

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **1.1 Background**

Nepal is a multi-ethnic country, comprising of almost 80 ethnic groups, 103 castes and more than 92 native languages (mother tongues), and followers of various religions. Among the different ethnic groups, the Limbu is one of the indigenous ethnic groups which has a distinct culture, tradition and religion of its own. This ethnic group is distributed mainly in Taplejung, Panchthar, Ilam, Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Dhankuta, Terathum and Sankhuwasabha districts. These inhabited lands are historically known as “Limbuwan”, this area is bounded by the Arun river in the west, the border with Sikkim state of India in the east, the border of Sunsari and Jhapa in the south and the border with Tibet of China in the north. This region is also known as “Pallo Kirat”.

Limbus are also found to have inhabited outside the boundary of Nepal. They are scattered throughout the hill territory of Sikkim, Assam, Meghalaya and Manipur states of India. With the passage of time, in search of better livelihood some of the Limbus also migrated from highland of eastern Nepal to the lowland of southern Terai region, including the Kathmandu valley. According to the statistical year book of Nepal (CBS 2002), the total population of the Limbus of Nepal is 1.58 percent and only 1.47 percent of total population speaks Limbu as their mother tongue.

#### **1.1.1 The Origin**

Limbus are a branch of Kiratas segregated by the Gurkha rulers with special grant of land privileges and local authorities in some particular areas (Limbuwan) from the rest of their kindred. Historical documents reveal that the term “Limbu” was used by Gurkha (Nepal) administration after 1774. The decrees and letters of Sen rulers before the unification of Nepal and the genealogies of various clans (thar) of Limbus also divulge that the Kirata

leaders were conferred the titles of Raya and thus they were known as Raya and later Rais. (Subba, 1995:12)

As far as Limbus are concerned, they belong to “Naulak (Nine hundred thousands) Kirat” as mentioned in the letters of Prithvi Narayan Shah, the founder of present Nepal. The phrase used by P.N. Shah in his Royal decree adhered to his contemporary Limbu Rayas (1831.4.22 B.S.) is interpreted by Brian Houghton Hodson (1880c) in his work, “Miscellaneous Essays Relating to Indian Subjects” to mean a house tax, at two annas per family, which yielded nine hundred thousand annas, whence the population estimated to be around two and a quarter million for Kiratas, inclusive of the Limbus, Yakhas and Vayus. (ibid)

The Limbus themselves claim to have held from time immemorial the Tambarkhola valley on the upper waters of the Tambar Kosi rivers. They have also a tradition that five out of the thirteen sub-tribes came from Lhasa whilst five others came from Kashi (Benaras). The former group is called Lhasagotra, and the latter Kashigotra; but the term “gotra” has in this case no bearing in marriage (Vansittart, 1993). The groups of ten chiefs were called Limbus or Archers and the land which they won with the help of Li or bow and arrows were called Limbuwan. (Chemjong, 1998)

Limbus were first known by the name of Yakthumba, and they are descended from ten brothers. With these ten brothers came three spiritual advisers. The above mentioned brothers and priests did not know how to write, but they knew some prayers and traditions. These prayers and traditions were handed down by word of mouth, and according to them were the people ruled. These thirteen men were all residents of Benaras, and they agreed to make themselves homes in the mountains of Nepal. Five of the brothers marched straight from Benaras to Nepal, but the other five went to Tibet, and from Tibet through Lhasadinga, until they met their five brothers in the mountains of Nepal. The first five brothers and their descendants are called Kashigotra, and second five brothers and their descendants are called Lhasagotra, because they respectively

journeyed from Benaras to Tibet, and from Lhasadinga to Nepal. (Note- In the Hindi language Benaras is known as Kashi.) ( Morris & Northey, 1927)

All ten brothers should rightly be called Kashigotra, for they all came from Benaras. Now these ten brothers settled in a place called Ambepojoma Kamketlangma Sumhalangma. The ten brothers had many children, and their descendants multiplied very quickly, till they became a nation and were called Limbus. (Ibid)

The Limbus were, however, subject to the kings of the country, and they were very much oppressed. The kings ruled them with such a harsh rule, and oppressed them so greatly, that eventually the Limbus, having joined together, decided to fight the kings of the country and drive them out. Every Limbu swore upon the holy place that he would conquer in the fight or die, and every man swore that he would not return from the war until the kings had been driven from the country, and that he would sooner die than run away in battle. There was a great war between the Limbus and the kings, and the former won many victories and drove out the kings from the land, and its boundaries: on the north Tibet; on the south the plains of India; on the west the Arun river; and on the east the Mechi. (Ibid)

The Limbus now assembled together again and consulted, and they determined to elect unto themselves ten chiefs, one from each tribe. In this way ten chiefs were elected, and each chief built himself a fort and called it by his name, and each chief marked the boundaries of his country and called it by some name. After this division of the country the Limbus remained rulers of their country until the Gurkhas wage war against them. (Ibid)

For twelve years did the Limbus fight with the Gurkhas, after which they were defeated. The Gurkhas then killed all the Limbus whom they could catch, whether men, women, or children, and the Limbus had to hide in the mountains because of the cruelty and oppression of the Gurkhas. After some time the Gurkha King, thinking of all the heavy

troubles that were upon the Limbus, called them together, and on their promising to look upon him as their king, he granted unto the chief men amongst the Limbus commissions with certain ruling powers for the chief of each district. (Ibid)

Each holder of the commission was granted full power, according to his warrant, to try all cases in his district, and to rule in every way as he deemed fit, with the exception only of cases of murder, cow killing, and with regard to taxes or money matters, which had to be referred to and settled by the king of the Gurkhas. The Limbus after this ceased making war with the Gurkhas, and became their friends, and acknowledged the king of the Gurkha as their king. (Ibid)

All that can safely be said is that the Limbus are the oldest recorded population of the country between the Tambar Kosi and the Mechi, and their flat features, slightly oblique eyes, yellow complexion, and beardlessness may perhaps afford grounds for believing them to be descendants of early Tibetan settlers in Nepal (Vansittart, 1993).

### **1.1.2 The Migration**

The Limbus are generally regarded as among the first inhabitants of east Nepal. Together with the Rais, they are thought to be the descendants of the ancient Kiratis. In the Mahabharata the Kiratas were said to dwell in the eastern Himalayan regions. In many contemporary government documents the area of east Nepal is still referred as Kirat. The country inhabited mainly by Rais lies in the mid-region of east Nepal between the Dudh Kosi and the Arun rivers and is termed 'Middle Kirat', whereas the Limbu country east of Arun river i.e, Limbuwan, is called 'Far Kirat'. (Caplan, 2000:13)

The Kipat system (the tribal ethnic ownership of land), local authority with certain administrative powers (subhangi), contract system in land tax and special local court with some judicial powers (Amal system) grounded some autonomy to Limbus. But indirect encroachment occurred from time to time in the authority and privileges of Limbus through inspection (Janch) and land survey (Napi), new taxations, offering of subhangi

(encroachment in the rights of primogeniture relating to subhangi) through the offering of certain area of land, and imposing various rules and instructions (Shrestha, 1985). The powers, privileges and facilities of Limbus were ended by the implementation of Land Reform Act in 1966. The great majority of Limbus were in vicious cycle of debt and all their properties, including land, were mortgaged. The act compelled them to be displaced from their land and almost 80 percent of the land went into the hands of non-Limbus. The wave of migration of Limbus from Limbuwan to other places, specially to Terai, started since then. Because of this reason, today Limbus are not only confined to Limbuwan but are also found in Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari and other places as well. (Subba, 1995)

During the process of migration, Limbus from eastern part of Nepal started to migrate to different parts of the Kathmandu valley with the aim of upgrading their life standards. Since all the better facilities necessary for the development of personality of one's life have been centralized in Kathmandu, they migrated to Kathmandu to fulfill their different aims in life. Initially, the Limbus who were economically strong migrated to the Kathmandu valley but, the increasing trend of migration of the Limbus started due to the improvement of their economic aspect so as to cope with urban life of Kathmandu valley, mainly, after the change of political system in 1990 A.D.

In modern times, they have sustained their life cycle rituals among the different communities of Kathmandu valley with a distinct rituals and traditions. Having distinct rituals of their own there are various objects which symbolize the specific meaning during the performance of rituals. There has been some changes in rituals practiced by the Limbus residing in Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu due to the influence of various factors after their migration from different parts of the country, mainly from eastern part of Nepal.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Limbus have their own way of performing rituals. From the very beginning of birth ritual to the death ritual, they perform different proceedings of their own. Even when the

inborn child is inside the womb of mother, Limbus performs a sacred ritual worshipping the God for the protection of child which is known as *Sappok Chomen* in Limbu language. They have priests or “sacred specialists” to perform different rituals, such priests are called *Phedangma*, *Samba*, *Yeba* (male) or *Yema* (female)). All these Limbu priests are perceived as resource persons of Limbu culture, tradition and oral literature.

Since the Limbus are aboriginal tribes in the eastern region of Nepal from the time immemorial they have distinctive performance of rituals based on mythological themes and religious philosophy. The ritual performances of Limbu priests (*Phedangma*, *Samba*, *Yeba*, *Yema*) are unique and are guided by their indigenous traditions. Limbus also have a long tradition of reciting *Mundhums* i.e., poetic expressions of legends, history, songs, etc which are in the form of religious scripture.

Limbus, being the inhabitants of eastern part of Nepal mainly in nine districts (Limbuwan), also got migrated into different parts of Kathmandu valley. This process of migration increased after the advent of democracy in 1990 A.D. Their lifestyle changed after they got migrated into Kathmandu valley, but even then they are practicing various ritualistic performances as their part of cultural life. They perform various rituals ranging from birth ritual to death rites which have symbolic meanings as a form of ritual expression. There has been an impact on the rituals of Limbus community of Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu because of the urbanization and modernization, even though they are striving to preserve their indigenous culture and traditions. Hence, this study has focused on the rituals among the Limbu community of Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu valley. More specifically, the researcher has addressed the following research questions:

What are the symbolic meaning of birth, marriage and death rituals practiced by the migrant Limbus of Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu?

What are the changing forms of rituals and its causes among the migrant Limbus of Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study was to describe the rituals and explore the changing forms of birth, marriage and death rituals practiced by the Limbus residing in Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu. The specific objectives of the study were as follows.

1. To identify the symbolic meaning of birth, marriage and death rituals practiced by migrant Limbus of Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu.
2. To explore the changing forms of birth, marriage and death rituals and its causes among the Limbus residing in Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu.

### **1.4 Rationale of the Study**

This is a study of indigenous ethnic group, who have been struggling for their ethnic identity. They have distinct dialect (Panchthare, Tamarkhole, Chhatare and Phedape) of Sino-Tibetan language family. They also have distinct culture, tradition and religion of their own. They perform various rituals and observe festivals in their own mythological belief.

This study has discussed the rituals of the birth, the rituals of marriage ceremony and the rituals of various stages of death rites with *Mundhum* background regarding with the Limbu community of Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu . This study has identified the symbols representing the different meanings among the rituals of Limbu and also the changing forms of rituals among them and there was no any previous study of this kind in the Limbu community of Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu. So, it will be fruitful to the persons who want to know more about rituals and the changes among the rituals of Limbu of Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu. Therefore, ultimately this descriptive and explorative study will also be a good resource for those who tend to study this tribal group.

### **1.5 Limitations of the Study**

Each and every study has its own limitations. Likewise, this study has also some limitations which are as follows.

1. This study has intended to study rituals of Limbu community of Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu which is a micro study and has attempted to explore the symbolic meanings and the changing forms of rituals and its causes among the Limbu community of Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu.
2. This study is limited in migrant Limbu community of Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu which may not have reflected the rituals of Limbu community of Nepal.
3. This proposed study has been undertaken for the partial fulfillment of requirements of an M.A. in sociology. This, being a work for a dissertation, is obviously constrained by time and resources.
4. All the information in this study have been based on the qualitative research method done by the researcher.

### **1.6 Organization of the Study**

This dissertation consists of six chapters as per the objectives of the study. The first of the introductory chapter presents the background, statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, its limitations, significance and conceptual framework. The second chapter presents literature review which includes theoretical review and previous studies on rituals. The third chapter includes the research methods adopted in this study and the fourth chapter identifies the symbolic meaning of birth, marriage and death rituals practiced by the Limbus residing in Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu.

In the same way, chapter five explores the changing forms of birth, marriage and death rituals among the Limbus of Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu. Similarly, the last or the sixth chapter includes the summary, conclusion and recommendation of the study.





## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Theoretical Review

To fulfill the objective of the study, the theoretical part has been reviewed in the following two categories as per the requirement of the study. They are as follows.

##### 2.1.1 Symbolic Theory

The symbolic theory/interpretive theory came into existence after the Second World War, and developed in USA around 1960s in the form of symbolic anthropology. Primarily, the symbolic theory was visible as a theory for the micro study of culture. Symbols are the gestures, objects and language which depend on interpretation. Interpretation of symbols may differ according to the culture. In general symbols exist in different forms such as symbols as a form of 'ritual expression', symbols as a form of 'cultural interpretation', symbols as a form of the 'expression of the art and belief, etc.

There are a number of anthropologists who contributed in the field of symbolic anthropology. Among them Victor Turner, Clifford Geertz, Mary Douglas, David Schneider are imminent. Victor Turner is popular since his analysis of rituals is based on the ideas that ritual meanings are coding of social meanings and such rituals have immense influence on mind. Victor Turner interprets that symbols, by their nature, are multifocal and multivariate and they can represent many things at the same time. Hence, Victor Turner gives emphasis on sociolinguistic approach while interpreting symbolism. Similarly, D.M. Schneider's interpretation about symbolism is based on cognitive approach whereas Geertz's interpretation is based on interpretive approach. According to C.Geertz, there is a relation between symbol and culture which should be interpreted. The life cycle ceremonies observed by the Limbus of the Kathmandu valley also have various symbols within their rituals which are described in the preceding chapters.

