinction between black and white Pande and one person carries out all shamanistic functions, though there is often more than one Pandes in the Chepang village. It is the Pande who must work for the community and practically all of them consider themselves to be white though it is very difficult to draw the line between black and white Shamans. The Chepangs widely believe in shamanism and take it as a medicine, culture and tradition. The Pande is expected to fulfill roles of a psychotherapist within the community. Chepang shamans are supposed to have power of some unique visionaries to observe life from above, below and outside cosmic orders in different

forms of ritualistic performances. They transcend the known world and explore unknown. They also revive the afflicted part through the genesis and communication with some magical powers.

Pande plays vital roles in his or her social and cultural spheres. He/she is the person who is supposed to show concerns over problems that occur or prevail in the community. Pande uses his/her knowledge for the welfare of the Chepangs. In this regard, Roboli states:

The Chepang themselves called *Tunsuriban*, a words which describes their faculty to move freely into both the celestial autonomous kingdoms. The *Jhankri* of their ethnic groups, in particular the *Tamangs* are called *Urghsuriban* as they are only able to continue with the celestial world most certainly be overcomes if they to venture to underworld. (122)

### **Pande and Cultural Performances**

The varieties of the festivals that the Chepangs celebrate make one to assume a notion that probably the Chepangs make the happiest ethnic group. They are always ready to celebrate festivals. They spend money and time that they manage to save by working throughout the year. Generally, they use *jand* ,*rakshi* or home brewed alcohol and meat during the festival times. They celebrate all the common Nepali festivals such as Dahsain, Tihar, Saune and Maghe *Sangranti*. Except these festivals, they have their own festivals such as Nwagi (Chhonam), *Aitabare* puja, *Gaidu*, *Tonkolong* and *Bhayar* Puja among others. Most of the Chepang festivals are celebrated according to the suggestion of the Pande and in his appearance. There is the presentation of communal ethos in their festival. They never worry about festival's

expenditure as often time they finish all of their grains and money on celebrating festivals.

### **Gaidu Puja**

This festival is celebrated in the month of *Jestha* (June's full moon's night). *Gaidu* is the god who saves animals and livestock from the different kinds of disasters such as flood, landslide, influenza etc. On the occasion, Pande chants the mantra which is very significant in itself. It is believed that shaman has power to convince the *Gaidu* or god and make him ready to save their crops and animals. They offer cock and foal to the god and make him happy.

### **Saune Sangranti**

It is celebrated on the first day of the Nepali month *Saun* ( mid September). It is popular with the name of *Didi* festival. It is believed that after *Saune Sankranti*, happiness heralds and disaster will disappear. Some Chepangs pelt some burning firewood (*agulto*) as a symbol of scabies. They sacrifice cock and worship their god (witch) called *lute*. In my survey area the festival is celebrated as a common Nepali festival. During the festival, they eat meat, drink liquor, organize dance, and sing throughout night.

### **Nwagi (Chhonam)**

Nwagi is known as Chhonam festival. It is the most important festival of the Chepangs. It falls in the month of Nepali month Bhadra (mid September) particularly on its second Tuesday. During the festival, they collect different kinds of agricultural product such as *ghaiya* (Day-rice), *pindadu* (taro root), *girmala* (Sponge guard), lemon and offer to their ancestors. The festival is celebrated with certain rituals. On the occasion, Pande shaves his head and takes a ritual bath and performs a special night worship to invite their ancestors for the feast of the New Year. In my recent

field visit, I came to know that, all the Chepangs do not celebrate this festival, which is to be discussed in chapter three.

### **Dashain**

Dashain is a national festival in Nepal. It is celebrated by Chepangs alike. They worship local goddess such as *Bharang Kalika*, *Shaktikhor Kalika* and *Ichhakamana*. They offer male goats and cocks to the holy goddess on this occasion. They collect a lot of foods and liquors, invite friends and relatives and express their happiness through songs and dances on this occasion. They spend a lot of money in the festival and many also sell the property to celebrate it.

### **Tihar**

Tihar is also celebrated by the Chepang as their local festival. On the occasion, they exchange happiness among each other through songs and dances. Specially, the festival is celebrated in plain area of their settlement. It is taken as a local festival or the *Bhubhan festival*.

### **Aaitabare Puja**

It is another important festival of the Chepang. *Aitabare* is supposed to be benevolent god. They believe that *Mangshir* Purnima night (the full moon night of the december) is the birth day of their ancestor. On the occasion of the festival, Pande and Maha Pande (*Phal*) both chant some special mantras to remember the god. They believe that only the god *Aaitabare* can help one to remain safe from epidemics. It is also believed that the sun god appears into the earth and the life begins again.

Therefore, they worship *Aaitabre* s a symbol of energy.



### **Push Pandra**

It is one of the minor festivals that they celebrate throughout the year. On the occasion, they eat and drink various foods and liquors and organize dancing and singing party within the community. The day is taken as the birth of the shaman.

### **Mage SAGRANTI**

This festival is related with food shortages and disasters. They celebrate it by inviting women kin, mainly married daughters and sisters. Especially, they eat yam, meat and drink liquors during the festival. Some of the Chepangs go to the *Devaghat Jatra*, a ritually famous pilgrimage or holy pilgrimage in Nepal on this occasion.

### **Chaite Dashain**

It falls generally in March, a month when foods remain scarce. Chepangs do not have enough foods and liquors to use on this occasion. They celebrate it in very serious mood, which is the main feature of the festival. Only few of them celebrate the festival. They conduct many pujas such as *Narmung*, *Devakali* and so on. These pujas are performed by the Pandes in special ritualistic manners.

### **Birth ceremony**

The pregnant girl moves back to her parent's house few days before child is born. Therefore, she takes much support and help from her mother. After the child is born, she is considered to be impure for a short period of time, mainly for the seven or five days. During the period, the mother and baby are kept separate and secrete from other family members. The Pande on the part of wife family carries out purification ceremonies. Only after that husband can meet his wife and newly born child.

## **Chhewar**

*Chhawar* is one of the important ceremonies of the Chepang. It is celebrated after the male child crosses the age of six. According to Pande's suggestion the parents of the male child go to the child's maternal uncles' and invite him to the ceremony. They invite the Pande to come for the ceremony. Maternal uncles offer some gifts and shave the child's head. After the *Chhewar* male child gets recognized as the member of the community and is treated as an adult who is allowed to work in the field.

## **Marriage Rites**

Marriage is an important event in life for all. Both Chepang men and women are regarded as a mature and responsible only after they get married. Marriages conducted according to traditional culture demands certain rituals, and Pande plays an important role on such occasion. On the day before the wedding, the groom goes to the bride's house with a gift of a pot full of liquors, and asks the girl's parents about their expectations. If the girl's parents agree the marriage will be fixed on otherwise it can be canceled. In some cases girl's parents demand more liquor from boy's parents before accepting the proposal. Then the wedding day is fixed. In Chepang's marriage ceremony, there is no need of chanting mantras that we find marriage in Brahmin communities. Though Pande is called from the bride side, liquors and food are offered to him from bridegroom side. There is no other special ritual in the Chepang marriage ceremony although some Chepangs offer ( *Chui ko Bot*) Bassia Butyrace, a fruit that can be used to make vegetable butter to their daughter as a gift.

## **Death Rites**

The evil spirits are considered as the main cause of death in Chepang community. When someone dies, all the family members and relatives mourn and arrange for the funeral. The corpse is wrapped by a *kaatro* (a piece of cloth used to cover dead body) and is taken to the *Jababi*, a net bag made by *choya* or bamboo thread including a pot of tobacco and foods. Such items are taken as necessary stuffs for his/her way to the underworld. They usually dig the grave under Shorearobusta tree. The only person to preside over funeral in the Chepang community is the Pande, and one of his important functions is to accompany the soul of the dead to reach to the land of his ancestors. During the time of the burial, an important nocturnal Shamanic ceremony is held by Pande. The time between the death and funeral, soul is supposed to face great many difficulties and Pande is believed to help the soul to meet with the ones of the ancestors. If the spirit or soul of the passed one is angry with family members and other villages, it can create some fearful situations. Therefore, Pande convinces the soul by offering fruit, foods, liquors and other valuable things. It is believed that any unsatisfied spirits can appear as misfortune, and may bring disasters in the village.

## **Rites of Constructing Houses**

The composition of Chepang house is unique. In my survey area, I came across only some few joint families. Such families do have up to twenty members. Generally, one comes across families that are unitary, and many joint household have up to ten members. The Chepang houses are immediately recognizable as they are temporarily structured and are made by mudstone, dry grass and bamboo. Such houses are much warmer than others. They take advices from Pande before choosing a particular piece of land to construct house. Pande checks the place and worships the

land god (*Bhumi*). There is enough space outside and inside the dwelling area. There are no windows, but a hole dug in one of the corners of the house. Before the construction of new house the Pande must hold certain ritual. It is necessary to verify that there are no earthly divinities residing in nearby stones, running water or trees as they could cause serious problems such as illnesses epidemics and various other types of misfortune which could happen to be in their territory. The Chepangs are more conscious than the other people in the case of selecting land for house. In this regard, N. K. Rai describes the situation in this way:

Apart from a desire to avoid landslide and natural pits, a house site is chosen by a Chepang shaman, who analyses the soil and advises on construction. House sites are abandoned if the evil souls of the dead give trouble or if many family members die in an epidemic. Some houses are left temporarily when a family member has a bad dream and misfortune is expected. Houses are also abandoned if the stone of the walls or the woods of the floor constantly makes noise for the materials are believed to have been brought from graveyard area. (12)

Thus the discussion made above reveals to us that Pande as the leader of the Chepang communities performs great many roles and responsibilities as part of fulfilling cultural demands. Discussing his or her roles in the continuity and change state of his or her communities can reveal to us great many features of the Chepang world. Pande as a performer of great many rituals that the Chepangs live by do not only help his people to communicate with their ancestors and gods but also people like us to know about the views that the Chepangs live by. In the following chapter, I aim at exploring first some general features of shamanic performance. This will help me to analyze some shamanistic performances practiced in the Chepang communities

in the third chapter. I have selected mainly Chhonam and Namrung Pujas to describe and analyze the performative role of Pande. In the last chapter, I make a conclusion of this research.

## Chapter II:

### Performance Theories and Shamanic Performances

#### Introduction

Performance is a key term that is contested with cross-disciplinaries. It observes the human behaviors including day-to-day human activities. It is difficult task to define the term. However, theorists have reached at a point and agreed that performance must be taken as a process not as a product. Performance is something that happens, emerges, and grows in and through a process, a set of activities or specific behaviors. In this regards, Peggy Phelan says, “Live performance disappears even as it is happening, and it happens differently in each time” (16). These products are given a certain status as performance through framing. The frame is succeeded to establish communication which Richard Bauman analyzes:

Performance is the mode of communicative behaviour, a type of communication. While the term analyzes in aesthetically natural sense to designate the actual conduct of communication ( as opposed to the potential for communicative action), performance usually suggest, an aesthetically marked and heightened mode of communication, framed in special way and put on display for an audience. (41)

The above lines focus performance as a mode and manner of communication between actors and audience. In the same lines Victor Turner, a British- trained anthropologist, defines performance as following:

Performance ...From the old French '*Parfournir*' '-par (thoroughly) plus *furnish* ("to finish") - hence performance does not necessarily have the structuralist implication of manifesting from, but rather the processual sense of "bringing to completion" to "accomplishing" To

perform is thus to complete a more or less involved process rather than to do single deed or act. (91)

It is highlighted the philosophical development of the performance theory that focuses on lexical meaning. But Schechner takes the performance as an umbrella term and interrelate it with the day-to-day activities of a person. In this regard, he says:

Performance mark identities, behind time, reshape and adorn the body, and tell stories. Performances- of art, rituals or ordinary life-are made of “twice behaved behaviours”, “restored behaviours”, performed actions people train to do, that they practice and rehearse. (22)

Further, he says, “Doing actions gestures and their executions- ritual rites, stage plays, improvisations, dances, singing- across the world” (72). It conceives of this range of activities in a series of fuzzy, concentric circle that are often not discreet from each. In the same line Pelias Ronald writes, “Performance is the communicative process. All performances are transactional communicative events between speakers and Listeners” (15). Likewise, Eline Diamond emphasizes on the acting mode of performance and writes:

Performance is always a doing and a thing done .One the one hand, performance describes certain embodied acts, in specific sites, witnessed by others (and/ or the watching self). On the other hand, it is the thing done, the completed event framed in time and space and remembered, misremembered, interpreted, and passionately revisited across a pre- existing discursive field. (1)

Performance is interrelated to action that leads into the artistic forms. Performance causes, creates, and produces, both itself and things outside of itself. This productivity has many purposes that are often both languages as factions, uses, or intentions. This

purposeful productivity is utilized to do a number of things –for individuals, groups, and culture. Mary Strain, Bravely Long and Mary France Hopkins list various purpose of the performance as aesthetic enjoyment, intellectual inquiry, affective play, cultural memory, participatory ritual and social ceremony, political action and psychological probe. In this context, Goffman’s definition is relevant to quote, “A performance may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in way of the other participants” (15).

Shamanic performance is a purposeful and productive performative function, which is utilized to do number of thing for individual groups and culture. Kapchan highlights the performance and relates it with ethnography. In this regards he says, “To perform is to carry something into effect- whether it be a story, an identity, an artistic artifact, a historical memory, or ethnography. The notion of agency is implicated in performance” (479). In all cases, a performance is an act, interactional in nature and involving symbolic forms and live bodies. It provides a way to constitute meaning and affirm individual and cultural values. In the same line shaman’s body performance also circulates the individual and cultural values in a particular cultural group.

Performance always makes reference to former ways of doing, acting, seeing, and believing to such references can uphold the status. It contains the potential for changing status. In this regards, Conquergood writes:

Performances privileges threshold- crossing, shape shifting and boundary violate figures, such as shamans, tricksters, and jokers, who value the carnivalesque over the canonical, the transformative over the normative, and the mobile over the monumental. (138)



In the same lines, Pollock clears performance as a means of cultural resistance and writes. "Performance becomes a site of transformation and even a paradigm for cultural resistance" (657). Further, Jackson clears on its collectivity and writes:

Performance is about doing and it is about seeing, it is about image ,  
embodiment, space, collectivity, and / or orality; it breaks community;  
it repeats endlessly and it never repeats it is intentional and  
unintentional, innovative and derivative, more fake and more real. (15)

Critics have pointed out the fact that socio cultural group reflects back upon themselves, upon relation, actions, symbols, meanings, codes, roles, status, social structures, ethical and legal rules and other socio cultural components, which make up their public selves in the condition of reflexivity of performance. The above lines make it clear that performance is a collective presentation of the group or individual that helps to reflect the identity of the groups.

Performance helps us to create perception through actions, symbols, meanings, codes, roles, status, social structures, ethical and legal rules and other socio cultural components, which make up their public selves. In this regard, Geertz writes:

... highly contrived, artificial, of culture not nature of deliberate and voluntary work of art. A reflex presupposed realism a picturism of people and thing as it is thought in the culture they really are without idealization or fantasization. But of course, in art and literature even realism is a matter of cultural definition. Nevertheless, cultural realism, however unreal is some way from what I consider the dominant genre of cultural performance. (42)

In the same line, Barbara Meyerhoff states:

Cultural performances are reflective in the sense of showing ourselves to ourselves. They are also capable of being reflexive, arousing consciousness of ourselves to ourselves, as a hero in our own dramas as we made self aware, conscious of our consciousness. (42)

Many performance theorists claim that performance constitutes, or creates, identity, race, ethnicity, gender, desire, class, age, abilities, and geopolitical region. These all are known to self and to others through performances. Social groups, families, organizations, communities, or even countries are also constituted through the performance. They create and re-create about themselves. Family celebrations, sorority initiations, company picnics, political protests, the pledge of allegiance, are all means to create, maintain, and transform groups. The performance makes implicit and explicit claims about what is valued in and by the group and how members ought to act. Some theorists take performances as mixed up constitute culture and ongoing, dynamic cultural process. The structures are revealed in concrete manifestations performed by individuals: weddings, the Academy Awards, football games, presidential elections, step shows etc. It is cleared the double articulation of the performance. While creating communities and cultures we embody, our stories are always constrained and embedded by those communities and cultures.

Performance has power to change the environment. In the shamanic performance, a shaman acquires power through performance that helps him to fulfill his mission. Performance is multifaceted, demanding, competence from performer. It evaluates audience and to make available a heightened, self aware, and reflective, experience that separate from ordinary life. At once performance involves making the event through framing, signaling the frame through keying, and interpreting the

communication interactions that occur within those boundaries by asking and answering the question, what is it that is happening here?"

Most theorists agree on the ingredients of a performance. For Richard Bauman performance involves events, acts roles, and genres. For Richard Schechner performance is related to sources as such producers, performers and partakers. In this context, he writes:

This disclaimer does not disallow performance competence but is a concession to standards for etiquette and decorum, where self-assertiveness is disvalued. In such situations, a disclaimer of performance serves both as moral gesture, to counterbalance the power of performance to focus heightened attention on the performance. (22)

Clifford Greetz focuses on textual approaches of the cultural performance and defines, "The culture of the people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong" (452).

Performances are related with identity of a person, group and community. In this context Linda Nicholson states:

Each of the foundation locates a true identity on a different ground in our bodies, in culture, in learning, or in differences. All of these approaches have been critiqued as essentialist position an essence for gender that is binary and natural call these coatrack theories of identity which means the body is viewed as a type of rack upon which differing cultural artifacts, especially those of personality and behaviour are thrown or superimposed.(41)

Performance is important for asking the question how it constructs the identity. In this regard, Munoz says, “Disidentification is a name for survival strategies performed by minority groups that works on and against dominant ideologies, structures, and institutions” (12). Performativity as a political practice argues that people can resist and change oppressive structures and ideologies in everyday life.

All performances circulate around mimesis, poesis and kinesis faking, making and breaking our notion of identity and culture. Performativity takes these claims and foregrounds the fourth stance performance as staking. Performativity opens up new possibilities for understanding identity as a claim to selfhood, with agency to work with against dominant structure and ideologies. In this regard Myerhoff writes:

The centre people are agreeing upon and making authoritative the essential ideas that that define them. In these dramas, they develop collective identity, their interpretation of world, themselves and their values. As well as cultural dramas the events are definitional - ceremonies, performances of identity, sanctified to the level of myth.  
(47)

### **Culture and Performance**

The dictionary definitions of a culture have changed through time. From the Latin ‘*cultura*’, meaning cultivation or tending, the growing of plant, crops, or animals is the very early meaning of the word. Most of the thinkers think of culture in two different ways based on definitions. In 1882 British social theorist, Matthew Arnold proposed culture as the refinement of tastes and sensibilities. In this regard, he says, “The pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know [...] the best

which has been thought and said in the world” (10). Likewise, Raymond William proposes the culture as an ordinary means and writes:

It is common meanings and directions of society. These meanings are learned, made and remade by individuals. Culture is at once traditional, a whole ways of life passed on through generations, and creative processes of discovery that leads to new ways of thinking and doing. (12)

The above lines show the relation of culture and its relation of individual. In the same line Clifford Greetz analyzes the symbolic value of cultural performance and states:

Culture is semiotic: systems of meaning, signification, and symbol use are central to both patterned conduct and individual frames of mind. Culture is the symbolic system unique to humans in which meanings is publicity shared and the collective property of a group. (45)

To understand culture we have to recognize the way in which its meaning is tied to historically and socially specific situations. This involves a careful analysis of practices, lifestyles of those involve, and how people make sense of their condition. Culture is a suturing concept it indicates of a space within which competing vision of the role of human existence. It can be played out, all of which seek to fix the meaning of culture. Singer Milton outlined five components of cultural performance and writes:

It is beginning with their formal characteristics. Each cultural performance can be characterized by (1) a limited time span (a beginning, middle, add end), (2) an organized program of activity, (3) a set of performers, (4) an audience, and (5) a place and occasion of performance”. (18)

The cultural stage is the place where the performance occurs such as homes, temples, public halls, and community centers. Some time cultural training has got in the home, as informal and causal way likes the rearing of children and passing down of traditions. Without a fixed institutional base, it is often difficult to pin down, as they create their stages in and through the performance.

Cultural specialists, people who are especially recruited, trained, paid, and motivated to engage in performances. Singer Milton lists priests, scholars, reciters, storytellers, singers, dancers, dramatic performers, and musicians are the main cultural performer. In mass mediated cultures, editors, program directors, storywriters, and producers are also cultural specialists. Still other specialists assist the performers- production assistants, costumers, makeup artists, teachers, patrons, and organizers of performances. These cultural specialists often serve as arbitrators of cultural tastes, as well as make cultural policy.

Cultural media are the modes and forms of communication of the performance utilize singing, dancing, acting and recitation as well as graphic arts. Many cultural specialists are known for their mastery of one of these media. In shamanic performance, we find this quality of the cultural performance. While spoken language is often the premiere cultural, medium non-linguistic media are also utilizes in performances. With development in mass media analysis of cultural performance, require considering how cultural theme and value are communicated as well as on processes of social and cultural change. In this regards, Dwight Conquergood states, “Instated of static structure and stable systems with variables that can be measured, manipulated and managed, culture is transacted through performance. Cultural becomes an active verb not noun” (83).

Cultural performances spread the message of the community toward themselves and others. In this regard, Turner writes:

Cultural performances are capable of carrying many messages at once they are capable of subverting on one level what another level seems to be saying and the full reality of meaning and messages is only attained through the performance. (24)

The study of culture in and through its performances has come a long way from the goal of the British structural functionalist school of anthropology. Turner is one of them observes, “To exhibit the laws of structure and process which determine the specific configurations of relationships and institution detectable by trained observation” (139).

With the groundwork laid by theory of rites of passages, play ritual and cultural performance, Turner moves to the study of man theorized as a covering laws to an enlightenment theory of culture as a performed. The study of culture as performed has moved from theories of positivism to critical theories that explore voice and viewpoint as embodiments of power. Performances are constitutive of culture, not something added to culture. After the fact, performances are epistemic in that we learn and know our world through our performances are critical lenses for looking at and pushing back on culture. In this context, D. Soyini Madison’s definition about it is relevant to quote:

Performance is central to the meanings and effects of human behavior, consciousness, and culture. These days, it seems one can hardly address any subject in the arts, humanities and social sciences without encountering the concept of performance. Performance –as the central

to the study of humans across academic disciplines-did not take centre stage overnight. (117)

Cultural performances generated a new lens for studying culture as processes, play poetics, and power. It especially reflects, offering opportunities to confirm and transform values, structure, dramas and institutions. Whether performing, watching critiquing or studying performances of others the comment is always ethical and political. In this regards, Mary Frances Hopkins states, “Performative turn metaphor to argue for the performance turn and toss, to suggest that a certain amount for squirming of discomfort of ambiguity is both necessary and inevitable in any study of performances that constitute culture” (25).

Most of the cultural performances belong to culture’s subjunctive mood.

Subjunctive is defined by Webster as:

That mood of verb used to express supposition, desire, hypothesis, possibility etc. rather than to state an actual fact, as the mood of were, in if I were you. Ritual, carnival festival, festival theatre, films and similar performative genre clearly posses many of the attribute (31).

Shamanism is one of the cultural performance which performance in the particular stage to fulfill social or ritual performance.

### **Ritual and Performance**

Ritual is based on the communal activities, which help to acquire social solidarity among the people. In this regards, Catherine Bell writes, “First, ritual action is communal, involving groups of people who gain social solidarity through their participation” (94).



Ritual action is often divided into sacred and secular but these categories are usually not distinct from each other, especially when approached as genre of ritual location. In this context, Bell further states:

Rites of passage, calendarical rites, rules of exchange and communication, rites of affliction; feasting, and festivals; and political rites. All of these activities are strategic ways of acting that in turn produces and organizes our knowledge of the world. These ways of acting range from the religious to the secular, the public to the private, the routine to the improvised, the formal to the casual, and the periodic to the irregular. There are five characteristics of ritual like activities, demonstrating that reutilization is a process, flexible, and strategic. Formalization is the degree of formality in dress or speech that marks an activity as ritual-like. Ceremonial costumes, language, gestures, and movement occur on a continuum between informal and casual to highly restricted and formal. These restrictions say a great deal about hierarchy, authority, and symbolic message. (123)

Ritual and ritual like actions abound in our daily lives as a way to give meaning and significance to experience. In this context, it is relevant to quote Victor Turner:

I like to think of ritual essentially as performance, as enactment and not primarily as rules or rubrics. The rules frame the ritual process, and the ritual process transcends its frame. A river needs banks or it will be a dangerous flood, but banks without a river epitomize aridity. (129)

In shamanic performance also there uses ritual process which help to transform the state of danger.

Ritual has been so variously defined –as concept, praxis, process, ideology yearning, religious experience. Ritualistic performances have always been very definitely situated in this or that culture while efforts to transcend or to accumulate cultures, or even more powerful than the sources.

Ritual is multidimensional; any given performance is shaped by the experiences poured into it as much as by its conventional framing structures.

Experiences make the structures glow. In this regards, Turner further says:

Ritual in a tribal society, represent not an obsessional concern with repetitive act, but an immense orchestration of genre in all labile sensory codes; speech, music singing; the presentation of elaborated forms; complex, many tired shrines; costumes; dance forms with complex grammar and vocabularies of bodily movements gesture and facial expressions. Ritual also contains plastic and labile phases and episodes as well as fixed and formal ones. (106)

Ritual performances are efficacious meant to perform illusion, which helps to maintain the illusionary nature of the ritual. It is characteristic of many ritual and mythical sequence of primitive society that the actors claimed to be recapturing the creation of world and that this act of creation is mythologized as a list of names attach to person, places, animals and things. In shamanic performance shaman chanted the whole history of the tribe and request their god to help the performance. It is a kind of ritual that recapturing mythical sequence of primitive nature of human being.

Ritual celebrations knit us into history; and even into prehistory, connecting humans to each other over geography and time. Many still find connection in the rites and ceremonies passed down to them from the lives and faiths of their parents and

grandparents. For others, contemporary life has grown so secular, colored by irony, or just plain different that the old ways of marking major transitions no longer resonate.

Turner sought to integrate the notion of liminality the threshold. In this regard

Schechner writes:

Performance is central to Turner's thinking because the performativity genre is living examples of ritual in/ as action. And not only when performance is overtly ritualistic as in a mass, a healing ceremony, a shamanic journey, or a Grotoswskain poor theatre or parenthetical event all performance has at its core a ritual action, a restoration of behavior.(10)

Effective ritual performance has always been situated in this or that culture while efforts to transcend or to accumulate culture fail at precisely the point they want to make creating action as a powerful than the sources. Rituals are efficacious and we wonder how just as we know that a good stage magician is performing tricks that are, really not levitating that representing beauty of illusion and mastery in ritual. In this regards, Huxley states, "Reutilization are seasonal, agricultural fertility, funerary and healing ones because they make explicit the interdependence of people with their physical environments and bodies" (34). Performances of rituals are distinctive phase in the social process, where by groups and individuals adjust to internal changes and adapt to their external environment. In this context, Leach writes:

It is characteristic of many ritual and mythical sequences in primitive society that the actors claim to be recapitulating the creation of the world and that this act of creation is methodological as the list of names attached to persons, places and animals and things. The world is created by the process of classification and the repetition of the

classification of itself perpetuates the knowledge, which it incorporates. (405)

Overall performances are related with ritual, which had been started from the ancient past and going on now with the demand of time.

### **Shamanism as a Performance**

As we know the term 'shamanism' is held to mean a group of belief and ritual practices which are based on the possibility of there being a direct relationship between men and divinities or spirit. Shaman can be found in many parts of the world; from the Northern Eurasia to north South America. The origins of shamanism are probably to be found in Siberia and central Asia. In this regard, Ugo Marazzi, says:

Central Asia and south Siberia have, in the course of history, been open to influences from almost all the major religions (Christianity *Mozdosm* the Jewish faith, Buddhism, Islam, Manichaeism) and to the sedentary cultures of the southern people. Islam and Buddhism have had a deep and lasting influence on the culture of central Asia, mainly on the Turks and Mongols. The impacts of Islam and Buddhism on the original forms of the shamanist practiced by the Kazaks, King's Uzbeko-Tajiks and Uighurs, on the one hand and by the Mongolians, *Buriats*, yellow-*Uighurs* on the other hand has meant that there are two forms of syncretistic shamanism, one is Islamic Shamanism (predominately Sufi). The other one is Buddhist Shamanism (*Lamanistic*) characters by the priest and prevalence of shamanist ideology in the forms of the dominating religion. (22)

Russian ethnographer Mikhailavski defines the shamanism at the first time and writes, "The Shamanism as being an intermediary in the relationship of man as with the world of the spirit" (67). In the same line Dina Riboli States:

The shaman is the main actor and fronts of the culture of the people he lives amongst as well as being therapist not the limited western sense of word, but in much wider and complex sense the cures various types of crisis be the individual or the collective. (53)

The shaman owes his power and knowledge primarily to his o/her society. In the shamanic performance, he/she uses neither doctrine nor dogma. Shamanistic knowledge is mainly passed on orally with very few exceptions. Shaman has no need to worship sacred images like temple, church and other religious place. Shamanism has no priesthood and is not recognized by a solid hierarchical structural power amongst religious expert. The shamans use the drum, which is almost similar all over the world, which is originated from Siberia and spread all over the world. In this regard, Hultkrantz states:

Many specialized shamanic elements typical of Siberia may be found outside this area probably as archaic residues of diffusion. This is the case in the Americas, where we certainly come across not only ecstasy animal guardian spirit and tripartite world but also a notched tree with steps for the climbing Shaman, as in Siberia- The tree being ritual replica of the world pillar and a drum that sometimes has the drum skin painted with cosmic figures exactly like the Siberian drum. (60)

The term 'shaman' is taken from the 'Tungus' language (shaman) and may even, from the Sanskrit terms '*Sramana*' and '*Sramanera*' denoting ascetic. Buddhist monk respectively describes the person in generally small communities who is

responsible for communicating with the spirits, gods and forefathers. The shaman is usually taken as a diviner, therapist and psychopomp and it is he who accompanies the dead soul to the world of their forefathers. He is also the custodian of the local myths and therefore of the culture of the group to which he belongs. In Nepal shaman is known as 'Jhankri' who is known as ritual or religious expert. The shaman works in different cultural context; he/she has the ability to cure the illness. Through the special performance shaman moves quite freely between both of the world and crosses the borders between different cosmic worlds in very much the same way as a hero of the story.