In every society, symbols are the most important vehicles by which culture is transmitted. Whether in the form of language, action or objects, people constantly employ symbols in doing, thinking, saying, and making things. Moreover, the symbols used by members of a society often coalesce into integrated symbolic systems. A language, for instance, is made up of many sounds, many gestures, and many tones of voice; every one of each not only has meaning in its own right but also takes on added meaning when employed in conjunction with others. (Hicks, 1995)

Cultural studies focus on three interrelated problems—"the production of cultural meanings, the textual analysis of these meanings, and the study of lived cultures and lived experiences". Symbolic interactionists, following Mead, tend to accord causal significance to social interaction. Thus, meaning stems not from solitary mental processes but from interaction. This focus derives from Mead's pragmatism: he focused on human action and interaction, not on isolated mental processes. Symbolic interactionists have in general continued in this direction. Among other things, the central concern is not people mentally create meanings and symbols but how they learn them during interaction in general and socialization in particular. People learn symbols as well as meanings in social interaction. (Ritzer, 5<sup>th</sup> edition)

As the father of symbolic interaction, Mead made a distinction between gesture and symbols. Gesture is a social act that operates as a stimulus for the response of another organism (animals) engaged in the same act. Symbol is a 'significant gesture' which conveys a 'meaning' to which only human beings can respond. Whereas a gesture may produce a stimulus in an animal, only man can act towards a gesture's meaning, i.e, a symbol. Therefore, only man is truly symbols-using, symbols-making animal, i.e, animal symbolism. When a gesture, e.g., a wink of an eye, evokes the same meaning from the receiver of the gesture, i.e., the wink, as from the sender (of the wink), this gesture is a 'significant gesture', or symbols. When vocal gestures (speech) reach this receiver-sender

consensus of meaning, language is the result. At the point where gestures employed in communication take upon themselves this symbolic function of conveying not just stimulus but consensual meaning, human interaction is not just social as set forth by Cooley, but is more –it is symbolic interaction, according to Mead. (Abraham, 1982)

According to George Herbert Mead, without symbols there would be no human interaction and no human society. Symbolic interaction is necessary since man has no instincts to direct his behavior. He is not genetically programmed to react automatically to particular stimuli. In order to survive he must therefore construct and live within a world of meaning. For example he must classify the natural environment into categories of food and non-food in order to meet basic nutritional requirements. In this way men define stimuli and their response to them. Thus when hunters on the African savannah categorize antelope as a source of food, they define what is significant in the natural environment and their response to it. Via symbols, meaning is imposed on the world of nature and human interaction with that world is thereby made possible. (Herald, 1980)

Social life can only proceed if the meanings of symbols are largely shared by members of society. If this were not the case meaningful communication would be impossible. However, common symbols provide only the means by which human interaction can be accomplished. In order for interaction to proceed each person involved must interpret the meanings and intentions of others. This is made possible by the existence of common symbols, but actually accomplished by means of a process which Mead terms ‘role – taking’. The process of role taking involves the individual taking on the role of another by imaginatively placing himself in the position of the person with whom he is interacting. For example, if he observes another smiling, crying, waving his hand or shaking his fist, he will put himself in that person’s position in order to interpret his intention and meaning. On the basis of this interpretation he will make his response to the action of the other. Thus if he observes someone shaking his fist, he may interpret this gesture as an indication of aggression but his interpretation will not automatically lead to

a particular response. He may ignore the gesture, respond in kind, attempt to defuse the situation with a joke and so on. The person with whom he is interacting will then take his role, interpret his response and either continue or close the interaction on the basis of this interpretation. In this respect human interaction can be seen as a continuous process of interpretation with each taking the role of the other. (Ibid)

### **2.1.2 Migration Theory**

The movement of people or group of people from one place to another with the intention of making permanent settlement in a new location is called migration. Birth and death are related with biological process, where as migration more related with socio-economic process of human is being. In a wide sense, migration is a process of social mobility. It is more related with human will power. Migration is more influenced by the needs of family and society, so which can not be taken as natural activity. Hence, it is more related with in search of better physical facilities by human.

According to Adam Smith, the movement of people from one place to another is more difficult than the movement of all physical goods. It means the movement of people is a complex phenomenon. In fact, the migration helps to keep the balance of natural resources import and its dissemination to people. Transportation is the main medium for migration.

According to Paul Guinness, the movement of people across a specified boundary, national or international to establish a new permanent place of residence is called migration. The UN defines permanent as a change of residence lasting more than one year. According to United Nations Multilingual Demographic Dictionary, "Migration is a form of geographic or spatial movement involving change of usual residence between clearly defined geographic units. Some changes of residence, however are temporary and do not involve change in usual residence, these are usually excluded from migration, they include brief excursion for visiting. Vocation or business purposes are even across

national boundaries. Other changes of residence although permanent but short distance movement and hence, are also excluded from migration.”

When a person changes his residence, then he is considered as migrants. People live in the same place, but carrying activities in other places are also treated as migrants i.e., daily and weekly commuters. According to demographic perspective, migration can be divided into two categories: Internal migration and International migration. On the basis of area of residence, internal migration can be divided into rural to urban, rural to rural, urban to rural and urban to urban migration.

Place of origin is the place where people are born, but to fulfill their physical needs they get displaced to other place. So, the term origin of place is also related with migration. Normally, people get displaced from one place to another in search of better physical facilities due to the unavailability of their physical needs. So, the poor facilities or unavailability of facilities in the place of origin are considered as pushing factors for migration. Some of the pushing factors are as follows.

- a. Unemployment situation factor
- b. Underdeveloped due to low economic growth
- c. Low wages and salary
- d. Political instability
- e. No values of qualification
- f. Lack of research center and other facilities
- g. Dominance of traditional norms and values
- h. Lack of arable land
- i. Lack of transportation facilities
- j. Deprive of health and education
- k. Increment of social insecurity and political pressure

According to the migration theory propounded by Regenstein, laws of migration are as follows.

1. In general, many people intend to migrate to short distance. When distance increases the number of migrant people decreases.
2. Migration takes place in a series form. For instance, when people migrate to urban area from small urban area then his original place which he has left is occupied by people migrating from rural areas. In this way, his vacant place is fulfilled.
3. The process of dispersion (emigration) is the inverse of that absorption (immigration) and exhibits similar feature.
4. Each significant migration stream products, to a degree, counter stream.
5. The longer the distance travelled, the greater the likelihood of the destination being a major industrial and commercial centre.
6. Migrants are generally adults, family rarely migrate over long distance.
7. Town dwellers are less migratory than those living rural areas.
8. Females are more migratory than males over short distance while males are more likely to move long distance, particularly to other countries.
9. The volume of migration increases with the development of industry and commerce.
10. The direction of migration is mainly from agriculture to industrial area.
11. The major cause of migration is economic.

The notion of 'land shortage' is, of course, an ambiguous one, but it suggests either an overall insufficiency for the population of an area- An increasingly unequal distribution of existing land resources as these moved out of the control of Tibeto-Burman groups.

There is evidence that a disproportionate number of nineteenth-century emigrants from the hills belonged to tribal populations. But land shortage was not the sole motive for emigration. Hill dwellers left their homes to avoid excessive (and often unofficial) taxes, high rents on agricultural tenancies, extravagant rates of interest, or onerous forced-labour exactions. The government frequently castigated local bureaucrats,

headmen and village notables for failing to prevent these emigrations, or for bringing them about in the first place. Thus, in an Order to Limbus dated June, 1850, the authorities wrote:

“We have received reports that you are leaving your kipat lands and going abroad because of the pressure of moneylenders and the oppression of amalis, revenue collectors, and government officials....(you) should come here and represent (your) legitimate grievances. With due assurance, observe your customs and usages and remain on your kipat lands and homesteads.”

Needless to say, it was the more disadvantaged members of these communities who most felt the burden of exploitation and took flight in search of a better life. (Caplan, 1995)

### **2.1.3 Ritual Change**

Ritual means a religious or solemn ceremony consisting of a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order. According to Collins dictionary ritual is any formal action which is set apart from profane action and which expresses sacred and religious meaning. The term “ritual” has been used by GOFFMAN (1972) to denote the routine practices of everyday life. Ritual action may therefore be regarded as occurring in both sacred and profane domains of social life. In both cases it is the symbolic quality of the action which is its defining characteristic. (David Jary & Julia Jary, 2000)

Discoveries and inventions, which may originate inside or outside a society, are ultimately the sources of all culture change. They do not necessarily lead to change. If an invention or discovery is ignored, no change in culture results. It is only when society accepts an invention or discovery and uses it regularly that we can begin to speak of culture change. (Ember & Ember, 1985)

Diffusion is the process by which cultural elements are borrowed from another society and incorporated into the culture of the recipient group. Borrowing sometimes enables a group to bypass stages or mistakes in the development of a process or institution. For example, Germany was able to avoid some of the errors made by its English and Belgian



competitors by taking advantage of technological borrowing. Japan did the same somewhat later. Indeed, in recent years some of the earliest industrialized countries have fallen behind their imitators in certain areas of production, such as automobiles, televisions, cameras, and computers. (Ibid)

Culture change and adaptation-The general assumption that most of the customary behaviours of a culture are probably adaptive or at least not maladaptive, in that environment. A custom is adaptive if it increases the likelihood that the people practicing it will survive and reproduce. Even though customs are learned and not genetically inherited, cultural adaptation may be like biological adaptation or revolution in another respect. The frequency of certain genetic alternatives is likely to increase over time if those genetic traits increase their carriers' chances of survival and reproduction. Similarly, the frequency of a new learned behaviour will increase over time and become customary in a population if the people with that behaviour are most likely to survive and reproduce. Thus, if a culture is adapted to its environment, culture change should also be adaptive- not always, to be sure, but commonly. (Ibid)

Types of cultural change- Many of the cultural changes in the world from A, D. 1500 to the present have been caused, directly or indirectly, by the dominance and expansion of western societies. Thus, much of the culture change in the modern world has been externally induced, if not forced. This is not to say that cultures are changing now because of external pressures; but externally induced changes have been the changes most frequently studied by anthropologists and other social scientists. Most of the external pressures have come from western societies, but not all. Far eastern societies, such as Japan and China, have also stimulated culture change. And the expansion of Islamic societies after the eighth century A.D. made for an enormous amount of culture in the Near East, Africa, Europe and Asia. (Ibid)

In addition to commercialization and religious change brought about by the expansion of Western and other countries, political changes have often occurred when a foreign system of government has been imposed. But, as recent events in the former Soviet Union and South Africa indicate, dramatic changes in a political system can also occur more or less voluntarily. Perhaps the most striking type of political change in recent years is the spread of participatory forms of government –“democracy”. (Ibid)

## **2.2 Studies on Limbu Rituals**

Limbus have their own customs and traditions evolved through centuries and are leading their distinct way of life. Most probably they came in touch with Brahman Hindus during the rule of Sen Kings in Morang and Makwanpur and partly accepted Brahman as their priest which is evidenced by the name given to them in Nepali or Sanskrit words. Brahmans apparently started to influence some aspects of the rites of Limbu since then and the rites, which have no elaborated *Mundhums* and rituals such as rites of birth, feeding rice and cutting hair for the first time etc, must have been replaced or modified by Hindu way of ritual performances. However, Limbus resisted the overall attempts of Hinduisation because of their culturally well-entrenched and customarily firmly established way of life. (Subba, 1995:40)

Limbus have their own way of extending hospitality to the guests. If the guests are relatives, they are provided with *Phudong* offering of a ceremoniously slaughtered animal. Not only is meat provided with the food, but the meet of the upper part of the slaughter animal, specially the portion from forelegs to the head, is usually sent to their houses. Locally prepared liquor and *Tongba* (hot millet beer served in a wooden barrel-shaped vessel imbibed through a bamboo straw) are served immediately and this is the initial component of hospitality. If someone is not a close relative, *Phudong* is not provided. However, they are entertained with the best food that the hosts can provide. When foods are ready, they are placed in the proper way usually around the hearth and guests proceed either in the order of status or age to take the food. The sitting and hand

washing arrangements are made in the conventional convenient way. As the guests sit down in proper order, somebody on behalf of the hosts, request them to take food whatever they could manage. This custom is known as *Henamepma* similar to a toast proposal. The leader of the guests should respond to it. This procedure follows in a formal way on some special occasions and becomes informal and brief in other occasions. This custom usually does not apply to the strangers who are staying for one night in some house. However they also enjoy the hospitality of the host within their resource capability. Guests are entertained with *Yalang* (Paddy dance) at night. Invited guests from distance are often provided victuals of their way also. (Subba, 1995)

Limbus have a typical system of cooperation. When someone dies, the economic difficulties suddenly surround the family of the deceased. They have to invite all the relatives, both consanguineous and affinal, for the final death rite-*Khauma* (purification) accompanied with a feast (*Phoje*), which involves a lot of financial as well as human resources. So, this rite is usually performed after a few week or months from the date of the demise for necessary preparations. Various forms of support and cooperation begin from the day of funeral procession to the last rite of *Khauma*. As soon as the information of death of some person is spread, the villagers and kinsfolk come with certain amount of money, husked uncooked rice and millet beer (fermented grains) to the house of the deceased person to participate in the funeral procession. This helps to bear the cost of the funeral procession and other necessary items to some extent. Lots of manpower is needed for the preparation of *Khauma rite*, specially in the course of husking rice, preparing millet beer or liquor, preparing leaf-trays and bamboo *Tongbas*, and making some pickles. Kinsfolk and villagers always cooperate in all these activities to reduce the economic burden of the concerned family. Sometimes, close affinal relatives also send some persons to assist in this regard. On the day of *Khauma*, villagers, specially kins join the function with the assistance of certain amounts of money (*chamyang*), liquor, millet beer and husked rice. The close relatives invited from distance come to participate in the function and they also offer supports with certain amount of money, liquor and male

buffaloes or male goats. This custom may support the family to some extent who has to perform such ritual. Sometimes it adds the burden because of costs involved in *Phudong* and other activities of hospitality. In marriage ceremonies also, there are customs assisting with money (Pangyang), liquor and husked rice by the villagers, specially by kinsfolk. It is a system of mutual support flowing on both sides. The cooperation and support during the death rites is compulsory whereas the support during the marriage ceremony is voluntary and dependable on the interests and choice of the kins or villagers for lending their support or cooperation. (Subba, 1995:44)