In different cultural context, shamans work in different way although the basic functions are similar among each other's. The shaman moves quite freely between both human and spirit worlds and he can cross the border between the different cosmic worlds in the same way as a mythical hero does. In this regard, Russian ethnographer, Mikhailovskii further states:

Establishing relationship is very dangerous but it helps to maintain an equilibrium between what is known and what is unknown; health and illness; life and death; humankind and supernatural. There is the need for reassurances and certainties, which distinguish the thoughts, philosophy and actions of the human race and in the culture and society; he works as main actor among all as well as being therapist, not in the limited western sense of the world, but in much wider and complex sense; he cures various types of crises, be they individual or collective. (22)

The shaman owes his power and knowledge through performance primarily to the supernatural world. Shaman only uses his/ her techniques and experience when

they perform their role. He/ She uses neither doctrines nor dogmas. Except some exceptions, Shamanic, know ledges and techniques are orally passed on.

Schechner compares the Shamanic performance with theatre activities and writes:

So often, the jump from ritual to theater is assumed or attributed to ancient events. The evidence for which is suspect. Organist theory an evolutionary methodology have, however a built in criterion for their own evolution: their ability to identify the links transitional forms. In the case of Shamanism, this is apparently self-evident. Theatre occurs when the shaman “pretends” substituting possession by with impersonation of the spirit- and of ecstasy itself. (84)

Schechner further explains the shamanic performance and divides it into three different stages. According to him:

In the first step the shamans themselves, by increasing control over their ecstasy and through the intricate narrative complexity of their material, pretend ecstasy- in which however the audiences still believe. At these stases, what is being performed is “theatre” for the shamans but not for their audiences. The shamans have performed a cognitive leap but their audiences have not done so. (49)

The second stage would be when the audiences, in time, see through the pretense. The shamans are then relieved of any further need to supply magical result but the subsequent confrontation of pretence with skepticisms suggests two denouements. Either audience leaves these shamans for others, more ‘authentic’ séances or they take the third step: enjoy these performances now as theatre.

The third step is usually assumed, even though it means that the whole institution would have to pass first through an intervening stases of disbelief and even

contempt which would either case the whole institution of the self-destruct or at the very least, necessitate a radical redefinition of a new actor/audience relationship. It is certainly possible that the whole sequence occur, that laymen being to imitate the Shaman's performances, of which there is also some evidence (123).

The conclusion of this theory is, nevertheless, that shamanism becomes theatre when it ceases to be authentic, indeed ceases to be a religious phenomenon at all. Shamanic performance is related to mystic voyage. A system of transformation emerges in terms of communication such as mystics plunged into solitude, precision their ecstasy. After the facts, shamans surrounded by their assistants patients, and onlookers, relative during the trace itself, their masterful feats, as for the possessed, also surrounded not only uncommunicative but also undergo their transformation.

In 1980s witnessed resurgence; some call it a renaissance –in scholarship on shamanism. In this regards, Taussig ideas are reverent to quote:

A shamanism is [...] A man made, modern western category, an artful reification of disparate practices, snatches of folklore and overarching folklorization, residues of long established myths intermingled with the politics of Academic departments, curricula, conferences, journal juries and article and funding agencies. Despite such dismissal, the topic of shamanism has proved remarkably resilient. (102)

The study of shamanic performance has been revitalized by multidisciplinary interest in states of consciousness and mechanism of theory, and by popular interest in alternative forms of spirituality. This reawakening has not been a function of internal developments in anthropology but in 18th century European fascination with shamanic performance, which then, as new, influenced scholars across a range of disciplines.



The contemporary literature reflects the patterns of shamanic performance differently. It is used as a gloss for certain discourses and practices that operate in local, regional, national and transnational contexts. Extracting shamanic performance from such context to be studied as a detachable and self-contained problem is at odds with the goals of such research, which is aimed at understanding historically situated and culturally mediated social practice.

Perhaps the most important development in studies of shamanic ritual has been the increasing attention paid to the conditions and dynamics of shamanic performance. Important here has been the legacy of Victor Turner, whose influence both in and beyond the field of anthropology. Together with Turner, Richard Schechner finds in shamanic ritual what he takes to be a goal in postmodern theatre – namely an emphasis on performance not as a finished product but as a process of religious self-expression.

Chepang performance culture is based on nocturnal shamanic ritual. These ceremonies are most frequently held for therapeutic purpose though the séances, which are divinatory in nature. The séances can also be held within the community for the benefit of the whole village toward all off danger or epidemics even to control the rains, landslide and hailstone etc. Other séances are held during the time in important festivals in the course of the year, in particular for the *Chhonam* festival, which is linked to the ancestral cult, and the festival dedicated to the god *Bhume*. The Pande also holds private séances when he is completely alone. The trance is an essential part of these nocturnal séances, and it appears to be disordered and uncontrollable when the spirit is calling a novice, though the shamans tend to gain control of this gradually.

There have been many explanations of different natures of shamanic performance in psychiatric such altered states of consciousness and magic flight used by the shamans. In the past, there have been somewhat over supplied and aim to establish a link between shamanic performance and illnesses or mental disorder. In this regard, Tokarev stated, “Shaman is neurotic, figure, often subject to epileptic fits” (125). The main problem is that many scholars have wanted to apply the terminology, concepts and categories of psychiatry or psychoanalysis to a reality within which can be understood after making a serious and careful examination of the whole culture of the people.

Thus cultural performances especially shamanistic ones are very important for one to understand the cultural nuances that people do live in a particular ethnic or cultural community. To articulate similar assumptions, the next chapter concentrates on the role of Pande in the Chepang community.

### **Chapter III:**

#### **The Importance of Being of a Pande**

Pande is a hero, warrior, therapist and traveler to other worlds. He holds some secrets that common human cannot. He is the only person who is blessed with the responsibility of maintaining the equilibrium between all levels. Therefore, as he/she sits for séance appears much more than a simple therapist. On different puja occasions such as Chhonam, Namrung, Tonkolongs and Bhair, Pande appears as if someone sent by some divine forces to help people accomplish their wishes. Pande is at the centre of the rituals of the Chepangs. He or she reveals or contains some of the features of the ritual performances that Turner observes:

It is ability to “get into” and “get back from “that makes the shaman a continually useful person, not a person to be used once only. Thus, there are three categories of performance, 1) aesthetic where the audience change consciousnesses while the performer roll over, 2) ritual drama where subject of the ceremony is transformed while the officiating performer roll over) social drama, where all involved change. (194)

Basing in Turnerian categorization one can say that the performance of Pande falls into the second one, i.e. ritualistic performance that is based on the particular situations or ceremonies. More than that Pande plays the role of a therapist, fortuneteller, as well as spiritual leader of the Chepang communities. As part of fulfilling such roles, he/she performs various activities, which are similar to the dramatic performance. Most of the times, Pande appears like a hero amidst his audience as he prepares to “get into and back from” ‘other’ worlds. Audiences passively wait the journey of Pande.

Various performative roles enable Pande to carve out distinct identity and appearance which ordinary Chepangs regard very important. Pande is widely believed to possess supernatural powers to fight against demons. He is also believed to possess some divine power to talk to divinities and ancestors. On various puja, Pande is supposed to have mastered over all ritualistic texts or verses that are very sacred and important. Therefore, he is a priest among his fellow beings. Since Pande also holds skills and crafts of playing drum, singing slogans and dancing, he or she taken as a divine artist. Therefore, people regard him with a great wonder.

### **Encountering Pande in Performance**

Over two decades, I have come across shamanic performances in Chepang communities. As a non-Chepang living nearby Chepang communities I am always thrilled as well as afraid to encounter Pande in his performative roles. Most of the shamanic performances of Chepangs are related with their myth. According to their myths, Tuesday is the birthday of shaman therefore it is regarded as an auspicious day for shamanic performance.

Out of various purposes for conducting or organizing shamanistic performances the therapeutic one is the most important or common one among Chepangs. The performance for such purpose usually takes place at night. It happens near the side of the patient's house. Firewood and other necessary materials related to the therapeutic actions are prepared in advance. The stars are seen twinkling in the sky but atmosphere around the scene looks darker. Before arriving at the séance, Pande takes a ritual bath and holds drum and stick (Gato). He puts on special dress. His mood and gestures create an impression that he is about to conduct some important things. For half an hour, he remains in a silence. During the time, his helpers lit the fire in the altar. At once, Pande throws some rice and red Powder

around the altar and starts drumming and chanting. The atmosphere at once became overwhelmingly powerful. Outside the scene it looks as if the patient and few audiences gaze at Pande with some great wonder. The horizon looks covered in dark velvet. Monotonous sounds of owls, jackals and other animal's make one realise as if the world is going to end right at the same point. The shadow of mountain looks as if it is appearing nearer and nearer. It looks as if it is only Pande who is not afraid.

After half an hour of chanting and drumming, Pande starts to take some magical flights. Audiences find it very difficult to look at his face. His arts of playing drum and voice of chanting provide an enchanting dimension to the atmosphere beyond verbal description. It is believed that he can change the whole environment by his magical power. One gets an impression as if the air is moving in a high speed. Everything becomes stranger. Many times I was afraid of the situation. I felt as if the flames of the fire change its shape. A huge flame appears near the altar. The shaman jumps into the fire and disappears for some time. A big noise is heard outside the house. The environment looks as if it is a battlefield. One can listen to the sounds of various animals, birds and insects making a cacophony. More than that, it a cacophony of sound looks as if it is parading around the altar. Suddenly the sky gets darker and the environment becomes more exciting. At the same time two cocks are sacrificed. Out of two one cock is thrown into the altar and other is thrown near by the altar.

After some times, the shaman appears in his earlier position. This process takes five or ten minutes. Surprisingly, the environment comes in its previous stage. The big flame of fire changes into normal state. The deep darkness changes into a normal state and the wind starts blowing normally. Animals, birds and insects remain silent. The patient is seen in his or her normal state of being.

It is believed that the rice, red powder and water thrown by Pande around altar is a challenge to those creatures that have caused illness. Forces that cause illness are supposed to reside either in the Sky or in the Earth. By jumping into the blazing fire, Pande is supposed to find out or trace down the shadow of the witch that has caused the physical as well as mental illness. If the case is serious one, Pande starts to jump in the sky to chase malefic beings. One can hardly observe the shaman flying in the sky. But the sky looks as if it is getting nearer to the earth. Great many different images and signal seem hovering round the altar. Near the altar, it seems things are coming and going in various directions. But if this process takes a long time it is believed that they can harm both patient and Pande. In case, Pande cannot trace down the force, he goes through a trance, and requests his gods and gurus to help him to defeat the powerful demon. If he defeats the demon he takes a rest and alcohol. Otherwise he prepares for next battle without taking food. Next day he/she again uses his magical arrow and sets to defeat the demon who has challenged him.

*Chhonam* is a special day for shamanistic performance. The day falls in the second/ third Tuesday of Bhadara month (September and October). It starts in the late evening or in the early morning. The usual healing ceremony and the *Chhonam* ceremony are almost the same. But on the occasion of *Chonamm*, various festive activities take place around village. Gods and demons appear in various forms of birds, animals, insects and fish among others. It is believed that such unique and strange animals are different symbol of the god, ancestors, and demons. Since Chepang villages are surrounded by forest it is believed that jungle is the dwelling place for the malefic beings. Some time a plate like object with big flame appear in the sky on the occasion of *Chhonam* night.

## **Pande as a Persona**

Before taking a ritual bath, Pande looks like similar to any ordinary Chepang. But as he emerges out of ritual bath, his face looks brighter than before. Various ritual paraphernalia such as garland, turban and bird feathers that he puts on make one regard him as an especial persona. As he sits contemplating the cosmos and meditating for a time being, it looks as if he is in a state that is much more than a silence. Pande in an interview revealed to me that during this state of serene silence he communicates with his god, ancestors, and guru about the problems of the people that he is supposed to address. Pande chooses early evening as a right time to contemplate or meditate. Sometime he/she embodies persona of different animal, bird and insect such as tiger, eagle, parrot, snake etc. On such moment one finds very difficult to keep on concentrating on his face. It is believed that even camera cannot arrest the facial expression of Pande. Moreover, the drama of light and shadow at night around the alter makes Pande look more mysterious and extraordinarily powerful human being.

Moreover, it is believed that it is the very contour of the face of Pande, the shaman that reflects or indicates the nature and degree of sickness of the patient. If the condition of the patient is worse, Pande's face looks serious. Sometime shaman puts on magical mask to trace down the kind of disease that his patient is suffering from. People believe that sometime the shaman can see in the face of patient the image of the devil that has caused sickness. Shaman's eyes in that sense are scanners which read out the invisible force that has caused the sickness. After decoding the devil, shaman starts chasing it during the performance. To encounter him in this chasing flight is to experience a luminal world that is both visible as well as invisible.

In his or her day to day life a Pande holds different identities among his people as he or she is supposed to have possessed great worldly and non-worldly knowledge. He can dance like a great dancer. His body performance is combination of myth, psyche and physical body. Except few cases, he learns shamanic dance through self-practice or the guidance of gods. Since body performance is the main weapon of shaman to fight with the devil, one can argue that Pande is expert in intra-body communication as well. Moreover, he also holds knowledge of inter-species body as he lives through physico-state of different animals or birds.

### **Accoutrements that Pande Perform By**

Shamanistic performances are impossible with drum and other accoutrements. It is said that with the absence of drum shamanic performance cannot take place. Pande uses drums which are similar to the ones that the Siberian Shamans use. S. V. Ivanov describes the Siberian drum and writes:

Siberian drums are single skin drums which have chained and iron hangings with various symbols resting on the back and a cross group which varies from the drum to drum depending on the materials. The skin on the drums is sometime painted usually with illustration in the form drawings which generally indicate the different interpretations of the divisions between the cosmic worlds and regions. (40)

Similarly, Michael Oppitz classified the drums, which have been generally used in the Himalayas and writes.

One type resembled Siberian drums in that it comprises a wooden frame that is covered by a membrane on only one of its two sides; the other side begins left open. This type, which may be called the Dhaulagiri Massif, has its handle inside the frame. The other type



designed as the eastern Nepalese Shamanic drum because it is found in Nepalese hillside. (54)

The Chepang drum belongs to the first group described by Oppitz. It generally varies in diameters that can be anything from forty, fifty centimeters and the frame, which is about twenty centimeters wide, is made of wood from a tree called *sandan* in Nepali and Bansi in Chepang language. The *sandan* is the only tree considered sacred by the Chepang who also use this wood to make hoes. The membrane of it is made of goat's leather. The 'S' shape drum's stick is called the *Gajo*. These instruments are the medium through which Pande makes communication with the supernatural forces, therefore they are considered as highly sacred. Francesco writes:

The subject used to produce sound in Shamanic rituals is according to the protagonists instruments used to mediate between the world human and supernatural intermediates between the heavens and the underworld apostrophic agents, which can hunt and keep away the spirits generators of signals. (54)

Drums are not made as commodities to be sold and used for every body's purpose. Great many processes are followed to make a drum. Chepangs do have their myth about it. Therefore, they perform rituals during the process. Before cutting down the tree for the sake of making a drum out of it, for several days the shaman worships the forest-god for granting a permission to do the thing that he is going to do. It is also believed that god appears in his dream to give permission to cut down the tree. According to the dream, Pande enters the jungle, takes the help of a bird named *Singura*. There is a myth about *Singura* which is believed to have rescued human beings from various problems in the earth. As human beings were miserably suffering, *Singura* appeared from Patal advised and took Pande to the forest and asked him to cut down a particular tree to

make a drum out of it Pande with the help of the drum chased away the demons. Thus Pande as part of that myth looks for the bird to take him to the area where such trees are available. As he reaches there he throws some rice and ashes near the area. It is believed that the chosen tree starts to shake as soon as Pande throws the rice and ashes in a certain area of the forest. As Pande notices a particular tree trembling he takes it as the command of god. As he sets to cut it down, it is believed that tree oozes certain red liquid.

Thus the drum that the Pande works with has a got a circle of myth moving around it. From time immemorial, Chepangs have respected the bird, the dream of the Pande, the red powder and the ashes, the tree and the drum. Therefore the drum is not a piece of wood but a process of myths, mingling of divine powers with the duty of Pande. It is believed that Pande must not take more than five days to make new drum otherwise he will meet danger. It can also be extremely dangerous for Pande and the people. If Pande makes any mistake, he will either die or become mad. Therefore, drum that Pande performs the shamanistic performance with is linked with the health of the community that he belongs to.

Various iron hangings around the drum hold great power as they are supposed to protect from some possible attacks from spirits and malefic beings. Drum alone cannot fight the battle. The drum is often taken as incarnation of a fighting figure, a hunter whose ethos and arms are represented by the membrane made of goat leather and the iron chains. The music produced with the ring is believed to help the Pande to investigate malefic spirits. In this regard, Meik states, “All the main functions of the ring that reflects the realities and cosmic worlds. The Shaman, is a hunter of malefic beings and gathers the information necessary to solve any case at hand” (65).

The other paraphernalia that the Chepang Pande uses are bell, *trisol* (trident) and Rudraksha (Eleocalpus Ganitus ) which are also used by priests belonging to other castes and communities. All these instruments are directly linked to the Rudra, who is also known as the Great god (Mahadeva) of Hindu myth. Like Chepang's Sadans, Rudraksha is recognized both in India and Nepal as having extraordinary magical power. They are believed that to be the best instruments of defense against attacks by evil, malefic spirit and witches and not even by the messenger sent by *Yama*. Researchers also compare the drum that Pande uses with the *shankha* that of the Brahmin priests. Brahmin priest believe that the sound produced with the *shankha* holds power to protect human beings from evil spirit.

### **Dreams that Pandes Live By**

Pande through trances of great many statures, talk to gods and divinities, fight with demonic forces. Therefore, this very quality of getting into the trance determines strength and power of the Pande. A trance involves movement which allows the soul of a shaman to take a magical flight to the underworld and heaven or anywhere of the world of humans. Trance plays vital role in the shamanic performance. There are basically two stages of trance. In the first stage, Pande crosses various cosmic lands such as heaven and underworld. This is a liminal state of experience as he/she is connected to the divinities as well as human world. Next phase is that of silence when Pande closes his eyelids and isolates himself from the human world. Similarly, dream plays an important role in the shamanic performance. Some dreams last for few minutes. They provide Pande some hints from the problems. The longer one provides him a knowledge and skill of shamanic performance in detail. Such long dreams last for whole night.

There are two kinds of shamanic performances in practice. One is known as white and the other is known as black. Shaman who plays with black magic practices various kinds of power. Chepang shamanic dance is near to the black shamanism. In this regard, Lot Falck writes:

The earth has taken by the Yakut Shamans who had to consecrate their presence in the cult to the dark face, so as to neutralize them in order to offer more protection to men and in order to prevent and abuse of power. Obviously the Shamans with these characteristics are often accused of witchcraft. (63)

However, there are not clear distinctions between white and black shamanism as all shamans claim to be practicing the white one. Since Pande is believed to work for the welfare of the community, people consider him/her as a white shaman. But often times, shamans narrate the fights that they have had with the black ones. In this regard one of the shamans called Sanjethi's narrative is relevant to quote here:

Once I was called to cure a sick child. As I arrived there I met another Jhankri or shaman. I checked the child's pulse and knew that the child could not possibly live. I wanted to know what the shaman thought of it. He replied, "How can you be so sure that this child will die?" I took a challenge. He left the place by threatening him that I would probably be not able to return home. I knew that he was one of these shamans who use knowledge for his personal benefit. These kinds of shamans usually cheat people. They pronounce magic formulas and make offering of rice to make situations worse. That was the reason why the parents of that sick child had called me. Before I arrived, the man had already asked the parents of the child to sacrifice a goat and chicken.

But I told them it would be pointless because there is no life left in the child. After having food I too left the place and went to another house to sleep. My grandson Kale was with me. As I slept I began to dream. In my dream I saw the same shaman was ordering his power to bring down all sorts of ills upon me. In the dream I was followed by many things. I ran to the temple, and prayed to local deity. I put my soul in the hand of this ditty. After that I saw a stone following me. The stone did not hit me but he started throwing branches of Saal tree (Sharea sobusta) at me. But I was able to break both stone and branches into little pieces. He had nothing else to throw at me. I knew that he did not have sufficient power to throw anything else. Then I threw these things black at him and they struck him in the chest. Next morning I woke up and returned to my home. A week later I heard that the fellow Jhankri was dead. (Personal Interview)

Such battles between shamans keep on happening. Such account makes it clear that the Pandes have are potential to harm to others. Thus the power that the shaman holds determines both productive and destructive forces. A shaman who can harm their counterparts is also sometimes known as powerful.

Chepangs see heaven as being the source of many problems. Heaven for them is the cosmic place in which the lord of death, *Yama Raja*, resides with dangerous planets at his service. It is believed that he sends such planets to induce illness and death in the earth. The Patal or underworld is described as a place where the most important divinities which belong to the Chepang people live and it is often referred as the land where the most worthy ancestors reside. This relationship with the underworld is one of the distinguish features of Chepang shamanism. There is another point, which

makes Chepang shamanism different from others. They give importance to dream and believe that the whole learning process of the shamanic profession takes place during dream in which the guiding spirits explain to novice things that he/she has to do in order to become as an expert Pande. There are various process of calling gods and spirit.

In several parts of the world, the candidate usually begins to receive message from the spirits and divinities. Receiving such messages may take in several forms of uncontrollable trembling, agitation and excitement which are often described as madness, various forms of illness and so on. The novice needs to seek isolation. He/she becomes aggressive towards other men, speaks uncontrollably and has frequent dreams when the assistant spirits and divinities appear to him during these phases which could last for few days or even years.

Sometimes future shamans are kidnapped by supernatural being and are instructed. In this regard, Robert Paul says:

Shamans have their calling announced to them, usually in their early or middle teens, about of craziness which may last anywhere from few weeks to two years. In this craziness, the divine manifests itself to them but in so chaotic and over powering a way that they are overcome and go mad. (4)

The calling procession of supernatural spirit within Chepang does not usually take place during a series of dreams. In this regard, Shanjethi Chepang describes, “We Pande possesses an ancient power. We do not have any Guru. The dreams teach us who to cure illness” (Personal Interview).

Similarly, another Pande, Kalu Chepange mentions similar thing:

Everything is created by the Palal. Brahmin reads scriptures, we do not. There are one thousand six hundred spirits those, which live in the

water, can appear in dreams. Only Pande can have seen this sort of dream because only he has known how to play with these spirits. I am a simple person, I lead simple life but I can call on the divinities and put them in the right place and this is why I am called Pande. (Personal Interview)

It is believed that god is responsible to give shamanic knowledge. So Chepang shamans claim themselves as someone chosen by god.

Pande can venture into the kingdom of underworld as being one of the principle characteristics, which makes him the most important shaman in Nepal. The dream itself is a door, which is used by the Pande to communicate with other supernatural beings. I would like to note some interesting descriptions of the types of dreams and vision experienced by a Chepang Pande called Kamane:

I became a Pande through dreams. At that time, I heard a sound in the dream like a voice saying 'I am the goddess of underworld. I asked it, where can you go? How far? But she replied, 'I am also the goddess of heavens, if anyone has problem, if you should need me call and I will run to your aid, just call me goddess.' In dream, I also saw Ban Jhakari with his long hair who said to me if you would need me just call; I'm here to help you. In the same dream, I have also seen a woman as a form in goddess and ordered me to take help. Then I asked the goddess," Who are you?" And she replied "When I am on the earth my name is Nari Devi, I shall be on hand whenever you call, to cure people's illness". During the dream, I couldn't see anyone; only hear his or her voices. I follow the voice and become Pande. (Personal Interview)

Similar kinds of experiences are narrated by other shamans. A young shaman, Bir Bahadur states:

Everyone becomes a Pande through dream. I myself become Pande through dreams. There is not human guru of mine. My guru helps me during the important Pooja. The figure I see in the dream appears in the form of gods and goddesses. I have to obey the order they give me in the dream. (Personal Interview)

Likewise another senior shaman Tobangi says:

During the dream, a man appeared before me but I did not know his face. He ordered me to show him respect. I did not believe him at the first. But the man continued to come one after another dreams and asked me later I understood that he was my guru. He has given all skills and knowledge. Even today, the dream sometimes comes to me, when I have to celebrate important Puja. (Personal Interview)

Chepang shamans also believe in Kali Aama, the mother goddess. Myth states that some days after a child is born, the Aama or black mother or visits the new born child in its cradle and writes its destiny on the inside of its' forehead. The child destiny will remain accordingly throughout his/her life. It's believed that any events which take place in his or her life are determined by the will of the divine being.

Chepangs believe in *Banjhakari* and *Banbokshi*. The *Banjhakari*'s wife is known as *Ban Bokshi*, the most dangerous supernatural creature. Sometimes *Banjhankari* also captures the human beings and teaches him or her some shamanic knowledge. *Banjhankri* and *Ban bokshi* teach some therapeutic knowledge to the kidnapped child. I asked to a shaman who is known as the descended of *Banjhankri*. In this regard, he says:



I was made Pande by the inhabitant of jungle the *Banjhankri*. My Guru is *Banjhankri*. He kidnapped me when I was child, only three months old and kept me with him for three days and night. Before becoming a Pande I had a dream. In the dream I was walking along the riverside in the jungle my guru was teaching me everything. I was made to remember everything and I remember all the events of my childhood. My parents told me that the age of three months I had disappeared for three days. Three days later I was brought back to the place where I had been taken from *Banjhankari*. At that time *Banjhankri* taught me to play the drum and cure the illness. (Personal Interview)

Some Pandes remember the clean operation carried out by *Banjhankri*. In this regard, a young Chepang who was a confirmed as a Pande this year says:

When I was six years old I was kidnapped by *Banjhankri* after that I lost my sense. There is something dark in front of my eye, when I reached in the palace of *Banjhankri*. I saw faces of my parents in the face of the *Banjhankri*. The *Banjhankri* cut and opens my stomach and makes it clean. During the year, he taught me different shamanic knowledge and skills including various treatments. (Personal Interview)

### **Identity that Pande Lives By**

Identity is a collective form of a community. It is given and acquired through various activities. Myth and other cultural events are such occasions when a person is given certain kind of identity in a form of belief, tradition and religion. Therefore, an individual marches through the corridors of myths and other collective experience. In this regard Linda Martin Alcoff observes, "Identity need to be analyzed not only in their

cultural location but also relation to belief and cultural practices” (2). Shamanic performances are such process of acquiring identity not only for the shamans but also for the people who watch and become part of it. In other words, shamanic performance is related with the identity of the ethnic people as shaman and his performance of indigenous knowledge and skills reflect or evoke some deep structures of the community. Shaman is not only a mythical figure but also a spiritual leader whose performances are guided toward the welfare of his people. He holds huge knowledge about his tribe and his territory which helps him to control over both natural and supernatural beings. Thus, the identity of a certain community is linked with shamanic performance. In this regard, Riboli states:

In the Chepang community, shamanism has been the important means to preserve their identity, which is different from other ethnic communities. Since long ago, the special knowledge and skills and myth have been practiced into their community through the medium of shamanism. The dresses of shaman and the instruments of that which are used in shamanic activities help the Chepang to make their own identity. (90)

### **Flight that Pande Travels By**

Shamanic performances are often known or taken as magical flight as such performances are journey to heaven and underworld. Shamans are taken with awe and wonder for having such abilities to travel. In this regard, S.M. Shirokgoroff says:

Bird like costumes present in the Yakut where the Shaman’s clothing consist of the skeleton of a bird. The Tungus in Transbaikalia use two types of clothing depending on whether the Shaman is traveling to the heavens in which case the costume is very light so as to facilitate flight

for which the more traditional costume made from reindeer skin is used. (85)

The magic flight of Chepang shamans is not independence in itself. It is similar to the one that the shamans belonging to other Himalayan tribes accomplish. A shamanic flight in Nepal is earth-bounded. In this regard Allen observes:

The shaman closest approach to the classic other worldly journey is a real terrestrial journey to the burial ground, where he lies on the stones of the grave and calls the soul if it were a child, luring it from the clutches of its capture or entire. Even the helper spirits of the Nepalese shaman are somewhat earth bound. They are conceived as grazing in various localities. They travel across the countryside. Throughout the ethnography literature on Nepali shamanism, we find such journey. (1)

In Newari shamanism we find the tantric ways of flight to different parts of the earth, Heaven and the underworld. There is a myth about Machhendranath and Gorakhnath, which is an important example of earthly bounded magical flight. According to the myth, Gorakhnath and Machhedranath both meet each other by using the magical flight where as one is supposed to live in mountain (Nepal) and the other is believed to live in the bank of Indian Ocean (India). The frequent meeting would change the relationship between two, and Gorkh Nath becomes a Guru of Machhendranath, which is still known as the pioneer of magical flight.