Limbus have a distinct culture, tradition and religion of their own, though they are living together with their Hindu and Buddhist neighbours. They have a long tradition of narrating or reciting *Mundhums* and performing certain rituals and observing ceremonies in their own distinctive ways. *Mundhum* is a legend, a folklore, prehistoric accounts, sermons and moral and philosophical exhortations in poetic language. It is a scripture living in oral tradition. It denotes to “the Limbu religion” or “the Limbu religious literature”. (Subba, 1995)

Some families among the Limbu people consult astrologers, - others do not. When marriage is contemplated, the parties, very commonly without the knowledge of their parents, meet together in some place of common resort, or in some market, should there exist any, in order to sing witty songs, in which test alone the male is required to excel his fair rival. If the candidate is beaten in the contest by the maiden whose hand he covets, he at once runs away from the scene, being ashamed of his defeat; but if on the other hand, he wins, he seizes her hands and leads her triumphantly to his home without further ceremony, a female companion, generally accompanying her. (Vansittart, 1993:109)

If the candidate had previously won the maiden’s attachment by any means whatsoever, the places to meet being some fountain, or well where the maiden goes to fetch water, and thereby had opportunities of discovering her efficiency in the art of singing, he pays a

bribe of a couple of rupees, or its equivalent in kind, to the maiden's companion to declare him the winner in the singing competition. (Ibid)

Generally marriage is contracted by courtship among the parties, when the above described means are not resorted to, before their parents are informed of their intentions. This takes place when the candidate obtains free access to the house of the maiden's father, which is easily effected by presenting the nearest relation living in the house with a pig's carcass. This kind of present is called *phudung* in the Limbu language. When the marriage ceremony takes place, the bridegroom, if rich enough, kills a buffalos or else a pig, which is presented to the bride's parents with a silver coin fixed to its forehead. (Ibid)

Amongst the lower people the parents of the bride seldom know anything about the marriage till the return of the girl from her vector's house. At the time of the marriage the friends and relations of the parties assemble, each bringing a present of a basketful of rice, and a bottle of *murwa* or *arack* (jand). Then the parties meet in a spacious courtyard, attended by their friends and neighbours. The bridegroom beats a drum, to the music of which the bride dances, outsiders also takes part in the dance. (Ibid, p.110)

This is over when a priest called *Phedangma*, or *Bijua*, conducts certain religious ceremonies, beginning with the mantra " according to the commands handed down from ancient time, and doings of the patriarchs, we bind our son and daughter to-day": when the Bijuwa repeats the mantra, the bridegroom places his arm in that of the bride, they at the same time holding a cock and a hen respectively, which are then made over to the *Bijuwa*. At the end of the service the throats of the fowls are cut and the streaming blood is received on a plantain leaf from which women are drawn. In another leaf vermilion paint is placed. The bridegroom then dipping his middle finger in the paint passes it by the forehead of the officiating priest to touch the bride and tip of the bride's nose. The bridegroom then says: "Henceforth from this day, maiden, thou art my wife,"

and shouting repeatedly, "Maiden, thou art my wife," puts a vermilion mark on her brow. The slain fowls are thrown away; whoever picks one up, gets it. The following morning the priest invokes some friendly spirit, who thus advises the married couple: "You two should henceforth live as husband and wife as long as you live on this earth," to which the parties suitably reply "We will do as you command." Unless this period of a lifetime is mentioned, the marriage is not considered auspicious, and to make it auspicious certain other ceremonies are prescribed which open up new sources of gain to the priest. (Ibid)

Those who bring bottles of *murwa* as presents are admitted as guests to the marriage, when first of all *murwa* and roasted meat, generally pork, are served, after which a dish of rice is presented to every one of the party. At the termination of the marriage ceremony the bride, released from her captor's hands for the first time, returns to her parents. Two or three days after her return comes the 'Parmi' (intermediator or umpire) to settle differences with the bride's parents, who now for the first time are supposed to learn the matter about her and the bridegroom. He brings as a rule three things- one bottle of arrack, the entire carcass of a pig, and a silver coin- as presents to the bride's parents. Just as he goes to make the presents to the bride's parents, they are bound to fly into a passion and threaten to beat him, whereupon he entreats them not to beat him and tries to pacify them by producing another rupee from his pocket. The bride's parents then interrogate him in an angry tone, saying: "Why did you steal away our daughter" and so on. When their anger subsides, he pays the price of the bride, which, according to his means and resources, varies from Rs. 10 or less, to Rs. 120 or more. When the money is not forthcoming, its equivalent kind is given; but in all cases a pig must accompany the price. When the bride's parents are satisfied, the demand of presents for the *suffas* (subahs) and village elderman is made. These men are the twelve elders of the village. Usually a sum of Rs. 12 or its equivalent in kind is given, which the *subahs* and other officials of the village appropriate to themselves. The payment is called *turayimlag* in the Limbu language, meaning the satisfaction or appeasing the anger of the bride's parents for

stealing their daughter. This amount, although due to the bride's parents, is now-a-days appropriated by the village officials. (Ibid, p.111)

When a Limbu dies, his body is sometimes kept for one whole night before being buried, and sometimes it is buried at once. The body is properly laid out at full length, and then carried to the spot chosen as a grave. The officiating priest, *Phedangma*, then receives one rupee with which he is supposed to purchase the piece of ground to be used as a grave from the gods and goddesses of the place. After the body has been buried some of the *Phedangma* keep the money, whilst others throw it away crying, "This is the money with which we purchased this land." The grave is dug deep and long. The body is laid in at full length with the toes pointing towards the sky, and with the hands upon the breast, and with the fingers of one hand clasped by the fingers of the other. Leaves are then scattered over the body. (Ibid)

The rich bury their dead, first enclosing the body in a coffin, in which is placed grain of every kind. Earth is then piled over the body and on the top of the earth a monument of stones is erected. If the body is buried near a road, the top of the grave will be made so as to be a convenient resting place for travelers, and a tree will be planted to give shade and coolness to them. (Ibid, p.112)

After the actual burial is over the priest and all guests and friends will go to the house of the deceased, where a feast is provided for them. The family and relatives of the dead will mourn for four days, if the deceased was a man, and for three days, if a woman, and are forbidden during that period to eat any meat, salt, dal, oil or chilies. After the mourning is over a pig is killed, and a *Phedangma* and all the friends and relatives having been called, a feast will be indulged in by them, and the *Phedangma* and the guest will say to the mourners: You are now allowed to partake of meat, salt, dal, oil, and chilli and all other things from today. The *Phedangma* will then again cry out loudly to the dead man's spirit, "Go now where your forefathers and foremothers have gone before." (Ibid)

Both cremation and burial are vogue amongst the Limbus (also amongst the other Kirantis), the latter being the more common and probably the common practice. The corpse is placed lying on its back with the head to the east. The grave is lined with stones, and a cairn, consisting of four tiers for a man, and three for a woman, erected on the top. The *Phedangma* attends at the funeral and delivers a brief address to the departed spirit on the general lot of mankind and the dom of birth and death, concluding with the command to go whether his fathers have gone and not to come back to trouble the living with the dreams. Neither food nor cloths are placed in the grave, but sometimes a brass plate with a rupee (or if a poor man with a copper coin) is laid under the head of the corpse. For nine days after the funeral the sons of the deceased live on plain rice without any salt, and for a month or two the relatives must avoid merry-making and wearing flowers in their hair. The special and characteristic sign of mourning is a piece of white rag tied round the head. There is no periodical ceremony for the propitiation of ancestors. (Ibid, P.115)

Every ethnic group or castes in the world have their own traditional marriage rituals. Likewise, Limbus also have their distinct and typical marriage rituals. Normally, marriage is said to be occurred when the relation of husband and wife is set up in between the man and woman formally. The procedure which is performed during the marriage ceremony is known as *Mekkam Thim* (marriage ritual). In Limbu community, specially, *Ningwa Takma* (love marriage) and *Naksingma Mekkhim* (arranged marriage) are prevalent. Marriage relation should not be established within the same clan. There should not be marriage relation with the maternal family up to four generations. Also, there should not be marriage relation with the step mother's family. If anyone is happened to marry his own relation then he will be killed by the lightning of thunderbolt or tiger or bear, the *Mundhum* says. Hence, it is meant that the marriage can happen in the Limbus only in between the couples who have no any kinship relation with one another before. (Senehang, 2007)



Manjul Yakthumba (2006:87-94) explains and focuses on the importance of four ritual steps and ten customs of Limbu marriage rituals. According to Yakthumba, four ritual steps of marriage ceremony and ten customs are as follows.

### ***Naksingma***

This is the first ritual step to be performed from the side of the future bridegroom. The meaning of this ritual step is to ask for the hand of bride (magani). After making sure that there is no any kinship relation with the future bride's family, certain members on behalf of the future bridegroom along with himself approach the bride's parents' house and present a bottle of millet beer, one rupee or a flower kept on the leaves of banana and ask for the permission to keep their words in front of the bride's parents. In the course of taking permission, the leader of the bridegroom's family (which is known as Ingmiba in Limbu language) also places some rupee which is known as *Pelifak Hukwa* (binti bisaune dastur). After accepting this souvenir from the bridegroom's family, the bride's parents permit them to speak and finally they reach in the conclusion of doing marriage.

### ***Tendham Mekkhim***

This is the second ritual of marriage ceremony. The meaning of *Tendham Mekkhim* is to enter the bride into the bridegroom's house. During this ritual the bridegroom sets out to the bride's home to bring her in the pre scheduled time along with his companions called *Lokande* (Janti). After reaching the bride's house, the bride along with her companion called *Lokandi* and the bridegroom return to the bridegroom's village. Prior to returning to the fixed place of the bridegroom's village, the bride and bridegroom are treated with the farewell feast along with rituals performances. After bringing the bride at some fixed place of the bridegroom's village along with her companions, they are served with feasts and entertained with the *Chyabrunge Dance* (Dhol Nach) throughout the night. The next day, the cloths and ornaments are sent for the bride where she is kept. Before the arrival of marriage procession, the brides are to be made ready by wearing clothes and nuptial finery. The clothes worn by the bride is called *Mekhli*. The bridegroom along with

marriage procession approaches the bride where she is kept. At this time he wears the special clothes which is known as *Taga*. While going to bring the bride the bridegroom follow four virgin girls carrying lamps. When the marriage procession reaches the bride's place, they are sprinkled with rice with curd. The bride salutes the virgin girls and also offers the blessings putting rice with curd on their forehead. Then the bride garlands the bridegroom with flower and also circles him round thrice and finally salutes at the feet. After this ritual, the bride is brought to bridegroom's house and is made to enter the house with performing rituals according to *Mundhums*.

### ***Mekkam Chokma***

This is the third ritual step of marriage ceremony. This is meant to perform Lagan after entering the bridegroom and bride into the bridegroom's house. The ritual generally takes place beside the main pillar of the house during night period and this ritual is officiated by *Phedangma*. During this ritual the bridegroom and the bride are made to vow that from this time onwards they live as husband and wife being honest and never segregate each other. The necessary altar prescribed by *Mundhum* are also kept while performing this ritual. After this both the bridegroom and bride start to salute the bridegroom's relatives based on their seniority and order. This ritual is known as *Nisingma Sewa*, which means introductory salute. The next day, the companions of bride (*Lokandi*) and other relatives who have come from bride's house are served with *Phudong* or *Mejman*. During this ceremony, *Lokandi* are offered with some rupee. In the same way, the relatives and neighbours are also served with the rice cooked by bride which is known as *Pangli Hukwa* or *Buhari Mejman*. After this feast ceremony, the third ritual step of marriage ceremony ends.

### ***Hakthaba Tomma***

This is the last Limbu marriage ritual in which the bridegroom and bride along with the experienced or senior person to negotiate (*Ingmiba*) are sent to the bride's parent's house

carrying necessary food items as a custom. They customs which are to be presented to the bride's parent's house are as follows:

**1. *Pan Takma Thim***

This is a custom in which the senior or experienced person from the bridegroom's side seeks the permission to put some words in front of the parents and senior relatives of the bride's family on behalf of the bridegroom along with a bottle of millet beer, one *perungo* of meat, one rupee or a flower kept on the leaves of banana.

**2. *Yang Thokma Thim***

This is a custom in which a bottle of millet beer, one *perungo* of meat, one rupee or a flower is presented to the bride's parents' house as a permission to stay there.

**3. *Sepma Tomma Thim***

In this custom a bottle of millet beer, one rupee or a flower is kept on the leaves of banana along with front part of the slaughtered animal such as buffalo, goat, pig are presented to the bride's parents house as an evidence of marriage.

**4. *Sadakappa/ Hahthawa Tomma Thim***

This custom is meant for the submission of main rituals. In which a large amount of millet beer, five rupee or a flower kept on the leaves of banana along with a complete pig are presented. Even other items are also added according to the capacity of bridegroom's family.

**5. *Turaippa/ Sabacha Thim***

In this custom, a bottle of millet beer, one *perungo* of meat, five rupees or a flower are presented as a gift to the main negotiator or head of the village on the side of bride's family. But these days, the gift is taken by senior members or *tumyahangs* of the village.

**6. *Yomacha Tomma Thim***

This is a custom in which a bottle of millet beer, one *perungo* of meat, one rupee or a flower are presented to bride's mother from the side of bridegroom.

**7. *Yobacha Tomma Thim***

This is a custom in which a bottle of millet beer, one rupee or a flower kept on the leaves of banana are presented to the bride's father.

**8. *Phungdoyangma or Nyaja Tomma Thim***

In this custom, a bottle of millet beer, one *perungo* of meat, one hundred rupees or a flower kept on the leaves of banana are presented to the bride's auntie (father's sister) from the side of bridegroom's house.

**9. *Yangsingma Yang Tomma Thim***

This is the custom of presenting a bottle of millet beer, one *perungo* of meat, five rupees or a flower kept on the leaves of banana to the marriage arranger of bride's side family on behalf of the bridegroom.

**10. *Pan Supma Thim***

This is a custom in which the senior person from the side of the bridegroom declares the end of his saying and also begs pardon if any mistakes are done. During this custom a bottle of millet beer, one *perungo* of meat, one rupee or a flower kept on the leaves of banana are presented to the bride's parents' house.

Chemjong (1948:34) describes about the Limbus religious rites as below:

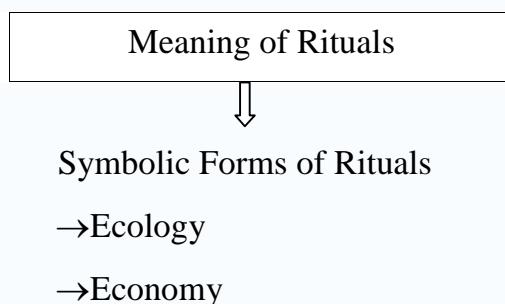
- (1) The supreme goddess of Limbus is *Yuma Sammang* (old gramndma goddess), which is worshipped twice a year i.e. in Mangsir and another in Baisakh.
- (2) The Limbus observe *Ya-Wama* (the worship during the cultivation period of grains) in Falgun and *Chasok Mangkhama* (the worship during the harvesting period of grains) or Nwagi in Nepali language during Ashoj.
- (3) When the Limbu women get pregnant, they perform a rite of womb worship for the protection of a child in the uterus which is known as *Sappok Chomen*.

- (4) The head of the Limbu family member perform the worship of goddess once a year to get the blessings from God for good health and prosperity of his family members, which is known as *Mangena* .
- (5) Every three years the head of the Limbu family member performs the worship of Goddess for his own good health, which is known as *Nahangma*.

Above mentioned studies have been found on Limbu community. Many foreign scholars and Nepali anthropologists including Limbu researchers and experts have also written about it. Some of them have been reviewed and presented to understand the rituals among the Limbu community, but none of the research has been conducted focussing about the rituals of migrant Limbu community of Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu. Hence, in this study it has been attempted to identify the symbolic meanings of rituals practiced by migrant Limbu community of Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu and explore the changing forms of the rituals and its causes.

### 2.3 Conceptual Framework

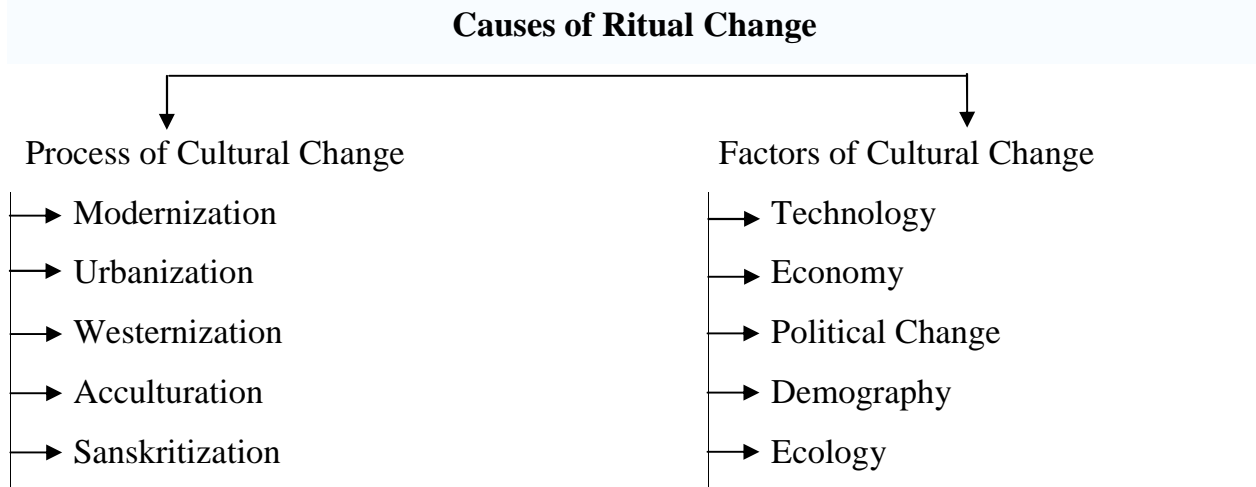
The conceptual framework is one of the important elements that guides the research. It plays a vital role in framing the research. This research is based on symbolic or interpretive theoretical framework, in which it has been identified the symbolic meaning of birth, marriage and death rituals practiced by Limbus residing in Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu. The conceptual frameworks for the identification of symbolic meanings are as follows.



- Religious Beliefs
- Technology
- Socio-Cultural Change

Conceptual framework of symbolic meanings

In this study, it has also been explored the changing forms of birth, marriage and death rituals and its causes among them. In this study, it has been considered the following process of cultural change as independent variables: modernization, urbanization, acculturation, westernization, etc and also the following factors of ritual change. Whereas the ritual change has been taken as dependent variable. The conceptual framework for the study is as follows.



**Fig. 2.1: Conceptual Framework on Ritual Change**

There are multiple causes for the change in the rituals among the migrant Limbus community of Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu. The most important processes of cultural change are the modernization, acculturation, westernization, sanskritization and urbanization. Beside these, economic factor, ecological factor, technological factor, demographic factor, political factor and the issues of cultural identity are also responsible for the change in rituals. The introduction of new education system and cultural

awareness also play a great role for the change in rituals among the Limbus. Other factor have also been analysed in the preceding chapters.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

This chapter discusses the research methods based on the available secondary information revolving around the review of existing literature and core feature of the study is based on the primary data generated by the key informants' interview and participatory observation.

#### **3.1 Selection of the Study Area**

No studies have been done on Limbu community of Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu so far. So, it has been taken initiative to study on this particular area of Limbu community. Hence, this research has been done so as to add the new dimension in the study of Limbu culture and rituals and also with the aim of fulfilling gaps on sociological/anthropological aspects.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

This study has adopted descriptive research design as it describes the existing ritual practices with the identification of symbolic meanings of birth, marriage and death rituals practiced by Limbus residing in Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu as well as exploratory research design as it explores the changing forms of birth, marriage and death rituals and its causes among them.

### **3.3 Types of Data**

In this study, two types of data have been utilized. They are as follows.

#### **3.3.1 Primary Data**

Primary data are collected from the key informants' interview and participatory observation. For this purpose, the researcher has prepared check-list for observation and a schedule for key informants' interview.

#### **3.3.2 Secondary Data**

The secondary data are collected from various studies such as books, published and unpublished documents from related literature and government documents from different libraries and institutes. Qualitative research method is used in this study.

### **3.4 Universe of the Study**

The area which is selected for the study of Limbu community is Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu. Since the research is based on qualitative data gathered from the knowledgeable persons who have thorough knowledge about Limbu rituals and also from Limbu priests who are expert in Limbu Mundhum. For this, they have been selected purposively. Because the research is based on qualitative research method, the house hold survey is not conducted.

### **3.5 Data Collection Tools and Techniques**



Collecting data is the connecting link to the world of reality for the researcher. Without the data, methodology can not be utilized to bring the researcher to the conclusion. In this research, for the collection of primary data, following data collection tools/instruments are used.

### **3.5.1 Participatory Observation**

Participatory observation is the most important method for getting primary data. It is also significant to understand the social natural process of the people of a specific setting. The rituals of birth, marriage and death are observed through direct participation along with them. Hence, the researcher himself has acted as a participatory observer in this research. During the observation, the researcher has also used the check-list to identify the symbolic meanings of birth, marriage and death rituals and their changing forms. The check-list for observation method is shown in appendix I.

### **3.5.2 Key Informants Interview**

Knowledgeable persons about Limbu rituals and Limbu priests who are expert in Limbu Mundhum are selected as key informants and interviewed in order to collect the qualitative data so as to identify the symbolic meanings of birth, marriage and death rituals and also to explore the changing forms of these rituals practiced by migrant Limbus of Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu. The schedule for key informants' interview has been shown in the appendix II. The names of key informants have been listed in the appendix III.

### **3.6 Data Analysis and Presentation**

The qualitative data gathered from the field who have thorough knowledge about Limbu culture, rituals and the ritual changes are descriptively analyzed and then presented in a simple manner. In the same way, the qualitative data collected from observation method with chek-list has been analyzed and presented in a simple manner.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

During the research of this paper the Limbu priests, specially *Samba* and *Phedangma* are more formal with their religious legends or oral sayings. So, they are reluctant to share their secret knowledge, even though the researcher has tried his best to uncover their secrets about rituals by creating conducive environment. Hence, this constraint has been taken as ethical considerations. The various Limbu rituals such as birth ritual, marriage ceremony and death rites are very difficult to observe by the researcher within the stipulated time of dissertation writing and was a matter of chance to observe those rituals, even though the researcher has tried his best effort to fill up the lacunae through first hand information from various key informants.

## CHAPTER IV

### SYMBOLIC MEANING OF BIRTH, MARRIAGE AND DEATH RITUALS

In this chapter, the existing birth, marriage and death rituals of Limbus in the study area have been described and the collected qualitative data from the observation method have been analyzed to identify the symbolic meanings of these rituals. The key informants' interview schedules have also been analyzed to know the symbolic meaning of birth, marriage and death rituals practiced by the Limbus in the study area.

According to the key informants' interview and from the observation method, the following symbolic meanings of birth, marriage and death rituals practiced by migrant Limbus of the study area have been described, analyzed and identified.

#### 4.1 Birth Rituals

When the Limbu women get pregnant, then they perform a ceremony preceding the birth which is known as *Sappok Chomen*. *Sappok Chomen* is a rite of womb worship or Kokh Puja in Nepali. After the successful birth of a child, they perform *Yandang Phongma* followed by naming a child and also perform weaning (pasni) to the child. *Yandang Phongma* is a Limbu word which means hanging of a cradle (Yandang-cradle, Phongma-to hung).

##### *Sappok Chomen*

*Sappok Chomen* is a rite of womb worship for the protection of a child in the uterus. It is also rite of propitiating gods for the good health of the mother and baby in the womb as well as successful delivery of the baby. It is unique in the sense that no one in the vicinity solemnizes such ritual except Limbu. It is usually held within the nine months of pregnancy and if it is not done due to unavoidable reasons during the period, it can be observed even after birth, but it must not be missed.

The ritual of *Sappok Chomen* is long one and it takes three days to complete. The rituals of two days are conducted outside the home and the rest of the rituals of one day inside the home. The altar is prepared specially and decorated with various things by skilled or experienced persons in the rituals. Lots of chickens, ducks, eggs, pigs, fishes, pigeons, etc are kept ready for sacrifice to different divinities.

The Limbus have a belief that the divinity makes the pregnant women unable to give birth and causes illness and birth defects to the baby in the womb. They also believe that it causes stomach pain, headache, dizziness and other health hazards. So, the propitiation of divinity is necessary to protect the womb. This worship is conducted by *Phedangma*. *Phedangma* is a Limbu priest who performs rituals.

Traditionally, several restrictions are imposed upon an expectant mother. She should not cross over a rope tied to cattle, should not eat unequiped fruits, slaughter animals or order for slaughter or see slaughter, should not see the melting of gold and silver should not cross the river and should not quarrel. The popular belief is that whatever the pregnant woman sees or gets the impression, it will have a bearing on the baby in the womb (Subba, 1989). All these belief symbolize that the Limbu women during the pregnancy period should be given good care. It is the duty of the husband to take good care of his pregnant wife and also the responsibility of father-in-law to take care of their pregnant daughter-in-law. Hence, the rite of *Sappok Chomen* womb worship has a great significance in the sense that it not only propitiates the divinity for the protection of womb and mother but also informs about the pregnancy to family members and other close relatives thereby to take care of the pregnant women.

In the study area, these days, the rite of *Sappok Chomen* has not been observed by Limbus. Because of the influence of various changing factors such as urbanization, modernization, westernization etc, this ritual has vanished from their life cycle ceremonies.

### ***Yangdang Phongma***

*Yangdang Phongma* means the naming of child after birth. When the child or baby is born in house, the house becomes impure. The guests are not entertained in the house. The close relatives of the new born child are also considered unclean. So, worship and other ceremonies are not conducted on their behalf until the new days for the female baby and four days for male baby. In *Yangdang Phongama*, a ritual of purification of the mother, the baby, the house and the close relatives occur. Eventually, giving a name to the baby and showing the light of the day to the baby are performed while doing *Yangdang Phongma*. All these birth ceremonies are officiated by *Phedangma* chanting *Mundhum*.

The mother of the newly born baby takes a bath in warm water early in the morning and the baby is also cleaned properly. *Wadum pakwa*-water of the seven springs or “*Chiralphek Chwa*” (water in which gold has been washed) is sprinkled in and outside of the house and to the members of the house through a small bunch of *Samyok* (*Cynodon dactylon*) and *Namyoba* (Indian worm wood Heabane/*Artemisia Vulgaris* ) for the purification *Phedangma* performs the ritual of purification with the aspersion of holy water. *Tumyahang* (distinguished persons) support and accept the purification procedure. After purification, the worship of supreme divinity *Yuma* and other guardian deities are performed and prayed for the protection of a new family. *Mangenna* of the new born baby is also conducted for the baby first time and a name is given to the baby. *Mangenna* is one of the important rituals of Limbu which is performed usually once a year to protect oneself from accidents, evil spirits, envy and jealousy, other physical harms and to succeed in the desired attempts. *Phedangma* invokes his *Mukkma Sams* (powerful omniscient preceptors or gurus) and asks for to instruct him the name to the baby. Names are usually given considering the time, day or date, month, year or special occasion of the baby’s birth and his/her form, colour etc. Names are also borrowed from the names of

sun, moon and other planets, gods, legendary heroes and heroines, great kings and queens and other popular figures or objects.

While performing *Yangdang Phongma*, the cradle which is prepared for newly born child is hung at the proper place and then the cradle is made to swing keeping a puppy inside. It is believed that the dog saves the newly born baby from evil spirits and other harmful divinities, which are hung in the ropes of the cradle, will hide the soul of the baby while sleeping in the cradle so that the evil spirits will not see baby's soul. Finally, the baby is kept in the cradle and the cradle is made to swing slowly. In this way, birth ceremonies are completed by performing *Yangdang Phongma* ritual. Lastly, the relatives and invitees are served with the feasts arranged by the newly born baby's family members.