Some Pandes narrate that the spirit of the drum guides them to the cosmic world though they never ride the drum. Other associates the state of being into trance with that of dreaming. The soul freely wanders during the dream, goes into the underworld, up into the sky, and flies to any place on earth. During this mission, Pande loses the state of conscious and separates him from his physical body. As he loses

conscious, he starts taking the magical flight with which he communicates with spirit. This kind of activities is only possible at night time. Therefore night is believed to be a dangerous time as witches and malefic spirit wander in the jungle to drink human blood. Night is also the time for the shamans to come into direct contact with divinities. Thus the most important shamanic puja can be held at night. When I asked a Pande about his magical flight, he narrates his experience in the following manner:

When I shake during a Puja, I feel light and even if I am sitting in front of a big fire, I feel cool inside. At the beginning of a Puja I am like a normal person but when I get the point, everything changes and I feel as light as a leaf, my body is like a dry leaf and it's very cool. I tell my soul to go in different direction, into the *patal* or *akash*. I send my soul with the help of a wind, at that time I send with the sun's Chariot or Indra's Chariot of the moon. In dream I often find myself in heaven where god's armies serve me. Then I wake up at my house. (Personal Interview)

All these accounts and sayings help us to prove that magic flight is an important characteristic of Chepang shamans which is more powerful than the both Lamanic and Hindu shamanic practices.

### **Power that Pande Lives By**

Shaman is an active agency of social power. This power appears during the time of his/ her performances, Pande scatters rice grain on his drum, pour some on his head and ingests some of this rice and scatters the remaining rice into the altar, especially into the vessel of water representing high mountains and the underworld. In shamanic ritual, Pande uses various symbol representing earth, heaven and underworld. The inner strength of Pande is produced in the act of the ingestion of power. In other

worlds, power is an essence that exists in imagination outside human productive capacity. This power is very transcendental in its nature. Pande goes to divinities and travels to mythic underworld where divinities live. All these include with raising of the life force and conveyance of blessing of long life. The Pande conveys a blessing of power, long life and spirit essence of harvests things and wealth. The external power of divinities works along with internal power to produce agency from abjection. Shamanic performance is only the means that use to the supernatural being.

### **Ecology that Pande Maintains**

The Chepang Shaman has to negotiate with mythological being. Not only the Chepang but also some other rainforest Indians have such ecological concerns related to their shamanic performance. Indian has developed a sophisticated symbolism and concept of “energy” flowing between people and animals in cyclic paths. In the same way, the shamanic performance of the Chepang community has been deeply rooted with ecology and environment of the place where they have been lived. It is believed that shaman has power to control over flood and landslide etc. He/she is known as the safe guard of ecosystem. Shaman has great much knowledge about flora and foams of the area where he/she lives. In Chepang community there, is culture to ask shaman before starting new work even hunting and fishing. In this regard, one of the senior shamans Jayankagi states:

Forest is our home where our forefather lived. If somebody cut the tree without any purpose, he/she may have become ill. Like that, there is a certain rule of hunting and fishing if somebody disobeys the rule he/she was either returned without getting anything or attacked by the tiger or other wild animals. (Personal Interview)

These kinds of myths are interrelated with Shaman that helps to establish relationship between human being and other natural beings. In short, the Chepang Shamanic performance is interrelated with ecology and nature that makes balance in environment.

### **Orality that Makes One a Pande**

Shamanic performance is interrelated with oral tradition such as sayings, myth and folk songs as means of performance. These kind of traditional songs and stories are in practice in both Hindu and Buddhist culture. Some stories and songs are related with the life and activities of god and goddess as well human being. There is no written scripture in Chepang. All the religious and cultural activities are orally transmitted from generation to generation. In this regard Roboli observes:

The Chepang culture, which is passed on orally from generation to generation and constantly repeated by the previous generation in Shamanic, chants. The Chepang and Nepali chants, which are used in the frequent ceremonies. Most of the Shamanic chanting has been practiced as a form of narrative poem. (16)

Shaman's chanting follows certain rhythmic pattern that is dedicated to Guru, god, and myth, etc. The chanting is called mantras which are used on various circumstances according to the needs. Most of the mantras are handed down across generation or persons in oral forms. Chepang shamans chant the mantra in a rhythmic way that sound is similar with the music. Following is an example of Shaman's song:

There is a forest above the forest flies the bird  
And we sound the single surface drum  
The soul of a human may be taken y witches.  
You are a bird  
You recognized the upper and inner part of the tree.

Shaman's song provokes the myth of the tribe. In above song there is a reflection of important myth, which is related with narrative of drum making process and procedure. These kinds of narratives are related with a performance which is loaded by oral context which according to Victor Turner:

... remains sketchy simulative, for example although a key premise in a performance perspective the oral literature context affects narrative content, few studies have identified any clear patterning in this interaction. One obvious problem is the vary nature of oral context: multilevel flood, and fleeting and this problem is compounded for the longer in which oral context is obscured by heavy narrative load stretched thin over time. (2)

During Puja or ceremony, the place becomes like a theater where shaman and his supporters perform certain rituals conveying message loaded inside the mantras to audience. The function is very similar to Hitchcock field observation, "The interaction between audience and shaman is so important to the shamanism that they believe ecstasy will end if the audience ceases their singing and acting" (5). He further describes this relationship as one of the mutual excitement, "There is no formal guideline although some trick and audience assumption play important role in shamanic performance" (5).

Most of the mythical stories and songs are in oral form. At the first time, Greek myths and Hindu myths were written in a form of scripture. In the case of ethnic community, there are not any written traditions as all myths legends are handed down in oral form. Shaman's invocation is still carried on oral form. It is believed that the invocation of a shaman is similar with the first song of Bible. Both of them are poetics of dedication. These kinds of dedications or songs or hymn are found in many cultures

that are related with their emotion, idea, imagination and day-to-day problems. In such dedications, gods or gurus are evoked to use their capacity to solve the problems.

### **Pande as a Therapist**

Among other roles, Pande as a therapist is often taken as an important one. People believe that Pande possesses magical power to solve the physical as well as mental problems or illness of the people. In this regards R. Greve writes,

The symptom and illness be divided into two large groups one is physical illness and other is psychological problem. Psychological problems are not believed to have been cause by malefic beings and believed to have been caused by black magic or magic act of witchery.

(3)

In the Chepang community, physical illness is taken as a simple life phenomenon. But mental illness is taken seriously because people believe that mental illness is related with witchery. Many ethnic groups in Nepal distinguish between madness from other sickness that is caused by spirit. Pande can treat both types of diseases. The treatment of mental illness is more performative in nature than the physical illness. In this regard, I asked a question to one female shaman Sanjethi Chepang about the experience of the treatment of mental illness. She narrates her experience in the following manner:

Five years ago one of my relative's daughters became mad and I was called for treatment. At first, I observed her condition and found that the black shaman that made worse her mental condition as well physical condition seriously hunted her. She was only sixteen years old. She was chained by a rope. Her condition was pitiful. At first, I suggested her family members to prepare the Puja materials. I chose



Tuesday to cure her because the day was her birthday. Before beginning to the Puja, I requested the witch to return his arrow but he threw another arrow toward me. I had no time to wait because that had created a problem upon her. After the sunset, I was concentrated for Puja. As the puja began with chanting, invocations, I requested my guru and the divinities to help for the innocent girl is treatment. At that time, I was in trance. Different powerful gods helped me and I returned the same arrow toward the Pande who made the innocent girl senseless. After few minutes, the girl asked to drink water and started to speak like an ordinary girl. After that, I suggested the girl family not to give torture and keep her in calm. (Personal Interview)

It is widely believed that physical illness is also the cause of some malefic being. For the treatment of this kind of illness Pande uses both shamanic and worldly knowledge once at a time. In my survey area, I have seen the different therapeutic practice. People usually meet Pande before they go to hospital. Pande uses different herbal found around the area. Pande holds knowledge about local geography as well as its flora and faunas, plants etc. He collects local herbal and makes medicine and uses to cure physical illness.

Shamanic treatment is just like theatrical performance, which is divided in three phases and uses four techniques to treat the patient. In this regards S. M Shirogoroff notes, "There are four types of divination are used by the shamans to determine the cause of illness and disaster. Those takes place in the trance and dreams that using various techniques and instruments" (10). During the time of treatment, the Pande holds the drum in a horizontal position and throws some rice in to the membrane and observes the two things, the shadows cast by fire and the movement of

rice. At first Pande distinguishes different types of shadows and determine which spirit or spirits are causing the problems. The movements of rice suggested good or bad sign. If the grains of rice do not move the patient may die.

Sometimes diagnosis can be made by taking the patient's pluses. This kind of pulse checking techniques is also found in other ethnic groups such as Lama, Bijuwa and Gubhaju etc. Chepang Pande usually presses the middle finger onto the vein of the patient's pulses. By checking the pulse beat he/ she finds the overall condition of the patient. The Pande receives a sort of shock inside the patient body. Sometime he finds the name of the malefic beings that could have caused the illness. The pulse movement on the body helps to find out the mental condition of the patient and shock of the body. If he finds the name of a being who is responsible for being illness the patient's pulse may miss the beat. This is the only technique to be performed by shaman.

Divination through dream is also used as a method to cure the illness. Divination requests that there is some sort of social and collative consensus, which is in turn, adds to the Pande's prestige. Such kind of performance is called *Chinta*. By using *Chinta*, Pande can identify epidemic or death and future problems, which people are going to face. These kind diagnostic séances takes place without using drum. The second phase is Puja performance. It starts after the sun set. At first, Pande checks up the patient's pulse and identifies the degree of sickness. It is at this moment he finds out whether he should go for nocturnal séance or not. During the trance, Pande can visit cosmic world to determine the cause of suffering. He may ask the divinity and assistant spirit to shows him the image of the malefic spirit. It is believed that patient is impure because there is evil thing into the body of the patient. In some cases illness is taken as the cause of sin. At that phase, Pande uses his skills and

knowledge of performance and requests demon not to create problems further. At the end of the therapeutic action, Pande sacrifices a cock or a goat which symbolizes the extraction of illness from the body of the patient. Most of the time, Pande performs therapeutic action at night time because all the malefic being are activated in the night time and it is easy to fight with the demons. It is believed that night is for demon, divinities and day is for human beings. In the nighttime all the supernatural creatures appear in the earth if they see the human being he/she will become sick. Pande cures the patient at night time by taking the help of divinities. On Puja he takes the help of instrument and request to guru and divinities by chanting the long invocation. The stage looks like a theatre as the patient is lying near the Pande. Pande sits in front of the altar and chants the mantra and request for help. The process continues for half an hour.

Mostly, therapeutic Pujas are completed within three days. Puja starts with usual chanting and invocations which a kind of request for help to cure the sickness. Puja is held in the house of the patient usually outside of the Varanda, or the confined space. Pande calls the different divinities by using the sound of the drum. On therapeutic Puja, Pande uses color powder to make the design of cosmos on the ground. It is usually divided into squares or rectangular in shapes, which presents various level and different rooms of in the heaven and under world. The design is like a chessboard where the public can follow the movement of Pande who tells them where he is in the trance, even that room helps him identify the heaven and underworld. Map as the symbol of universe, which helps him to find out the god and their special location. It is also the illustration of the other world. Pande makes the altar very consciously. Three eggs are placed in a line. The first of these is located in few centimeters away from the second that is opposite to the seat that Pande occupies.

The second egg is bigger in size as it is duck's egg and is placed in the centre, and the third one is put opposite of the first where Pande sits in. Then Pande starts his journey to the cosmos. This journey is often taken as very dangerous one because he often meets angry divinities or malefic spirits than might attack him. There is no spatial or temporal boundary of the Puja. The whole universe is confined into a few square centimeters while an egg can function as proctors of the Pande.

The second type of design is called cosmic design. In this design, three pieces of metals in white, red, and black in color are placed in the ground. Lines are traced on the black one with the same colored powder. These illustrate a vaguely anthropomorphic figure. This type of design has two functions, the first is to call up supernatural being and the second is to show the way for divinities. Then the trances end with greeting and thanking or offering to those divinities that have intervened at some point. At the end of the Puja, the Pande usually explains what has happened to the patient and offers advice for the welfare for the patient.

Various kind of magic weapons have been used by the Pande to fight the demon and create a kind of belief to the patient: Frank, J. focuses the main two ways of the healing process:

A great number of observations made by the Manchus and Tungus are quite convincing: the interference of the shaman is effectiveness, both in cases of individual troubles and in these mass troubles. There are two main functions of shamanic cure. one of these , the intellectual one , held by the British school of anthropology, according to which the shaman acts in such a way as to generate the belief in the patient that he will recover. (7)

Similarly, Dow J. focuses on the role of symbol in cure of patient. He says, the shaman can think the use of different symbols and metaphors provide a form of language, which the patient can express himself in, change his vision of the world and illness” (56).

The efficiency of Pande depends on the public relationship of Pande. Mainly there are two significance functions of Pande. One is symbolic which helps him to maintain power balance in nature and is therapeutic functions. To fulfill these functions, Pande performs various roles.

These days one comes across people who doubt the therapeutic role of Pande and give priority to hospital’s treatment. In my survey area, there are many churches, which are responsible for creating such awareness as a result Pande’s roles are in crisis. There are mainly two kinds of interventions into the professional world of Pande. One comes from the western culture and medicine, and another from the church which is going to eliminate the existence and position of the Pande. Only few powerful Pandes remain in my survey area because most of the Chepang has changed their religion. The therapeutic performance of Pande is going through some real and powerful challenges as hospitals offer free treatment for the Chepangs.

### **Other Functions of Pande**

Except therapeutic function, Pande has other roles to perform. He has capacity to know the past and future of the people belonging to his community. His function is different from the function of Hindu or Lamas’ prediction. There is no doctrine and mathematical calculation as needed to predict the future of the person. Pande directly asks the mother kali (*kali Aama*) who writes the note of whole life of a person. It is believed that the fates of a person has already determined at his birth. Pande has capacity to talk to Kali Ama so that he can ask about the future of a person and tell

her/ him about it. The function is very difficult. Only a few powerful Pande are supposed to have such power of predicting the destiny of the person. Pande can also control the wild animals and natural disaster. For that he/she takes help of wild hunter. Similarly he/ she can control natural disasters such as landslide, draught and flood etc.

In the Himalaya area, some Lamas are supposed to have power to carry heavy load from one place to another place. In Chepang community, only few Pandes practice such power. In this regard one of the Pande Jankaji states, “Long ago there was the Pande who could capture the tiger and travel hundred miles in five minute” (Personal Interview). These saying also prove that some powerful Pande could do that work. More than that Pande can change their body into different animals form e.g. form of eagle, parrot, tiger etc. and act like that animals.

The function of Pande is also interrelated with the psycho pomp. It is believed that human soul or spirit never dies. It can be transmitted only according to his/ her destiny. Pande can identify the destiny of the dead spirit. According to the Chepang myth underworld is the ultimate place for the spirit where their ancestors and divinities live in. There are nine parts of the underworld. The centre is for the divinities and other parts are for the spirits and ancestors. Pyura, Maina and parrot birds guide and show Pande the way to the underworld. The ritual performance of Pande makes easy to enter the underworld. Shaman has great knowledge about local geography. If somebody is lost in the jungle, he can succeed to find him or her out. For the welfare of human beings, he can do everything. Sometimes Pande gives various suggestions to the people about morality such as not to sleep long time, not to eat much and respect the divinities etc. He is not only the practitioner of magic power but also the knower of geography, nature culture and ecology. His/ her suggestions could help to establish the relation between nature, culture and human beings.

## **Puja and Pande**

*Chhonam* and *Namrung* are two main 'Puja' performance of the Chepang. They are related with two modes of their cultures. One is related with the pastoral life and another is related with the hunting or nomadic mode of life. Both festivals play the important roles in the life and ancient civilization of the Chepang. These festivals help to establish the relationship between god, divinities, ancestors and human beings of shows the relationship of the ancient life of the Chepang with hunting and pastoral living.

The *Chhonam* is an especial Puja which carries the long heritage of civilization and establishes the lineage of god ancestors and human being. It has the significant meaning of the pastoral life of the Chepang. The Chhonam festival, as it is called in Chepang, is also known by the name of *Nnwagi*, the Nepali terms used to describe the festivals during which offering from the first harvest are made. It is performed as a festival or the annual Puja where all the villagers gather in one place and worship their ancestors by offering the fruits and grains. It is not only the time of offering of grains and fruits to the ancestor but also the time to worship all the malefic beings. Most of the sick people gather to get treatment of their illness. During the time, Pande shows his/her shamanic skills and magical power.

On Chhonam Puja, Pandes from around the village gather in the home of the most powerful Pande. If there is more than one leader or powerful Pande in a particular village, it is natural that gatherings take place in different places. In either case, the Puja takes place in the house of powerful Pande. It is generally held in the month of Bhadau (September). Generally, Tuesday night is chosen for the Puja. Before the Puja starts, the villagers prepare the Rakshi and other necessary materials, Ghaiya rice, a special kind of rice, red powders (Sindur), cock and other offerings. On

the Chhonam day, Pande makes the altar according to the ritual. He makes the altar in rectangular where he/she marks by red powder and Ghaiya rice. There is no fixed altar to celebrate the Chhonam festival. Near the altar, a seat for the main Pande is made. In front of the altar, there is place for other people. In the daytime, everything is managed for the Puja. After the sunset, the main Puja starts with long invocation and chanting. Pande checks his drums and rings. The invocation and chanting continue till the mid night. Before the cock crow, Pande makes a visit to the place where the ancestors and divinities live in. It is believed that their ancestors live in the underworld from where all the plants and animals get the life. The offering process is very difficult. If Pande commits even a small mistake that is dangerous for Pande himself and the community. So Pande is always conscious about his duties and is fully concentrated on the Puja. After invoking ancestors, they call their local deities and demons that live in the sky and responsible for illness.

After that, Pandes show their shamanic skills and power before the audiences. The time is also the occasion of showing power for the new Pande. According to the tradition, if somebody is going to be the Pande he/she must participate in the Chhonam Puja and show the shamanic power before the powerful Pande and other people. Sometime there happens some magical war between future Pande and the Pande. In this war, if future Pande needs to defeat the old Pande. Only then people believe him. The future Pande needs to go through trance to convince people about his potentiality. About this ritual, I asked a question to the shaman Jankaji. In this regard, he states:

Long time ago, one of the dead Pande's grandson, known as Bikram showed some shamanic performance before villagers that time there was also a Pande from next village. Suddenly, he sent an arrow toward Bikram after that he



could not do anything. It means he could not fight with that Pande. He became seriously ill. I know that the old Pande is jealous of him and I treated him by using my arrow. After that, he left the desire to become Pande. (Personal Interview)

After such trial for new Pande, sick people and their relatives start offering cock to divinities and demons. Pande then starts requesting all the divinities and demons not to give torture to the patient. All the divinities, ancestors, and demons are also called in the altar for taking offerings.

Outside the altar a dancing and singing party is organized. Young boys and girls sing the song and exchange love. Sometimes youths come from neighboring village and participate in the party. It is believed that divinities, ancestors and other malefic beings also watch the dancing and singing party. Sometimes, they are divided in two sides and sing the song as the form of questions and answers. Most of the old people sing the song in their own language. After finishing Puja, the altar is kept safe for two more days as it is believed that ancestors and divinities take two days to depart from the Puja place. After two days Pande clean the altar and the festival comes to an end.

The festival is an occasion to combine of both hope and fear, spiritual and material quest, pain and pleasure, life and death, gods and human beings. These all help to run life in this world forever. It establishes the relationship between human and non-human creatures. The main aim of celebrating festival is to offer their agricultural products as well wild products to their god and ancestors who help them to produce these fruits and grains. It is similar to the theatrical performance where all the people appear and participate to celebrate the festival. Directly or indirectly, they play their role before themselves, is different from the everyday life. The dramatic

ritual creates a situation where everybody can take equal entertainment by performing own role and observing others role. More than that, the *Chhonan* is an annual performance of the Chepang when they forget toil, labor, risk and celebrate the festival with the hope of new life.

### **Pande and Namrung Puja**

*Namrung* puja is one of the secret pujas of the Chepang. It is related with hunting culture. It is a nostalgic of nomadic life of the Chepangs. Now this Puja is not in practice because there is no option of hunting in the Chepang area. It remains only in the form of nostalgia, which is similar with the arguments of Barbaut. He states, “The capacity of local people to adopt rather than passively subjected to the effect of change, by discovering new way to make useful of the natural environments is a social fact worth highlighting far from nostalgic stories about the lost traditions(14). Huntings are restricted by law since many years so that the vital ancient ceremony is only confined in the nostalgia.

The Rapti valley in the past was famous for hunting. Chepangs were involved in hunting in the winter and spring season. They used to carry bow and arrows for hunting wild animals and birds. Probably the Chepangs are the best archers of Nepal. They have various skills of hunting and knowledge of hunting nature, culture and geography as well as animals’ and bird’s behaviors. Since their ancestor’s time, they believed and worshipped the Namrung who could facilitate hunting in the dangerous forest. Worshipping of the Namrung is very difficult task for Pande. If Pande commits mistake either he would attacked by wild animals or wild Sikari. It must be worshipped separately in the jungle. Nowadays there is no option to hunting in the forest so that the Chepangs do not celebrate the Namrung Puja although some old Pandes have experience of conducting it. Generally, the Namrung Puja performance

takes place under the big tree. Before starting the Puja, Pande himself selects the place and prepares the necessary materials including a cock. He prepares five branches of tree for making the place and puts five stones in front of the first branch and puts two small stones in the opposite to other branches on which two symbolic bows made of bamboo are placed along with six arrows made of same materials. These stones symbolize five different Sikari (hunters). Among these, three are the Pachayavia hunters and two are the Gorkha hunters. Pachayavia hunters are the vegetarians who are responsible for the wild products. There is no need to sacrifice for the Pachayavia hunters. During the Puja, Pande sacrifices a cock for the Gorkha hunter. After finishing it, a small bronze bell is tied in the branches of the tree. After then Pande allows to other people to worship to god. The group of Sikari (hunters) encircles it showing their catapult, bow and arrow, and other weapons that help to kill and kidnap the wild animal and birds.

During my research, I asked to Jankaji, who is the grandson of *Sikari* about the process of performing Namrung Puja. He was afraid to tell it to me as he regarded the *Namrung* as the most powerful god who can do anything whatever he wants. He accounted a particular incident that occurred in his family. The event was related with the Jung Bahadur Rana and his Sikar Yatra. According to him:

Long ago, (1910 B.S) Jung Bahadur had come in the Rapti valley to hunt tigers and elephants. At that time, he reached in the Chepang area and started to hunt without worshipping the Namrung. Jung Bahdur, his hunters did not, find animals and birds in the area. They became so worried and asked the locals about the problem. According to the locals, they knew about the case and ordered to worship the Namrung. When the Pande sincerely worshipped the Numrung many birds and

animals were found in the area. After that Prime Minister Jung Bahadur himself met the Pande who gave him orders hunt in the area.

(Personal interview)

Both the Chhonam and the Namrung Puja are the main performance of the Chepang which carries their heritage, history and myth from ancient to now. All these activities are guided either ritualistic performance or traditional performance, which performs, by the Pande according to the need of life.

Pande performs various cultural and ritual practices within the Chepang communities. Pande no doubt holds a great power and importance within a particular Chepang community. The Chepangs widely believe in shamanism and take it as a medicine, culture and tradition. The identity of the shaman is marked by the shamanic knowledge and wisdom that he/she possesses. A shaman owes power and knowledge in both natural and supernatural world. The role of Pande and his/ her performance is faced various problems which minimize his/ her power. Although Chepang culture and ritual is still based on the shaman and his/ her shamanic knowledge, skill so that Pande is the major icon of Chepang culture.

## **Chapter IV:**

### **Conclusion**

In the past, Chepangs were known as a socially deprived ethnic community of the nation. Socio-economic and political changes of the present times have created some important consciousness among the Chepangs. Chepang as a name of a race entered into the books and minds of the western researchers in the mid-nineteenth century. In the recent decades especially after the last quarter of the last century, several books and research articles have been produced on Chepangs.

This research brings me to a realization that Pande needs to be contextualized at boarder social and political levels. Pande no doubt holds a great power and importance within a particular Chepang community as discussions made in the earlier chapters reveal to us. The fact that he, mostly 'he' though there is one female Pande whom I have come across during my research and am thinking of conducting a separate research on her in the future, holds great many social and cultural responsibilities. He is the part and parcel of the 'communitas' that Chepangs belong to since he is required to complete great many rites de passages. Observing him communicate with deities and demons, witches and benevolent spirits for maintaining peace and order in his communities is like acquiring some knowledge, though I personally regard it as a very personal one, about both the tangible and the intangible worlds which the Chepangs think that they belong to physically as well as spiritually.

This observation also makes a person like me ponder over some facts and fictions that despite of Pande's great many efforts, peace and order may not prevail in the Chepang community for forever. Demons may not always remain pacified, witches may keep on hovering over the houses of the folks, and deities may remain

indifferent to these Chepang folks. It is a very sad thing for us to know and observe that the Chepang children keep on becoming sick and many of them die. Many Chepangs suffer from serious diseases and die premature death. Almost all of them live economically very poor life. But important thing is that Pande is always busy at pacifying, controlling and making such super natural forces happy. This does not lessen the importance of Pande because his importance lies at working in this very condition when fate or greater than human forces are not seen in favor of the people. But one is also amazed to see when some sick children after going through some shamanistic treatments of Pande start playing the same game next morning. Great many sick Chepangs find themselves happily living with their family members in no time after they undergo Pande's ritualistic treatments. Chepangs know that without their Pande their lives would be more miserable. Deep down they know that living in this world is not that easy as there are so many forces to be satisfied. This belief makes them more humble to their deities and of course to Pande.

Importantly, deities, demons and witches are not the only forces that a Pande needs to fight against. There are great many cultural and political forces that operate in the world outside the Chepang's world and they possess some threat to Pande and his communities. At the national level, the hegemony of the Indo-Sanskrit epistemology has remained so much strong that the shamanism in Nepal has always been regarded as black art or bad form of knowledge, many of them regard it as witchcraft.

Modern educational pedagogy that is very much rooted to the colonization in this part of the world for that matter in Nepal too has always regarded shamanism of the kind that Pande is famous for as a kind of hindrance for 'modernity' or modern development in Chepang communities. The main stream knowledge production minds

and mechanisms have banned the shamanistic knowledge from the modern world the way Plato did or does to the poets and artists.

Nepal as a nation state under the party-less Panchayat system came up with 'praja bikas' developmental package. This package as many sociologists have criticized could not bring any substantial changes in the Chepangs' livelihood and it did not have anything to offer to Pande as it aimed at injecting mainstream developmental and educational policies in the Chepang minds. One cannot deny a fact that Chepang community is always and already in the process of evolution. This community has its own standard of form of knowledge and skills. Since long time Chepang communities have observed and experienced changes taking place in the world outside their boarder and received them.

In the recent years, Chepang communities are going through another major mode of cultural intervention as most of the Chepangs are found adopting the Christian religion. One comes across several churches of non-descript size and location being established in the Chepang communities. Several local Chepangs are seen gathering in the Church every Saturday. This cultural intervention has heralded greater challenges for Pande. Therefore, I think that Pande now needs to be studied not only in terms of the cultural roles that he or she has always been performing but also in terms of the improvisatory roles that he or she has to carve out at this juncture of history of their communities.

But the fact of the matter is that Chepang communities have always and already remained heterogeneous and Pande has successfully carved out his niche and played an important role in bringing or establishing cultural relationship between and among different communities. Pande is always in demand and is respected among locals. Since Chepangs have great many different ritual performances to be

performed, Pande is not going to vanish into thin air. It may sound optimism or anti-Christian, I think Churches cannot replace Pande because he is more rooted to the psyche and culture of the people. Therefore, Pande's roles, I think will not decrease in the days to come. Pande by his power can cross geographical boundaries such as the earth and the sky, and can travel into the underworld; therefore he can survive the cultural intervention that his communities are going through.