In recent times, in Kathmandu valley, birth rites and the ritual of naming a child is mostly influenced by Hindu tradition. They have left the traditional way of naming a child performed by *Phedangma*, and they have started naming a child and preparing his/her horoscope by Hindu priest (an astrologer) by noting the exact time and date of birth. In the study area, it is also found that by the influence of modernization and independence the parents of the newly born baby have also started to name their newly born baby according to their choice and which works as birth certificate. So, the certificates name of the child varies from the name given by a priest or an astrologer. But while performing life rituals of the child (person), the name given by a priest/an astrologer is considered authentic. These days, the influence of Buddhism is found which has impact on the birth ritual practices through their proximity, inter-dependence and interaction with Tamangs, Gurungs and Sherpas in the Limbu community of study area.

These days, the ceremony of weaning (*pasni*) or rice feeding to the child is performed usually after six months. Normally, the grandmother inaugurates the feeding ceremony by feeding rice to her grandchild (in the presence of *Phedangma*) and then other family

members and invitees start feeding the child. The guests and invitees offer gifts and food items to the child on the occasion of feeding ceremony. The cutting of hair of baby son male is done after three to five years following the Hindu traditions. But, still there is a belief that the presence of maternal uncle is necessary for the successful ritual performances. It has been found that the *Cynodon dactylon* (doob grass or *Samyok* in Limbu language) is the symbol of purifying object to end the ritual pollution from birth.

## **4.2 Marriage Rituals**

According to Vogardus “Marriage is an institution for admitting man and woman to family life”. In the same way, E. Westermarck says that marriage is a relation of man and woman which is recognized by customs and laws and involved certain rights and duties both in the case of the parties entering the union and in the case of children born of it. So, the pattern of marriage is an important factor in determining the fertility and population growth rate of a society. In Nepal, various social customs and traditions are associated with marriage practices, social customs or laws specify as to whom, how and where one should marry and these differ from society to society and from one subgroup or class to another also. There are different forms of marriage system in different ethnic communities of Nepal depending on the distinct marriage customs and traditions of their own. In Limbu community, specially three types of marriage systems are prevalent.

1. Arranged marriage (*Naksingma Mekhim*)
2. Chosen marriage or marriage by free choice (*Nanumna Khemma Mekhim*)
3. Theft (abduction) marriage (*Khumna* marriage)

Among these, arranged marriage and chosen marriage are common in practice. According to Yethang Batcha (convention set by Vethang, the wise legendary Kirat leader), mating is strictly prohibited among the consanguineous relations or in the same clan (Thar) and it is allowed only beyond four degrees on the mothers side (Chemjong,

1961). The instructions of the *Mundhums* are strictly followed even today. Complying with the rules laid down by *Mundhums*, exogamy is practical, but endogamy is preferred in the sense that endogamic circle is restricted within the scope of Limbu and Rai ethnicity. (Subba, 1985)

In the study area, there are practices of both endogamous and exogamous types of marriages. Theoretically, they do not marry within the member of same clan. Unlike Magars and Gurungs, they do not practice cross-cousin marriage. Commonly, they had the practice of arranged marriage system. Traditionally, marriage arrangements are made by parents of couples. Although in some cases the young people select their own partners before their parents make the arrangements. In the study area, there is also practice of inter caste marriage system with other ethnic groups.

Two types of marriage systems i.e. chosen or love and arranged marriage are prevalent among the Limbu community of study area. In the love marriage, there is a free choice between the couples so, there is no need to negotiate or arrange by the parents of the couple but in arranged marriage, the agreement of parents of the couple is a must. The traditional system of the theft marriage does not exist in Limbu community of the study area. In the past, young men and women used to meet in some place of common resort, or in some market, participated in witty duet songs of competitive nature and a candidate, could seize her hand, and lead triumphantly to his home. Now-a-days, such practices have been vanished.

In an arranged marriage, initiation of preliminary negotiation in search of a bride for the bridegroom is taken by the bridegroom's family through a team of matchmakers. The leader of the matchmaker is called *Ingmiba* in Limbu language, who should be experienced to conduct negotiation with bride's parents or guardians. The guardian or parents of the bride either accepts or rejects the request after due consideration. Other form of marriage such as the chosen marriage or marriage by mutual consent of both



parties precedes the arranged marriage. When the negotiation ends at fruitful i.e. the agreement is set up between the bridegroom's family matchmakers and bride's family parents accepted the request from bridegroom's matchmakers, then the dates for swoyamber and marriage are fixed. After this agreement, both of the family members start the preparation for the marriage ceremony.

After the due preparation, the swoyamber is organized at bride's home where the bridegroom offers a finger ring to the bride and the bride's parent and close relatives offer blessings to the bridegroom. During the ceremony the bridegroom gets present with his close relatives including experienced matchmaker and cousin brothers. A feast ceremony is also organized for the bridegroom's team on behalf of bride's family on that occasion.

After the completion of swoyamber, on the pre scheduled date marriage ceremony takes place in bridegroom's home. Bride is taken away from her parent's home by a team of the groom and she is accompanied by a group of ladies, known as *Mekesama* or "*Menchyaburukma*" (*Lokandi*). The bride is brought in nearby groom's house which is taken as bride reaches to the shelter, the bride together with *Lokandi* are accorded with warm welcome playing traditional musical instruments such as *Chyangbrung* (Dhol), *Narsinga* and *Sanai* and also booming the guns in pair. But, now-a-days, the custom of firing guns (*Bharuwa Banduk*) has vanished due to various reasons in the study area. There is a custom of presenting a wooden jar of liquor (*Sijongwa* or *raksi*), fried meat and one rupee silver coin to the bride groups which is meant for the relaxation of their long distance walk. It is also known as *Langhiwa. Ke-Lang* (*Chyabrunge dance*) is presented to entertain them. *Yarakma* or Paddy Dance is performed throughout the night with the involvement of both guests and hosts regardless of their ages.

The next day marriage ceremony takes place with various rituals to complete the ceremony. In the morning time, precious ornaments and clothes are given to the bride.

Then the bride is decorated with nuptial finery by her friends. In the same way, the bridegroom gets ready with the dress up of Daura-suruwal, waist band with khukuri, *Tiwajo* (Sripech) on head and comes out his house along with virgin girls (sisters), carrying consecrated water pot decorated with flowers. The bridegroom proceeds ahead along with marriage procession to the location where the bride is kept. When the groom reaches the location, *Lokandi* brings out the bride in front of the groom and groom puts a mark of Tika (a mixture of curd and rice) on her forehead. The bride salutes him in his feet and puts a garland round his neck. Then, she is brought to groom's home either by carrying or on the horse back along with procession. Now-a-days, even the vehicle is used in fetching the bride to groom's home due to the scarcity of horse or even due to the advancement of transportation. For the carrying purpose, the bride's own brother is authorized to carry her. When the groom reaches close to courtyard, people or procession sprinkles with curds and rice. Before entering into the groom's house, groom's father, mother, uncles, aunts and other senior family members put auspicious mark of Tika on bride's and groom's forehead.

All the invitees and guests are served with dinner and alcohol (or other drink items). After dinner, the most important rite of marriage ceremony begins which is known as *Mekamthim* and officiated by *Phedangma* (a Limbu Priest). *Mekamthim* usually starts in the late evening. To begin with this rite, banana leaves are spread out in a tray in front of the main pillar of the house and two water pots decorated with flowers, two small lamps (*Lasemi, Namsemi*) lighted in small leaf plate, a garland and red lead powder in another small leaf plate, two *Tongbas* and two leaf-plates of fried meat are kept on the tray. The bridegroom and bride are made to sit down in a crossed leg position on the right and left side respectively. Both the groom and bride are accompanied by male assistant (*Lokande, Unchi oppma*) and female assistant (*Lokandi, oppma*) on either side to assist them to go through the rituals of *Yupparung Yang Chepma, Ingladkma, Mekkhim Mangenna* and so on. In this position, the groom and bride are covered with shawl and the right thigh of the bride is kept under left thigh of the groom. Similarly, the left palm

of the groom is placed on right palm of the bride. After this, *Phejing Phengma* solemnizes the *Mundhum* of *Metkamma Mangenna* for the bride and groom, while doing this a pair of male and female chicken is sacrificed by beating on its back by a rod and some drops of blood is let to flow on the banana leaves. Until and unless the blood comes out of the mouth of chicken, the process of sacrificing other pairs of chickens continues, the belief is like this. After letting the blood to flow on the banana leaves, the *Phedangma* carefully observes the blood and forecasts the future of their conjugal life and also predicts whether the first child to be born will be a male or a female.

During the performing time of *Mekkamthim* (ritual of the auspicious moment of marriage ceremonies) *Phedangma* gives a great emphasis on the union of two souls and respect, support and love for each other. *Phedangma* addresses the distinguished gentlemen and ladies to remain as witness while solemnizing *Mekkamthim* ritual, and asks the father and mother of the groom whether they will behave properly to their daughter-in-laws or not. After listening this, the parents of the groom assure that they will behave properly towards the bride and also commit for sincere, cordial and affectionate relationship. This ritual is called *Ingladakma*. Now, the *Phedangma* shows a one rupee silver coin called *Lungyang* and declares them husband and wife. Here, the two parts of a silver coin depicts the husband and wife. Previously, this contract was solemnized in a *serilung* (a white shining stone) when there were no silver coins and the bride had to keep it safely. In this context, *Phedangma* used to declare that the wife would be set free or considered divorced when she hits her husband's forehead with that *serilung* when she is not treated properly by her husband as well as other senior family members. Now the *Yupparung* has become the symbol of *Serilung*. This ritual is known as *Yupparung Chepma*.

After the completion of *Ingladakma* ritual, *Phedangma* invokes the gods, the sun, the sea, the earth, the fire, the air etc to become divine witnesses of the marriage union and prays the omnipresent, omniscient goddess *Tagera Ningwaphuma* to bestow happy and prosperous conjugal life with progeny for the new people. Meanwhile, the groom puts red

vermilion powder on the forehead of the bride and the bride bows down at his feet as respect and promise. In some places, the bride puts a garland around the neck of the groom before saluting him at his feet. At this time, the guns are fired and traditional musical instruments are played on. *Phedangma* declares the end of the rite with closing slogans of well wishes. *Chyabrung* dancer enters the house in the mean time and dances around the main pillar of the house in a typical style of *Mekkamthim*. At this moment the guests and the hosts with local youths make a noise, push and drench each other, rejoice and come out of the house. Now, *Lokandi (Mekesama)* leave the bride and take part in Paddy dance (*Yarakma*). Now onwards, the groom and bride get free to intermingle with the guests and start saluting to senior relatives together. After the auspicious marriage rite ends, the bride also starts to help in domestic work being the member of the groom's family specially, in serving the guests and cleaning other utensils. After getting involved in household work from early in the morning, the bride initiates the cooking of the morning feast which is known as *Pangli hukwa* (bride's feast). *Phudong* is offered to the guests on that occasion. *Phudong* is an animal to be killed as a part of the slaughtered animal to entertain the guest as part of the hospitality. After this feast, the locals and guests assembled in the groom's house get dispersed and other invitees and guests are also given a warm send off by serving liquor and providing provisions for the way. There is a tradition of sending *Methkim Salang* to bride's home from the groom's home to inform that the marriage ceremony is performed successfully.

But, these days this sort of tradition has not been practiced in the study area. In the study area, it was found that the marriage ceremony was influenced by Hindu culture and traditions as acculturation. In some marriage practices of higher or economically prosperous Limbu families, mostly, they organize wedding party in party palaces to all invitees during the day time and only performed *Methkim* in the evening at the bridegroom's house. Hence, the pattern of marriage ritual has been changed with the modern trend of marriage practices in the study area. Since the Limbus of the study area has come in contact with other ethnic communities, the feast and liquor items to be used

in the marriage ceremony have also been amended or modernized. Because of the busy urban life-style or from the economic point of view, they have started to wrap up the marriage rituals within a day. Identified symbolic meanings of marriage rituals are as follows.

The nuptial finery worn by bridegroom called *Tiwajo* or crown on the head is the symbolic meaning that Limbus were king at some historic time period previously. While performing *Mekkamthim* or Lagan in nepali, the *Phedangma* (Limbu priest) used to declare husband and wife by showing a *Serilung* ( a white shining stone) to the bridegroom and bride previously, but now-a-days *Serilung* has been replaced by a silver coin. Two sides of a silver coin depicts the husband and wife. Here, the silver coin (*Yupparung*) has become the symbol of *Serilung*.

### **4.3 Death Rituals**

Death rituals of Limbus are distinctively marked different in comparison of neighbouring Hindus (Brahmans & Chhetri). When some dies with natural death, they have to perform several rites of various stages. These are as under:

- *Chesama* (Funeral Procession)
- *Kham Ingma* (Purchasing of the burial ground)
- *Sam Lapma* (Taking out the soul of the dead person)
- *Sam Sama* (Giving away the soul of the dead person to ancestors)
- *Yumchama* (Eating salt i.e, forbidden food)
- *Khauma* (Invoking the light i.e., disconnect the deceased person with his relatives, belongings and human society)
- *Mikwa sangma* (Wiping away the tears)

### ***Chesama***

*Chesama* is a Limbu word which means funeral procession during the performance of death rituals. When a Limbu person dies, the floor in front of the main door is cleaned to keep the dead body there usually facing westward. The dead body is washed with clean water and dressed up with new clothes and also shrouded with white plain cloth. To inform the neighbours and relatives they perform single firing from the gun (Bharuwa banduk), but in the study area this sort of firing is not found. Although they inform their relatives and neighbours through phone calls and also sending persons or messages. A bamboo stretcher (*chedhap*) which is made from a single bamboo is prepared to place the dead body. Previously, people used to make a wooden box (*khong*) made from the wood of Khongliba tree and carry the box to the graveyard (*Ipungden*). According to knowledgeable person of this ritual claim that *chedhap* is a new practice.

Before placing the dead body in *chedhap*, the dead body is sprinkled with golden water and garlanded with flowers. The dead body is placed inside the *chedhap*, the dead body is covered properly by white cloth except the head. The head and feet of the dead body are placed in upon a brass plates and the head specially face is kept under a kind of canopy made up of two stripes of bamboo and a piece of white cloth so as to keep the face under sun-shade. The brass plate which is placed under the head of dead body is called *Sandakhong* (resting place of dead soul). Half mana of uncooked rice wrapped with white cloth is placed beside the head of the dead body. Old silver coins are placed at the forehead, mouth and chest of the dead body. The plate, silver coin and *sam* (the soul of the dead person) are packed in a white cloth with due ritual before burial or cremation and brought back home to perform other rituals for the same, people other than Limbus are not allowed to touch the dead body. All the kith and kin pay their last homage by offering flowers and money tribute.

### ***Sam Lapma***

*Sam Lapma* is a Limbu word which means the taking out the soul of the dead person during the burial procedure of the dead body. Before the funeral procession starts *Samba* declares that the particular person has died and he/she has to go his/her own destined place leaving the present home, human society. *Samba* also declares that he/she is no more with relatives now onwards and follows his/her own path of destiny according to the *Mundhum* of *Susuwa LilinYakthunghang* (Limbu). This ritual is known as *Sam Lapma* (direct the passage for the dead soul). Kith and kin of the dead persons weep, scream being nearby the dead body and even close relatives wail touching the dead body. Women also join the funeral procession but before or cremation of the dead body they have to return back home from the graveyard. The funeral procession begins with the lifting and shouldering of *chedhap* by very close relative specially those who have sole right to mourn the deceased person, this moment remains for a short time and after that other neighbours and relatives help carrying the dead body to reach the graveyard while carrying *chedhap*, head of the deceased person is made in front. In front of the procession there will be a person who carries two stripes of white cloth attached to the two sticks representing two white flags and another person carrying three pieces of burning wood tied in bundle. There are two persons carrying swords in front and back of the *chedhap* carriers who shout at cross-roads or while crossing small rivers or streams so as to remove the evil obstruction from the path to go to the dead body. In front of the *chedhap* there is a person carrying a mixture of fried maize, pulse, soyabean, millet, barley etc who throws this mixture (*chebon*) at cross-roads or rivulets to clear the way for the soul of the dead person.

### ***Kham Ingma***

*Kham Ingma* is a Limbu word which means purchasing of burial ground after reaching the dead body in the graveyard. When the death rite procession reaches the graveyard, they keep the dead body on the ground placing head westward. Now after choosing the right place to build a new home for the dead person, they start digging the ground in exact size of the dead body into it, the purchasing of the burial ground is performed

which is known as ritual of *Kham Ingma*. The *Samba* puts one rupee coin on a grass blade while purchasing the piece of ground. After the *Kham Ingma* ritual, the dead body is placed into the coffin (which is made digging the ground) making the head to the west. Then another ritual taking out the soul of the dead person (*Sam Lapma*) is performed. While doing this, the plates and silver coins are taken out and kept in a small piece of small shroud. Then the coffin box is covered properly by the stones. All the participants of funeral procession pour some soil into the grave and burial work is done carefully. When the level of the burial coffin box comes to the ground level four sticks which are placed at four corners of the stone coffin box are taken out. This ritual is meant for taking the soul of the living persons out of the coffin. Then, the grave is lined with stones making four tiers for male and three for female. On the top of tiers, an airn is erected. The people, who can afford, construct a long lasting type of tombstone on top of the grave with the stone inscription afterwards.

The burial of the dead body is mostly done upon hilltop places. Every community has its separate burial ground (*Ipungden*). In the study area i.e., in Kathmandu valley, mostly they have performed the burial ritual of the dead body at the fixed place of Sleshmantak forest called “Bankali”. But these days, most of the Limbus cremates the dead body at the river side. Being the famous river and having its religious value, they mostly cremate the the dead body at the river side of Bagmati. Almost the same procedures have been followed while performing the cremation of the dead body at the river side. The persons, who mourn the funeral rite are made undressed at the river side or spring, shave the head, eye brow and moustache and cover their waist and head by white cloth. The mourners (*chesaba*), after getting returned home, are provided with light food without salt, ginger and pepper, after keeping their foot on burning wood or touching the fire. The mourners are made to sit down on hay in one corner of the house. On that day, close relatives and neighbours gather at home and stay through-out the night taking care of the mourners and deceased family.



### ***Sam Sama***

When the dusk falls, the preliminary for *sam sama* begins. The *sam sama* is meant for giving away the soul (*sam*) of a dead person to ancestors. To begin with this ritual, *Phedangma* propitiates divinity of the forest or nature (*Tambhungna*) with a pair of male and female chicken, an egg and *Tongba* and asks for not to obstruct the path of the soul of dead person which leads to the world of the ancestors. This ritual is performed outside the home. A small basket loosely woven from bamboo splits is made which is known as *Khengchuri* (a symbol of home where the soul of dead person is made to enter through the ritual performance). For the male, the *Khengchuri* is made of four tiers bamboo splits whereas for female it is made of three tiers bamboo splits. Then it is hung on the top of the hearth. Now, *Phedangma* begins to search the soul of the dead person. Eventually, *Phedangma* finds and makes the soul of the dead person agree somehow to enter the house. Then, *phedangma* offers the foods and other things to please and satiate the dead soul. Now *Phedangma* invokes one of the prominent ancestors to come and take their descendent to their world. Finally, the ancestor is made to take his descent i.e., soul of the dead person to his own world. For that, *Phedangma* makes the prominent ancestor happy by offering different food items. Then, the soul of the dead body remains no longer on the earth where he/she was alive. This process of ritual takes 3-4 hours to complete.

### ***Yumchama/Yumsama***

When a male Limbu dies, mourning is observed for four days and for female it is observed for three days and during the morning period salt, ginger and chilli are not taken by close relatives of the deceased persons including the mourners. They should eat simple food and fruits and should not use metal plates for this purpose. They should not talk to those whose mother tongues or ethnicity differs. They should not play, entertain, worship or bow down to senior relatives. During this period, even they should not wear the sewn clothes and should not comb their hair and ornaments and colorful garments.

If a child dies before his/her *Yangdang Phongma* rite (three days after birth for female child and four days after birth for male child), no funeral rites of formalities are performed and if the child dies before the changing of the teeth, mostly, for both cases they do not observe the mourning period and there is no uniformity in the ritual also. But, in the cases when they are observing mourning period they are purified and provided the restricted foods on the third or fourth day. This ritual is known as *Yumchama* (taking salt) or *Yumsa* (salt and meat) considering it as impure food item and also taking it as moment of sorrow.

While performing this ritual, ginger, pepper, garlic, and (meat?) are fried and kept in a small leaf plates separately. All the plates with prepared dishes are placed on a bamboo tray including two bottles of millet beer and locally brewed liquor. A folded white cloth is placed on the bamboo tray and a coin of five rupees is placed on top of the cloth along with the new clothes and caps of those who are observing the mourning ritual. The mourners have to face west and *Phedangma* starts reciting *Mundhum* facing towards them and perform the ritual of purification. With the end of his recitation, he tells all to taste the food items and spices placed on the bamboo tray and to share by all. Hereby the ritual of *Yumchama* concludes. On that occasion, other kins, affinal relatives and gentlemen (*Tumyahang*) should be present there. During the performance of purification by *Phedangma*, if it also contains the *Mundhum of Khauma* (disconnect the deceased person with his/her relatives, belongings and human society) then, this ritual indicates that the funeral rites come to the final stage by three or four days after the death of a person. And, if *Phedangma* does not recite *Khauma Mundhum* then the final rite *Khauma* accomplished by *Mickwasangma* (wiping away the tears of the mourners) should be performed on the date of odd numbers such as 13 days, 45 days counted from the month of death but should not exceed twelve months. Till the end of final rite of the deceased person, the mourners (*Kriyaputri*) should wear white cloths and also they should not get involved in any entertainment ceremonies or worships. So, they are considered impure till the final rite of the deceased person is observed.

In the study area, *Yumchama* ritual has not been conducted on three or four days along with final rite *Khauma* accompanied by *Mickwasangma*. The death rites, being the rituals of sorrow and unhappiness, are not observed keeping for a long time and even they do not want to remember the deceased person being a mourner for a long period. Hence, the bereaved family wants to conclude death rituals as soon as possible as per the *Mundhum* allows.

### ***Khauma***

This is the second last rite of death ceremonies, and it is performed when this rite is not performed along with *Yumchama* accompanied by *Mikwasangma*. This rite is performed within a year counted from the month of the death. On this ceremony, all the relatives and participants of the funeral processions are invited and a feast ceremony for them is organized. This is done with a full preparation cooperated by close relatives. All the invited guests are kept in temporary shelter nearby the house and the shelter looks like a camp-fire and nobody dances, sings and plays musical instruments in the first night or till the *Khauma* ritual is performed.

To begin *Khauma* ritual, a cut off head of a male buffalo, fried meat in two plates of leaves, a bottle of liquor, a pitcher of millet beer, two leave-plates filled with fried red pepper and salt, one meter folded white cloth and five one rupee silver coins on the white cloth are placed on a bamboo tray. All the mourners, relatives and guests are made to sit in the middle facing the west. Then, *Phedangma* addresses the mass describing about the efforts made to remain alive to deceased person and how the close relatives observe the mourning period with hardships, difficulties and restraints for the peace of the deceased soul in his/her ancestors world and also asks for their opinion and consent to bring light on their lives. He also asks all assembled there whether the departed soul has received the food, meat, spices and drinks and some of the gentlemen representing the mass have to reply that he/she has received and taken to his/her full satisfaction. Again, *Phedangma*

asks all assembled persons whether the departed soul can stay with ancestors, along with gods and goddesses with-out being obstructed on the path and gentlemen respond yes he/she can. Then, *Phedangma* declares that the departed soul is separated with the living ones and gives the approval of allowing the mourners free from all restrictions of food, clothes, entertainment activities, worships and considering them purified now onwards. Finally, *Phedangma* breaks his stick carrying by himself while performing *Khauma Mundhums* and throws away. After this ritual, the mourners take bath and change the new clothes. Then, they start to visit the guests and exchange salutation.

In the study area, this ritual of *Khauma* is not found to have practiced separately keeping the mourning period such a long time, but instead they perform this *Khauma* rite along with *Yumchama* within three or four days counted from the death of deceased person. They avoided this ritual to perform separately with a full preparation in this changed context seeing it as a show of unnecessary death ceremony with economic burden. These days, Limbus have already practice avoiding meat in the feast organized while performing death ceremony and also started organizing simple food party at hotels/restaurants for the death processions apart from purification of mourners at the house.

### ***Mikwa Sangma***

This is the last rite of death ceremonies, usually performed by *Samba*. This rite is meant for washing out the stains of tears from the face of the mourners. This ritual symbolically indicates the total separation of dead soul and forgetting the deceased person. To perform this ritual, *Samba* sprinkles water (collected water from various springs and rivers) on those persons who have been newly purified. The sprinkling of water is done with four bundle of leaves with stems of different trees collected from four directions (west, east, north and south). Those trees are considered as the trees of tears. Water is sprinkled from head down to the feet and this ritual starts from the senior most family members to junior ones. This ritual is performed at the courtyard. In the course of performing this rite, the

houses, doors and pillars are also sprinkled with this water. With the end of this ritual, funeral rites are completed.

Being the death rites of Limbus quite different from other neighbouring communities specially Hindus (Brahmans and Chhetris), they have distinct and complex death rituals. However, in the study area, because of the sanskritization Limbus are also found to have presented gifts and donations to Brahman priest with the belief that the gifts will be received by the soul of the dead person. Non-Limbus are also found to have participated in death rituals of Limbus as a funeral procession and other procedures of death rituals. They (Non Limbus) are also found to have supported the deceased family with certain amount of money following the custom and tradition of Limbus. Identified symbolic meanings of death rituals in the study area are as follows.

When a Limbu person dies, previously there was a tradition of carrying the dead body keeping in the wooden box called '*Khong*' made from *Khongliba* tree, but now it is replaced by a bamboo box called '*Chedhap*' in hilly regions and mostly, it is replaced by coffin box made from wood in the study area. Hence, both the bamboo box and the wooden coffin box are the symbols of *Khong*. During the burial ritual of dead body, when the level of the coffin box comes to the level of ground level four bamboo sticks which are stuck at the four corners of the stone coffin box, these are taken out which is meant for the taking out the soul of the living persons out of the coffin. Here, the four bamboo sticks are the symbol of souls of the living persons. During the performance of *Sam Lapma* (giving away the souls of the dead body to the ancestors), a small basket loosely woven from bamboo splits which is known as *Khengchuri* hung over the hearth represents the symbol of home where the soul of the dead body is made to enter through the ritual performance.

## CHAPTER V

### CHANGING FORMS OF RITUALS AND ITS CAUSES

The details of birth, marriage and death rituals already discussed have shed light on various aspects of the Limbus' rituals of the study area. In this chapter, the researcher has explored the changing forms of rituals among the Limbus of the study area based on the life cycle ceremonies which have already been discussed. It also deals with the causes of ritual change among the Limbu community of the study area. According to the first hand information taken from various key informants and from the observation, the changing forms of birth, marriage and death rituals practiced by the Limbus residing in the study area are as follows.

#### 5.1 Birth Rituals

In the study area, the ritual preceding the birth of a child such as *Sappok Chomen* or "Kokh Puja" is not practiced. It is due to the impact of modernization, urbanization and education that the Limbu people residing in study area become more educated so that they don't need to inform and make conscious about the caring of pregnant mother and the protection of womb. With the advancement of health facility, they have been benefited as per their economic status there by leading this preceding birth ritual extinct. Although this ritual is very typical and distinct among the ethnic communities, which is observed inviting within own relative members, they could not continue practicing in the study area because the neighbouring members or the close relatives of Limbu are scattered through-out the valley.

In the study area, the home where a child is given birth is considered impure and the ritual of purity is performed after four days for male and three days for female counted from the date of birth along with *Yangdang Phongma* (naming a child). During this ritual, only the close family members, mostly, within the household are invited but previously

(i.e., prior to migration into Kathmandu valley) they used to invite other own ethnic community members.