Pande of these days is no longer the same as he or she is aware of the changes that have taken place at national as well as international level. Politically not only Pande but also other members of the Chepang communities are very much aware of their rights and identities. One comes across several youths belonging to different political parties ranging from radical ideology to conservative one. This makes one realize a fact that Chepangs are not going to surrender to the waves of changes that reach to their hamlets and doors.



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## Appendix- A

### **Chepang's Myths about the Creation of the World**

The Chepangs believe that everything, including themselves, originated in the Patal and that earth and heaven exist because of this and particular thanks to the cosmic pillars, which exist inside in the underworld.

According to the myth, in the Patal there were two sets of brothers: *Batise* and *Tiwase*, Kesardin and Lawardin. Above the Patal there were two virgin sisters, who had never seen anyone or anything apart from themselves. The elder was Soboti and younger was Devkali. All these divinities existed before man. One day the first man was appeared in the Patal. The gods discuss about the new arrival. The first arrival was male. In discussion, some of said he will urinate and defect in our sacred places; he will cough and split. So they want to send the new arrival somewhere else. For that purpose, Batise and Tiwase showed the interest and tried to create the land for the new arrival. They are greedy so that demand one hundred Muri rice, lentil and hundred goats for the act. God is ready to fulfill the demand. The two greedy brothers completed their work by pushing the earth into the Patal but it was only remain seven days.

The frog Thukurdin, who had seen these developments, became very sad because he was afraid of the man who would contaminate him. The god asked the frog to take the message to the two sisters of the Akash. Thukardin came up to the nine celestial levels to tell the god's message. It was difficult to meet the two sisters because the two sisters never see anyone except themselves. The frog knew that and hid somewhere else and produced the sound. When two sisters arrived, they knew something is near them. They guess some time and found that *Thukardin* come up into the sky with the message of patal. After that, they said; let us tell the message of

patal. .Why did you come to the heaven? What is your problem? *Thukardin* said, “I have seen that the brothers were not able to do anything in seven days. There is new arrival in the house of god but the brothers cannot create place for him. If he had to stay, we could not live in clean places. Please help us”. This is why I have come to here to request you sisters about the problems of god.

One of the sisters said, “Yes” .Then the frog went back down and observed the brothers activities. They are only eating and talking about the plan. *Thukardin* told other gods about the positive answer of heaven. After that, gods were gathered and decided to send their army to bring the virgin sisters from the heaven and order to solve the problems.

Kesardin, Lawardin and Thakardin were the armies of gods come of the heaven and request to the sisters to come down to the underworld. At that time, the two sisters asked them why you have come. And they replied, “We have had some good news, we have to come here to bring you down to the Patal. The two sisters refused to go down with armies and said we will follow you! Go now! After that, the two sisters dressed themselves in white, started their journey ten times quicker than wind, and arrived before the armies.

In the underworld, they saw only darkness. In one corner the frog was sitting. They kick the frog and asked him why had been bring the message! The frog closed his eyes as he extremely shocked .At that time one of the sister has forgive him and order to live one of the corner from the time, the frog closed its eyes and lives in the corner during the day, time. Then the gods arrived and told about the problems then request for help. For that, two sisters order the god not to see them. They asked, “What happen in these seven days? The god replied, “Noting”. Then the sister order Thakurdin to closed the eyes and make the sun disappeared. Even today, when the

frogs close their eyes the sun disappears. When it was completely dark both sisters undressed to their underclothes and with their pinks extracted a large part of the pillar that was made in the underworld and threw it up high. A strange snapping sound was heard and it was said that there must be something underneath in the pillar. They discovered that it was a crab; the pillar had fallen on its back. That is why crab still has wounds on its' body which we can see even today. One of the sisters ordered the frog to open his eyes and then told everyone to look up. The pillar was seen in the air. Near the pillar, there was a large cow, called *Lendemuri*. The sisters were just about killing it. But two brothers said," Don't do it" and states, "We shall do it". Both sister gave chance to kill the Lendemuri. But the brothers could not kill the cow. All the gods begged pardon, requested to kill the cow .After that the two sisters excused them, and gave a big knife and hundred Muri rice to kill the cow .After that the two brothers blow the cow again they could not kill completely. The two sisters were so angry with the acts of the two brothers. Then after from the Lendemuri's moans different demons such as Bhut, Pret, Mashan etc were created. The blood of the sacrificed cow was put on the pillar, the larger bones became mountain, rock, while smaller became hill and the skin became the plain land .The sister order the new arrival," Go to their"! And said, "Live there and come back to this place when your time on the Earth is finished". In the meantime when you have problems, remember us, remembers our name, and that of Batise and Tiwase.

However, there was no sun in world so there were great problems and human were dying of hunger .At that time the little bird called, Chiparkala told human to bring the sun into the earth. The bird sings the beautiful song and persuades the sun. The sun was very much impressed with the little bird's song and ready to come up to the earth. At that time the sun said, "I live only the one time in the earth and then

return back to the underworld”. When I returned to under world, you take rest and again I come up into the earth then you start works. The bird accepts the sun’s proposal and become happy. From the time, the sun rises with the voice of Chiparkala in the morning and set in the evening.

After that, *Thankudin* complained the sun. The frog said, “Fine when I close my eyes and you can go back to the Patal and my body will become soft .But when I open my eyes you shall have to go back again to the earth”.

Until the sun remains in the earth, no demon could live in the earth. At that moment human being and animals feel safe.

The first new arrival was a boy and all the offerings of the *Chhonam* festival are mainly for him.

The mythical crab and large fish called Urmī make the cosmic pillar, which holds up the world of humans and heaven.

According to the Chepang myth, demons were created in the process of creating world after the first human had been created. They are made by the two sisters to punish the brothers who could not kill the cow easily. Some Pandes claimed that the god created demons to maintain equilibrium in the world; otherwise, men would have gone on reproducing themselves without end. Even those insect, which sting or bite, as mosquitoes, Bloodsuckers or flies, are demons .Shaman were created at the same time in order to fight with the demons and witch. There is no single myth recounting the creation of the first Pande. Most of the Chepangs believe that Shiva was the first Pande and Parbati was the first witch. It means women as taken as the spirit of demon that is as equal power full with god.

## Appendix-B

### Important festivals of Chepang

<b>Month</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Festival Name</b>
Jestha	<i>Punima</i> (Full moon night, June)	<i>Gaidu Puja</i> (Worship of Cattle God)
<i>Sawan</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> day (Sankranti)	<i>Saune Sankranti</i>
<i>Bhadau</i>		<i>Chhonam (Nwagi)</i>
<i>Asoj/Kartik</i>	<i>Sukla Asthami</i>	<i>Dashain</i>
<i>Kartik</i>	<i>Aunshi</i> (Dark night)	<i>Tihar</i>
<i>Manshir</i>	<i>Ekadashi</i>	<i>Kadashi Jatra</i>
<i>Manshir</i>	<i>Purnima</i> (Full-moon night)	<i>Aaitabare</i>
<i>Push</i>	15 <sup>th</sup> day	<i>Local Jatra</i>
<i>Magh</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> day ( <i>Maghe Sankranti</i> )	<i>Maghe Sankranti</i>
Chaitra	<i>Asthami</i>	<i>Chaite Dashain</i>

## Appendix-C

### Foods and Drinks of Chepang

<b>Chepang name of food and drink</b>	<b>Nepali name of food</b>	<b>English name</b>
<i>Yaam</i>	<i>Dhanko Bhaat</i>	Cooked rice
<i>Chichhuk</i>	<i>Dindo</i>	Porridge
<i>Can</i>	<i>Tarakaari</i>	Special dry curry
<i>Tyan</i>	<i>Tion (Tiun)</i>	Vegetable (green)
<i>Mai</i>	<i>Mashu</i>	Meat
<i>Nganmai</i>	<i>Machhaa</i>	Fish



<i>Chhapani</i>	<i>Rakshi</i>	Wine
<i>Gu</i>	<i>Pindaalu</i>	Taro root
<i>Lak</i>	<i>Githaa</i>	Air potato
<i>Pass</i>	<i>Vyaakur</i>	Cush cush
<i>Gochhak</i>	<i>Taanki ko Munta</i>	Bauhninea
<i>Balau</i>	<i>Sisnu</i>	Sting
<i>Ti</i>	<i>Paani</i>	Water
<i>Goi</i>	<i>Taarul</i>	Yam
<i>Hang</i>	<i>Bhaarlant</i>	

## Appendix-C

### List of dress and instruments used by Pande

*Dhangro*( drum)

*Gajo*( special stick)

*Ghanti*( bell)

*Rings* (membranes)

*Sal wood* ( Shorea Robusta)

*Darasn dhunga*( white stone)

Bird feathers

Mental plate

White piece of cloth

*Chyuri leaf*

Different colors powder including ashes

Various leaves and vines

Pieces of metals and stone

## Appendix-D

### Text of Shaman's Chanting (in translated form)

You are a great guru

I am a little child, who is taking your name

I bow my head in respect you

Guru I am asking your service,

Paying my respect to you searching for you

Do not be sad!

You are the noble one

You are the Brahmins. You are everything

You the protectors

You are the one who take care of everything.

I am taking your name, oh noble one do not be angry

Two lakes have broken

One of them is sprained

It can't walk, it can't wander

You who walk in search for food

I take your name.

Do not be sad! Do not be at all sad!

Oh guru..... It is your name that I am saying

Oh guru- pardon me for your anger

I am bowing our heads in respect to you

I put ourselves at your service

Ah! Ah! Do not be sad and pardon for your anger!

Great guru, great guru! Great guru

Arrow of the *akas*, arrow of the *Pattal*

Guru of the *Akas* guru of the *Pattal*

All the kings.....

I am giving you a place

I offer you water in a golden pot and I am putting

Some lights in this

This child's offering you water

And is putting some light into it

We will make you an offering now

Do not be sad in your hearts!

He is a child and a Pande

So do not be sad

There are two of us, listen to me, I am bringing you here.

The darkness of the world and the darkness of the life

The day night alternate every day, giving light and darkness

The sun sets and the moon comes out giving the light of the day and night

Roof of *Akas* and *Patal*

Protect him! Protect him!

The little Pande is giving the guru to this world

To the world of children,

Protect the sky!

Listen the child and do not be sad

Tears from the eyes....

And don't make your hearts black

I am offering you water

Crossing a famine, crossing a drought  
I shall repay you not only with these  
But also with other thing  
The divinities of the sky that walk around and around everything....  
The sky is light  
The world is light  
Everything is light except me.  
Give me refuge, give me refuge  
I shall not be coming without carriage  
Only walking about bring the child  
Look here!  
I am playing with the inhabitants of the forests  
With *Ban-Bokshi*  
Keep on the road that leads here,  
Do not dance in the shadow of the trees  
Oh, king moon,  
I shall sit on the destiny of Niu  
The destiny has been created  
Yama, do not call him  
Do not call the king  
The child will call the life. Oh guru

## Appendix: E

(Some Nepali words which use in the thesis without any references)

*Balmilki*- original writer of Ramyan

*Banjhankri* □ Forest shaman

*Bharang Kalika*- Temple of Kali

Bharatpur- head quarter of Chitwan district

Bhut- Elements

*Bideha* (Mithila)- A City of Nepal

Chitwan,- Name of the district

Dahsain- Name of the festival

Dhading- A district of Nepal located in south of Kathmandu valley

Diyala Bangala-A place located in Bharatpur

Gajuri- A small market place of Prithi High Way

Gorkha - A place of Nepal where Prithinarayan Saha was born

Groakhnath-A Nepalese god

*Ichhakamana*- A temple located in Chandibhanjan V.D.C., Chitwan

*Jestha*- Name of Nepali Month (Amy – June)

*Jung Bahadur*-a prime minister of Nepal ruled 1903B.S.-1922B.S)

King Birendra-King of Nepal ruled (2028-2058)

*Kushahar*:-A mythical characters of Chepang myth as well as Hindu

'*Kuss* Grass- A holy grass

Lohari- A mythical character of Chepang myth, the son of Sita.

Machhendranath- A great god of Nepal who is known as the god of agriculture, rain, livestock and magic

Magh- Name of Nepali Month (Feb.-march)

Mahendra- A king of Nepal ruled 2011-2028

Makawanpur- name of a district

Mashan- Elements

Muri- 40 kg amount

Narayani river- A river follows near Narayan Ghat

*Praja Bikasha*- A program runs by government for the development of chepang.