In the study area, the home where a child is given birth is considered as impure and the birth ritual of purity is performed after four days for male and three days for female along with “Yangdang Phongma” (naming a child). During this ritual, only the close family members, mostly, within the household are invited but, previously (i.e., prior to migration into Kathmandu valley) they used to invite own ethnic community members. While naming a child, mostly, they do not invite Limbu priest and they perform this ritual only by Hindu priest. After getting purified and naming a child, they have observed feeding ceremony (weaning period) after six months from the date of birth of a child. They usually perform this ritual feeding rice to the child initiated by grandmother first and then senior members including other invitees at the ceremony. In this ceremony, other ethnic community neighbours were also invited by the organizer family. Previously, before migration into the Kathmandu valley, they used to invite only close relatives. Now-a-days, the invitees have also started to offer gifts to the child while attending this ceremony, and in turn the child’s family has organized a feast ceremony to welcome the invitees.

## **5.2 Marriage Rituals**

In the study area, the procedure of marriage rituals has taken place very shortly due to the changing trend of marriage ceremony. There has been changing patterns of marriage rituals due to the impacts of various factors such as urbanization, modernization, acculturation and Hinduization. Mostly, the arranged and love com arranged marriages are common in the study area. The ritual of *Naksingma* (Magani) has been changed in the study area among the Limbus due to the influence of modernization and acculturation. They simply perform this procedure as the Hindu community does. In the study area, mostly, Limbus are found to have conducted negotiation for matching of couple to get married outside the house. They are found to have conducted this sort of negotiation at

restaurants, office, other common places but previously, they used to conduct this negotiation within the household among the parents and other close relatives.

After reaching both family members (bridegroom and bride's family) at the consent of marriage, they fixed the date for swoyember and final marriage ceremony accompanied by "Lagan". In some cases, it is also found to have performed the swoyember in the same day of final marriage ceremony. The trend of carrying bride by her brother to reach the bridegroom during the day of ceremony has been decreasing.

The booming of gun fire (Bharuwa Banduk) is not found in the study area, but still this practice is prevalent in rural areas of Limbuwan. The wearing of nuptial finery by bride has been decreased and the clothes that has to be worn by bridegroom specially, Daura-suruwal with *Tiwajo* (Crown) at the head is mostly replaced by suit-pants in the study area. A typical waist band called *Chandrahar* that has to be worn by bridegroom was almost not found. So, the culture of wearing this finery during marriage ritual has vanished. Although, the ritual of giving *Yupparung* (considered as a Baina) by the bridegroom to the bride, still, existed. *Yupparung* is a coin which is usually kept making a knot by the bridegroom at the bride's traditional shawl. The Limbus of the study area are found to have performed the main ritual of marriage ceremony called *Mekkam Thim* (Lagan) in a very brief time in comparison to eastern Limbuwan areas. The *Mekkam Thim*, a ritual of auspicious moment of marriage, is found to be officiated by *Phedangma* (Limbu Priest).

Now-a-days, in the study area, with the increasing trend of cultural awareness in the name of ethnic identity, it has been found that some traditional rituals such as *Ke-Lang* (*Chyabrun*g or Dhol Dance), *Yarakma* (Paddy Dance) are performed in most of the Limbu's marriage ceremony. But, unlike playing the panchebaja instruments in eastern Limbuwan areas, this sort of practice is almost not found in the study area. All the marriage rituals except *naksingma* are found to be accomplished within a day. The



marriage ceremony has been performed with organizing party to treat all other invited guests specially, by the Limbus who are economically prosperous. In the eastern part of Nepal where Limbus are densely populated, it takes three days to accomplish one's marriage ceremony. The culture of giving *Phudong* to the bride's groups after the final marriage ceremony has been decreasing in the study area.

The reciting of *Mundhum* while performing marriage ritual has become a very short in the study area in comparison to the eastern Limbuwan areas. Mostly, the Limbus of the study area are found to have organized the marriage ritual at Hattiban's Kirat Manghim area. Some Limbus have been found to perform this ritual at their own house. It is also found that the trend of using food items and liquors in feast ceremony has been changed because of the impact of modernization and acculturation on Limbus of the study area. Basically, there has been a significant change in the patterns of marriage rituals among the Limbus of the study area due to the changing factors mentioned above and the influence of Hinduization.

### **5.3 Death Rituals**

In the study area, when a Limbu person dies either the dead body is cremated or burned after performing the procedures of death rituals. Unlike the Hindus, the dead body is not brought out of the house but placed inside the house facing the dead body west to east in front of the main door. Even though, there is a tradition of placing the dead body in "Chedhap" (a coffin box) made up of bamboo but now-a-days in study area there has been an increasing trend of placing the dead body in wooden coffin box. When a Limbu person dies, a single booming of gun is fired to inform the neighbours and relatives, but this practice is not found in the study area due to various reasons such as security aspects, technical constraint, etc. Even in the Limbuwan areas, this practice has been started to decrease because of the conflict situation that persisted for ten years in Nepal and also due to other technical reasons related with booming of guns. There is also a change in carrying the dead body while taking to the graveyard or burning places, mostly, in the

study area due to the availability of transport means the dead body has been carried on vehicle whereas in rural areas, it is carried by funeral members. According to the wish and decision of deceased family members, the dead body is either buried or cremated. Sometimes, in some cases, even the desire made by the deceased person before he/she expires also dictated whether the dead body is to be cremated or burned. In the study area, mostly, the death rituals are followed by *Yumchama* and final ritual *Khauma* accompanied by *Mikwasangma* which are completed after four days for male and three days for female counted from the date of death. Since they do not want to remember the tragic moment for a long time caused by death of their person they accomplished this death ritual in a short time as per the Mundhum allows.

In the study area, the dead body was usually cremated on the bank of Bagmati River being the famous religious site. Those who wish to perform the burial; they have buried the dead body in the graveyard located at Bankali of Sleshmantak forest nearby Pashupatinath temple. Previously, including in Limbuwan habitation areas, there is a practice of serving meat during the final feast ceremony organized for the guests invitees and funeral members, but now-a-days this practice has been vanished in the study area. In the study area, previously, the migrant population of Limbus are few and it is very difficult to find *Samba* (Limbu priest who specially performs death rituals) to perform final death rites. So, in that case they used to perform the final death rites at their original place where there is availability of Limbu priest with shifting the death rituals from the study area. But now-a-days, the sambas are easily available in the study area with the trend of increasing migrant Limbu population. Hence, mostly, they perform final death rites there in the study area. Although they have performed final death rites in the study area, they have also performed purification procedure in their original place if their close relatives are also there.

Being the migrant population, the Limbus in the study area come in contact with other ethnic community members. So, with the influence of acculturation and Hinduization

some of the Limbus have also started to offer Danas (gifts given to the Brahman priest with the belief that the gifts will be received by the soul of the dead person) to Brahman priests in the name of Vaitarani ritual. Similarly, other ethnic community members also participate in funeral ceremony of Limbus and there is also an increasing trend of getting purification. So, the death rites of Limbus is also considerably influenced by modernization.

## **5.4 Causes of Ritual Change**

In this study, the causes for the ritual change have been explored among the migrant Limbus residing in Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu. Among the causes, process of ritual change and factors of ritual change have been analyzed which are as follows.

### **5.4.1 Process of Ritual Change**

Among the various process of ritual change, following processes have played key role for the ritual change in the study area which are as follows.

#### **Modernization**

Modernization is a process which indicates the adoption of the modern ways of life and values. It refers to an attempt on the part of the people, particularly those who are custom-bound, to adapt themselves to the present time, conditions, needs, styles, and ways in general. It indicates a change in people's food habits, dress habits, speaking styles, tastes, choices, preferences, ideas, values, recreational activities, and so on. People, in the process of getting themselves modernized give more importance to science and technology. The scientific and technological inventions have modernized societies in various ways. They have brought about remarkable changes in the whole system of social relationship and installed new ideologies in the place of traditional ones.

The introduction of new technology and the new health care system in place of old ones in many areas have minimized the importance and roles of Limbus priests (*Phedangma*,

*Sambas* and *Yebas*). Hence, the ritual pattern has been changed among the Limbus of the study area. The emerging application of new means of communication, expansion of modern education system and various social awareness programs have influenced the ways of life thereby changing the forms of rituals practiced by Limbus residing at Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu. Due to the introduction of new education system, many job opportunities are created which make the people busy thereby performing the rituals in a short period. Limbus become more educated due to availability of modern education system in the study area so that the superstitious beliefs towards the rituals have been minimized thereby changing the forms of rituals. In the study area, these phenomena of modernization have extremely limited their roles so that there has taken place the changing patterns of rituals.

### **Urbanization**

The growth of industries (industrialization) has contributed to the growth of cities (urbanization). Urbanization denotes a diffusion of the influence of urban centres to a rural hinterland. Mitchell refers to urbanization as being the process of becoming urban, moving to cities, changing from agriculture to other pursuits common to cities, and corresponding change of behavior patterns. Hence, only when a large proportion of inhabitants in an area come to cities urbanization is said to occur. Urbanization has become a world phenomenon today. As a result of industrialization people have started moving towards the industrial areas in search of employment. The growth of cities or urbanization has resulted in urban concentration and rural depopulation.

Urbanization is a process in which increased settlements occur thereby leading the growth of population density. Because of the urbanization, the increased population density brings more people to become in contact with increased social interaction and mobility which cause the change in the forms of performing rituals. Due to urbanization, there is a more competition in getting good job, quality education and to upgrade life standard so that the Limbus residing in Jorpati VDC have found to involve on selected

occasions of rituals because of their lack of time. They are also found to perform the birth, marriage and death rituals within a short period thereby changing the forms of rituals.

### **Westernization**

Westernization is a process which indicates the adoption of western culture and values. Since most of the economically prosperous Limbus live in western countries, the life-cycle rituals of Limbus in the study area has been greatly affected by the introduction of new food habits, new ways of celebrating rituals and other western social values. Due to the influence of western customs and values there has been found tremendous change in the ways of performing rituals of birth, marriage and death among the Limbus of Jorpati VDC. They have started to observe birthday ceremony and offering bunch of flower to marriage couple during the marriage ceremony. In the study area, Limbus have adopted western cultures such as celebrating the Valentine day, marking the marriage anniversary, celebrating April Fool, also giving treat on the successful of desired attempt, etc.

More than any other things the western education has an impact on the style of living of the people. They give up their inhibition towards meat-eating and consumption of alcohol. They also adopt western style of dressing and dining. It include even learning to appreciate western music and participating in western dance. Western education results a big change in the outlook of those educated.

### **Sanskritization**

Sanskritization is a process in which people of low caste or tribe or ethnic group change their customs, ideology and way of life in the direction of a higher twice born caste. Sanskritization denotes the process of upward mobility. In this process, a caste is trying to increase its position in the caste hierarchy not at once, but over a period of time. It would take sometimes, a period of one or two generations. Economic betterment is not a necessary pre- condition to sanskritization, nor economic development must necessarily lead to sanskritization. However, sometimes a group (caste, tribe) may start by acquiring,

political power and this may lead to economic development and sanskritization. Sanskritization does not take place in the same manner in all the cases. Studies have revealed that in most of the cases the lower caste tend to imitate the upper castes particularly the Chhetri and Brahmin castes. There are instances of upper caste imitating some of the practices of lower caste, and sometimes of even tribal groups. For example, a Brahmin may make a blood sacrifice to one of the local deities through the medium of a non-Brahmin friend. Thus, it can be generalized that sanskritization is not a one way process; it is two-way process. Not always one caste takes from the higher caste, sometimes, it also gives in return.

Since sanskritization become more common phenomena for upward mobility, the Limbus in the study area have also started abandoning some of their traditional customs and instead have adopted Hindu practices. Ultimately, this cultural behavior brings the change in patterns of rituals among the Limbus of study area. Some of the Limbus residing in Jorpati VDC have adopted the ritual of performing Rudri of one day worship as a sanskritization. Some of the Limbu women have also been found to observe fasting with the belief of getting success in desired attempts or for the well being or protection of their husbands. Some of the Limbus have adopted the ritual of offering Danas such as Vaittarani to Hindu priest during the performance of death rituals with the belief that the gifts will be received by the soul of the deceased person.

### **Acculturation**

Acculturation is a process in which a change in the cultural behaviour and thinking of a person or group of people through contact with another culture occurs. It is a process by which continuous contact between two or more distinct societies causes cultural change. This can happen in one of two ways. The beliefs and customs of the groups may merge almost equally and result in a single culture. More often, however, one society completely absorbs the cultural patterns of another through a process of selection and modification. This change often occurs because of political or military domination. It may cause considerable psychological disturbance and social unrest.

In this acculturation process, somebody absorbs the culture of society from birth onward. Some of the Limbus residing in Jorpati VDC have been acculturated with the ritual of Buddhism. In the study area the Limbus have also started to accept some practices of other ethnic communities selectively. For instance, they have started to offer white shawl (khada) to the person during the welcome, farewell or on the occasion of marriage ceremony.

#### **5.4.2 Factors of Ritual Change**

Besides the process of cultural change, in the study area, other factors are also explored which are responsible for the ritual change. These have been analyzed as follows.

##### **Socio-economic Factor**

In the study area, the increasing trend of economic interdependence and increasing volume of trade as well as other financial activities have contributed on the change of practicing rituals among the Limbus. The life cycle ceremonies, in the study area, are found to have organized expending more money in the name of feast, party or giving away gifts and presents. In the study area, the migrant Limbus have come in contact with other caste community members so that they have also started to invite them as a neighbor to participate in the ritual ceremonies, and in turn they also participated in their cultural ceremonies. Because of this participation in their different rituals, the changing pattern of rituals has occurred in different ways.

##### **Technological Factor**

The development in the field of technology culminated in the great event of industrial revolution. The industrial revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the various developments woven around it, revolutionize human life in several aspects. The tempo of the technological changes has not stopped. Technology and the technological changes continue to affect the human life and social order.

Due to the advancement of technology in this modern age, the life styles of the migrant Limbus residing in Jorpati of Kathmandu have been changed drastically. Due to the introduction of global communication system, there has been more interaction and communication with other people. Also transportation facilities, being advanced day by day in the study area, have enhanced mobility in daily life activities. These facilities not only make traveling easy but also change the way of life in the study area. The changing life style among the Limbus has also direct impact on their various cultural practices. Due to the advancement of transport vehicles, they have used the vehicles to carry the bridegroom and bride along with marriage procession during the marriage ceremony. Likewise, the vehicles are used to carry the dead body to the cremation site or graveyard by the Limbus residing in Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu. Hence, there has been a tremendous change in the forms of ritual practices among the Limbus of the study area.