Pret- Elements

Sadans- Name of the tree found near Chepang area

*Sangranti*- the first day of month

*Saun*- July- A August

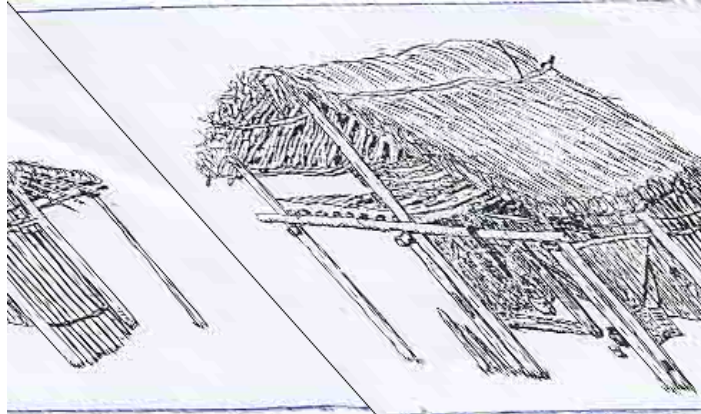
*Shaktikhor Kalika*- Kalika located in Shaktikhor

*Singura*- A mythical bird related with Chepang myth

Sita- A mythical women of Hindu myth

**Appendix –F**

**List of Photos**



**(A Poor Chepang's House)**





**(Christian Chepangs praying to the god)**



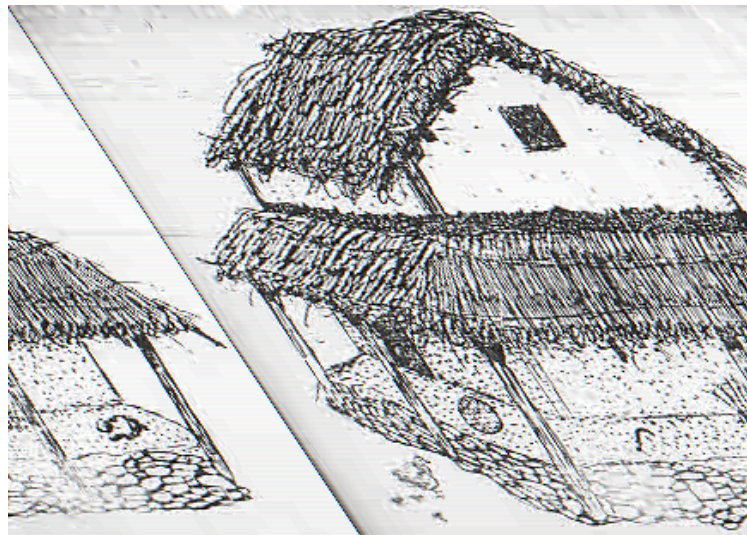
**(A woman Shaman in trance)**



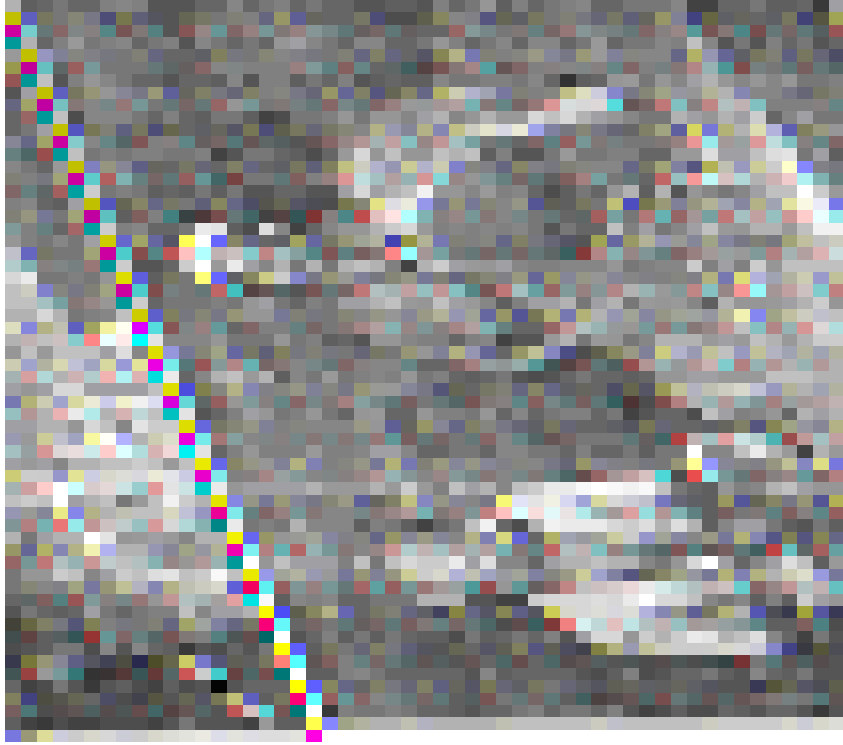
**(A shaman with a Patient )**



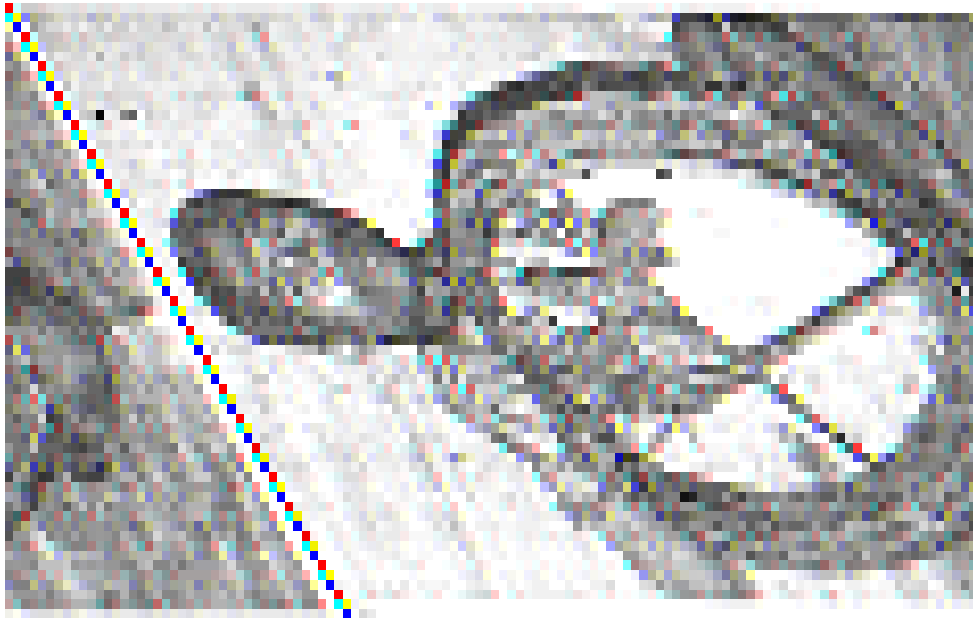
**(A Chepang who is search of the novice in jungle )**



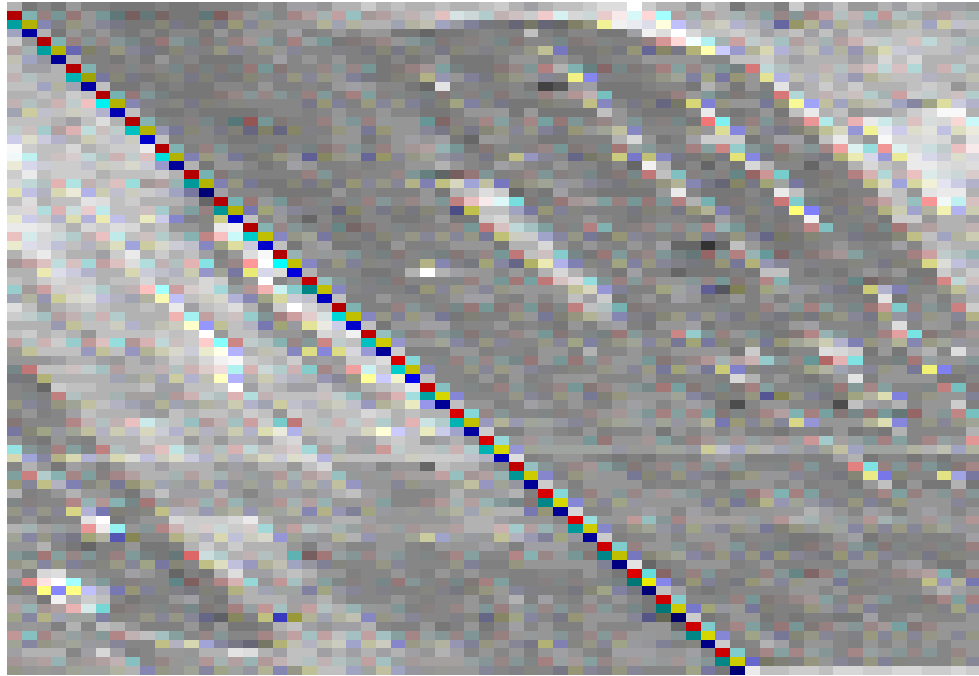
**(A traditional house of a rich Chepang )**



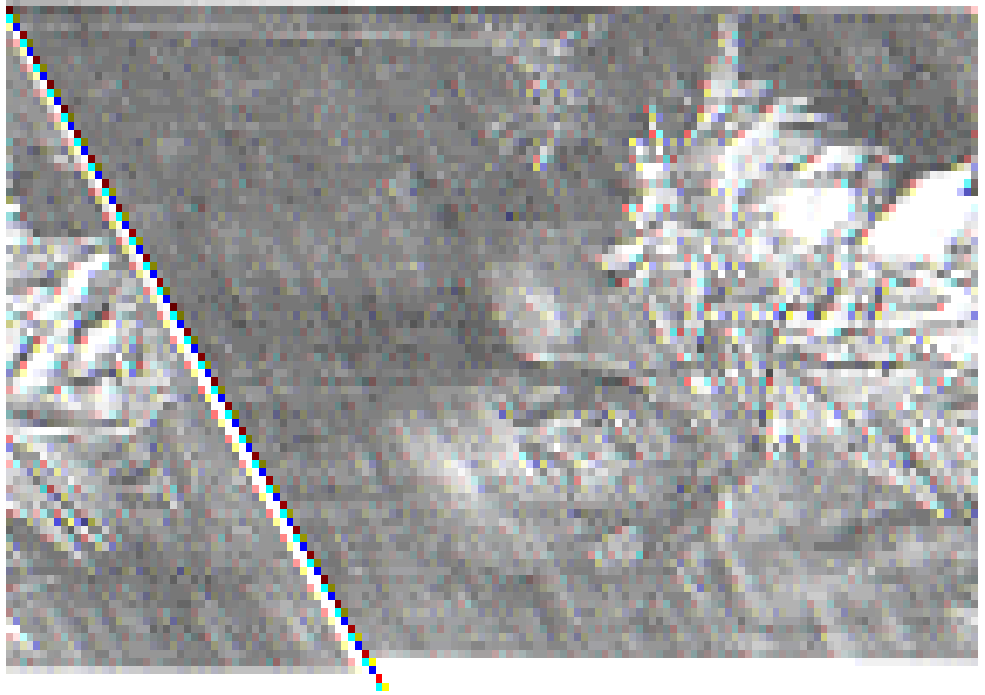
**( A shaman taking a pulse of a sick Chepang)**



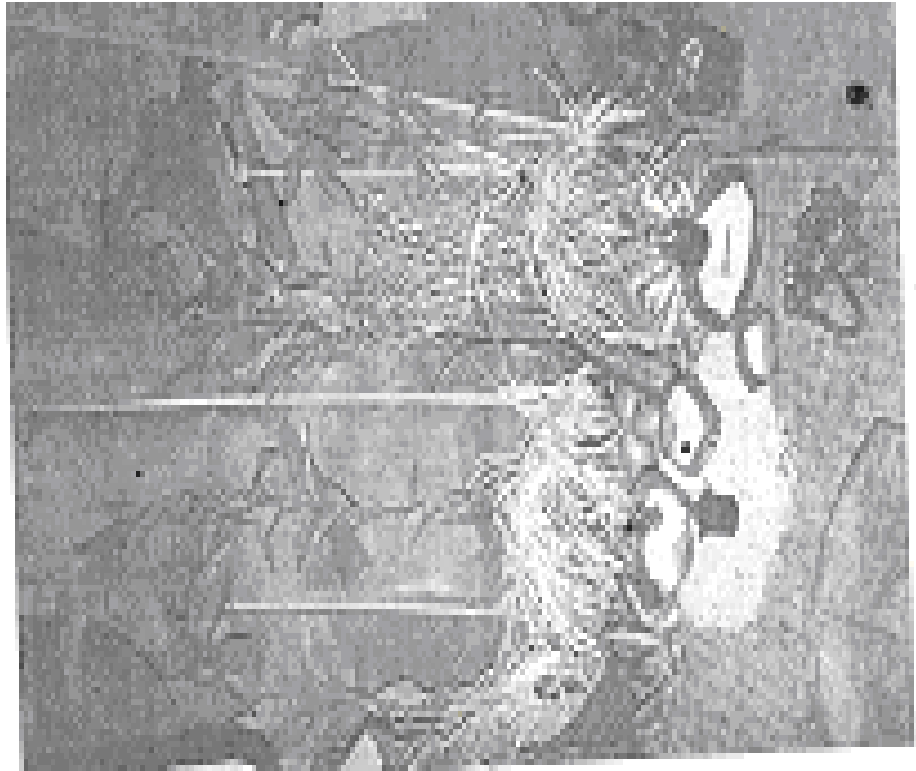
**(A shaman holding drum)**



**(The place prepared for Chhonam Puja)**



**(A male shaman in trance)**



**(An altar of Chhonam puja )**

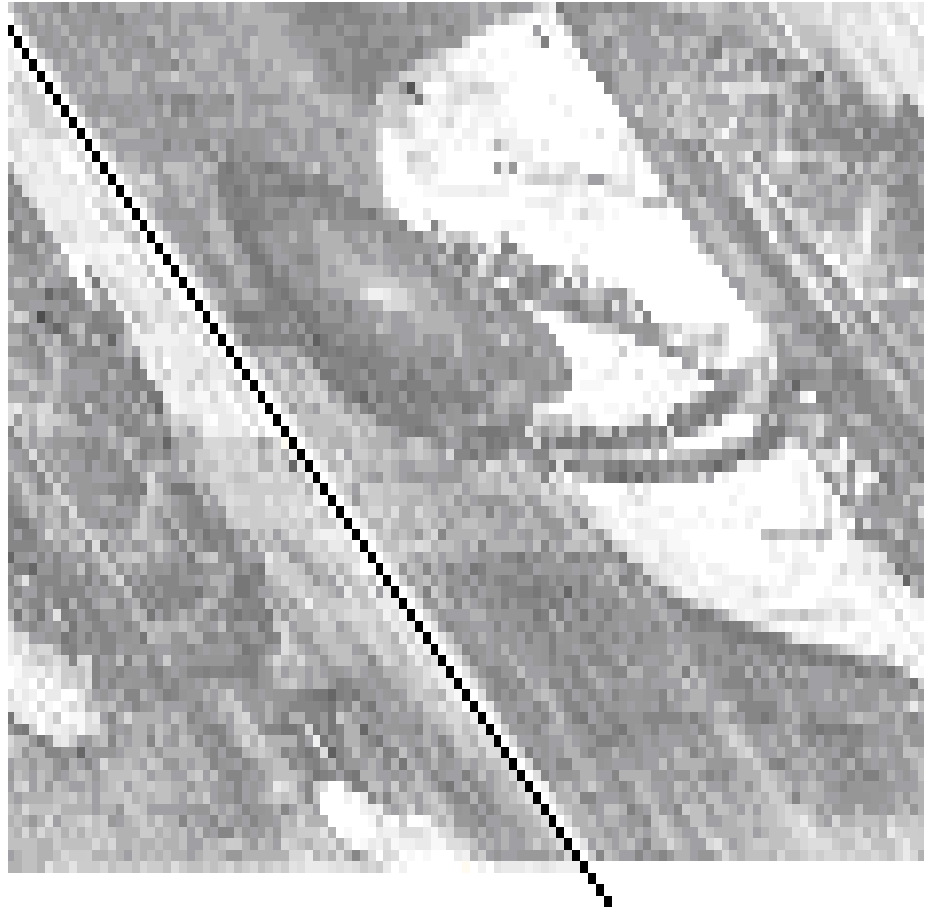




**(A female shaman in trance )**



**(A bunch of new grain for Chhonam puja)**



**(A shaman in a private trance)**