### **Ecological Factor**

After the migration of Limbus in Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu, they have been influenced by the ecological environment so that they have been forced to undergo adaptation process. During the process of adaptation, they have learned and practiced various cultures of that community or particular environment of that place thereby changing their forms of rituals.

### **Demographic Factor**

Due to the dense population in the study area, the migrated Limbus have become adopted with more interaction than before their migration. Due to the population effect their way of organizing rituals have been changed thereby changing the forms of rituals. They have been found to practice birth, marriage and death rituals among the other population group so that their way of performing rituals have been changed as they also have to address other population group's interest.



## **Political Factor**

Politics is essentially an ancient and universal experience. The art and science of political analysis have developed over several thousand years throughout many parts of the world. In particular, political analysis has thrived in all cultures that have inherited the rich legacy of the ancient people like ancient Greeks, Romans and the Indians. Like many other arts and sciences political analysis achieved an extraordinary degree of sophistication among the Greeks some twenty centuries ago under the leadership of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Since their time every age has produced a few great students of politics who have contributed much to the development of the discipline, i.e., political science.

Since the Limbus of the study area are migrated, mainly, after the advent of democracy in 1990 A.D., they have got more freedom and are also influenced by the movement of political parties. The impact of political aspect has reached in such a situation that even during the performance of funeral rites the funeral members have political talks. In most of the rituals, the political figures have their presence due to the gathering of mass people. So, there has been changing forms of rituals due to the influence of political factor.

## **Ethnic Identity**

In the study area, with the fear of losing the cultural identity many local organizations and solidarity movements of various ethnic or tribal groups including the Limbus have played crucial roles in the direction of protecting ethnic identity. Even various political parties have encouraged backwarded ethnic people including Limbus for their movements of regaining cultural identity. Such movements have influenced and educated the Limbu people in preserving the traditional and distinct cultures of their own to some extent. Hence, they have started practicing their traditional culture such as *Yarakma* (Dhan Nach) and *Ke-lang* (chyabrung dance) in various ceremonies, which has ultimately brought the change in their forms of rituals of Limbus residing in the study area.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Summary

Limbus are one of the main ethnic groups who inhabit in nine districts of eastern hilly regions mainly, scattered all over Nepal and abroad as well. They perform each and every rituals according to Mundhums. This study has focused to describe the rituals among the Limbu community of Kathmandu valley. They have distinct culture, rituals and traditions of their own. They have their own way of performing birth rituals, marriage ceremony and death rites.

In this changing context, Limbus have also migrated into Kathmandu valley mainly from eastern part of Nepal in search of better livelihood at different times. Then, they have been residing in different parts of Kathmandu valley scattering at Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur districts. Whatever may be their rituals before migration, but these days they have been sustaining their culture performing various rituals on different occasions. During this course, the way of performing their rituals has been changed with the influence of various factors.

The main objectives of the study is to identify the symbolic meaning of birth, marriage and death rituals and to explore the changing forms of rituals and its causes among the Limbus residing in Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu. Due to short time and other limiting factors, it is not possible to study all the aspects of rituals of Limbu. So, some problems are specified mainly, as a form of life cycle rituals such as birth, marriage and death and changing forms of rituals and its causes.

This is a descriptive analysis cum exploratory research. For the collection of primary information, qualitative research methods e.g., interview, questionnaires, participant

observation methods are used. For the collection of secondary information, several books on Limbu and articles has been referred. One of the main objectives of the study is to identify the symbolic meaning of birth, marriage and death rituals among the Limbu community of Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu.

It is found that the *Cynodan dactylon* (doob grass or *Samyok* in Limbu language) is the symbol of purifying object to end the ritual pollution from birth. During the marriage ceremony, the nuptial finery worn by bridegroom called *Tiwajo* or crown on the head is the symbolic meaning that Limbus are king at some historic time period previously. While performing *Metkhim* or Lagan in Nepali, the *Phedangma* (Limbu priest) used to declares husband and wife by showing a *Serilung* ( a white shining stone) to the bridegroom and bride previously, but now-a-days *Serilung* has been replaced by a silver coin. Two sides of a silver coin depicts the husband and wife. Here, the silver coin (*Yupparung*) has become the symbol of *Serilung*.

When a Limbu person dies, previously there was a tradition of carrying the dead body keeping in the wooden box called '*Khong*' made from *Khongliba* tree, but now it is replaced by a bamboo box called '*Chedhap*' in hilly regions and mostly, it is replaced by coffin box made from wood in the study area. Hence, both the bamboo box and the wooden coffin box are the symbols of *Khong*. During the burial ritual of dead body, when the level of the coffin box comes to the level of ground level four bamboo sticks which are stuck at the four corners of the stone coffin box, these are taken out which is meant for the taking out the soul of the living persons out of the coffin. Here, the four bamboo sticks are the symbols of souls of the living persons. During the performance of *Sam Lapma* (giving away the souls of the dead body to the ancestors), a small basket loosely woven from bamboo splits which is known as *Khengchuri* hung over the hearth represents the symbol of home where the soul of the dead body is made to enter through the ritual performance.

The next objective of the study is to explore the changing forms of birth, marriage and death rituals and its causes among the Limbus residing in Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu. According to the explored changing forms of the rituals, the causes for the ritual change have been identified in the study area. The identified causes are: modernization, urbanization, westernization, socio-economic aspect, sanskritization, acculturation, transportation facilities and issue of ethnic identity. So, we can say that change in rituals among the Limbus of the study area have occurred due to the above mentioned causes.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

Although Limbus are the migrant ethnic group in the Jorpati VDC of Kathmandu, they are found to have practiced their birth, marriage and death rituals according to Limbu *Mundhums*. During the course of performing birth, marriage and death rituals, these rituals have their own specific meanings which are identified and mentioned in the previous chapters. After the migration of Limbus in Jorpati VDC, Kathmandu, there has been found changes in the forms of rituals due to various causes. In the study area, the methods and procedures of performing birth, marriage and death rituals by the Limbus have been amended thereby changing the forms of these rituals. All these changing forms of rituals have occurred in the the study area due to the influence of different factors or causes such as modernization, acculturation, sanskritization, westernization, urbanization, socio-economic activities, transportation facilities and the issues of ethnic identity which have been explained and mentioned in the previous chapters.

## **6.3 Recommendations**

Since the different ethnic groups have already been migrated or in the process of migration into the Kathmandu valley, their traditional rituals might have changed due to the influence of various factors after residing in the valley. So, the researcher recommends to carry out more research regarding the change in the rituals of various ethnic groups of Kathmandu valley so as to find out changing factors of rituals and their influence. The researcher also recommends the NGOs/INGOs to carry out research on comparative study in ritual change of various ethnic groups who have already been migrated in the valley. So that the findings from the comparative study will be useful while launching the development projects. Finally, the researcher recommends to carry out research on historic Limbu ethnic group focusing on specific rituals such as the changing patterns of marriage rituals among the Limbus of Kathmandu valley, the practice of Mundhums among the Limbu community of Kathmandu valley etc.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Abraham, M. Francis (1982). *Modern Sociological Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Baral, Bhawani & Limbu, Kamal (2008). *Politics of Limbuwan*. Dharan: Bhanendra Kumar Limbu
- Caplan, Lionel (2000, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition). *Land and Social Change in East Nepal*. Kathmandu.
- Caplan, Lionel (1995). *Warrior Gentlemen 'Gurkhas In the Western Imagination'*. Uk: Berghahn Books, Oxford.
- Chemjong, Imansingh (1995). *Kirat Itihas*. Jhapa: Buddha Printing Press.
- Chemjong, Imansingh (2003). *Kirat Mundhum*. Kathmandu: Kirat Yakthung Chumlung.
- Chemjong, Imansingh (2003). *Kiratkalin Bijayapurko Samkhipta Itihas*. Kathmandu: Kirat Yakthung Chumlung.
- Chemjong, Iman Singh (1948). *History and Culture of Kirat People*, Jhapa: translator sher Bdr Innam
- David Jary & Julia Jary (2000 3rd edition). *Dictionary of Sociology*. UK: Harper Collins.
- Ember & Ember, Carol R. & Melvin (1985). *Cultural Anthropology*. New Jersey: Nancy Roberts.
- Guinness, Paul (2002). *Access to Geography, Migration*. UK: Bath Press Limited.
- Herald, M.H. (1980). *Sociology Themes and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Hicks, David (1995). *Cultural Anthropology*. Uk: Harper Collins college Publishers.
- Hukpa, Rajprasad (2010). *Samba Mundhum*. Kathmandu: Hukpa Chongbang Pariwar.

- Kainla, Bairagi (2003). *Limbu- Nepali- English Dictionary*. Kathmandu: Pragy Pratisthan.
- Kainla, Bairagi (2003). *Sristi Baran*. Kathmandu: Limbu Sahitya Bikas Samaj.
- Kirat, Yakthung Chumlung (2003). *Limbu Food and Drinks*. Kathmandu: Kanchan Printing Press.
- Morris C.J., Northey W. Brook (1927). *THE GURKHAS*. New Delhi: Mrs. Rani Kapoor, Cosmo Publications.
- Palungwa, Dil (2009). *Limbuwan Rajyako Samkshipta Itihas Ra Punarsthapana* Kathmandu: Narendra Singh Angbuhang.
- Ritzer (5<sup>th</sup> Edition). *Sociological Theory*. Mc Graw-Hill International Edition.
- Senehang, Dil (2010). *Limbu Clan, Habitation and Culture*. Kathmandu: Seri Tamling Senehang.
- Shrestha, Shivakumar (1985). *Limbuwanko Aitihasyik Adhyayan*. Lalitpur: Kirat Prakashan
- Subba, Chaitanya (1995). *The Culture and Religion of Limbus*. Kathmandu: K.B. Subba
- Subba, T.B. (1995). *Politics of Culture (A Study of Three Kirata Communities in the Eastern Himalayas)*. India: Orient Longman.
- UN, *Multilingual Demographic Dictionary*. Population studies No. 29, 1958, New York.
- Upadhyay, Prakash (2003). *Models of Culture*. Pokhara: Samjhana Publications.
- Vansittart, Eden (1993). *The Gurkhas*. New Delhi: Anmol Publications.
- Yakthumba, Manjul (2006). *Maulik Kirat Dharma-Sanskar*. Dharan: Dhanjit Limbu & Raj kumar Limbu.

## Appendix I

### Population by Caste/Ethnic groups for Nepal

S.NO.	Caste/Ethnic Group	Total	
		Number	Percentage
1	Chhetri	3593496	15.80
2	Brahman-Hill	2896477	12.74
3	Magar	1622421	7.14
4	Tharu	1533879	6.75
5	Tamang	1282304	5.64
6	Newar	1245232	5.48
7	Muslim	971056	4.27
8	Kami	895954	3.94
9	Yadav	895423	3.94
10	Rai	635151	2.79
11	Gurung	543571	2.39
12	Damai/Dholi	390305	1.72
<b>13</b>	<b>Limbu</b>	<b>359379</b>	<b>1.58</b>
14	Thakuri	334120	1.47
15	Sarki	318989	1.40
16	Teli	304536	1.34
17	Chamar, Harijan, Ram	269661	1.19
18	Koiri	251274	1.11
19	Kurmi	212842	0.94
20	Sanyasi	199127	0.88
21	Dhanuk	188150	0.83
22	Musahar	172434	0.76
23	Dusadh/Paswan/Pasi	158525	0.70
24	Sherpa	154622	0.68
25	Sonar	145088	0.64
26	Kewat	136953	0.60
27	Brahman-Tarai	134496	0.59
28	Baniya	126971	0.56
29	Gharti/Bhujel	117568	0.52
30	Mallah	115986	0.51
31	Kalwar	115606	0.51
32	Kumal	99389	0.44
33	Hajam/Thakur	98169	0.43
34	Kanu	95826	0.42



35	Rajbansi	95812	0.42
36	Sunuwar	95254	0.42
37	Sudhi	89846	0.40
38	Lohar	82637	0.36
39	Tatma	76512	0.34
40	Majhi	72614	0.32
41	Muniya	66873	0.29
42	Kumhar	54413	0.24
43	Danuwar	53229	0.23
44	Chepang (Praja)	52237	0.23
45	Haluwai	50583	0.22
46	Rajput	48454	0.21
47	Kayastha	46071	0.20
48	Badhae	54976	0.20
49	Marwadi	43971	0.19
50	Santhal/Satar	42698	0.19
51	Dhagar/Jhagar	41764	0.18
52	Bantar	35839	0.16
53	Barae	35434	0.16
54	Kahar	34531	0.15
55	Gangai	31318	0.14
56	Lodha	24738	0.11
57	Rajbhar	22463	0.11
58	Thami	22999	0.10
59	Dhimal	19537	0.09
60	Bhote	19261	0.08
61	Bing/Binda	18720	0.08
62	Bhediyar/Gaderi	17729	0.08
63	Nurang	17522	0.08
64	Yakkha	17003	0.07
65	Darai	14859	0.07
66	Tajpuria	13250	0.06
67	Thkali	12973	0.06
68	Chidimar	12296	0.05
69	Pahari	11505	0.05
70	Mali	11390	0.05
71	Bangali	9860	0.04
72	Chhantel	9814	0.04
73	Dom	8931	0.04
74	Kamar	8761	0.04
75	Bote	7969	0.04

76	Brahmu/Baramu	7383	0.03
77	Gaine	5887	0.03
78	Jirel	5316	0.02
79	Adibasi/Janjati	5259	0.02
80	Dura	5169	0.02
81	Churaute	4893	0.02
82	Badi	4442	0.02
83	Meche	3763	0.02
84	Lepcha	3660	0.02
85	Halkhor	3621	0.02
86	Punjabi/Sikh	3054	0.01
87	Kisan	2876	0.01
88	Raji	2399	0.01
89	Byangsi	2103	0.01
90	Hayu	1821	0.01
91	Koche	1429	0.01
92	Dhunia	1231	0.01
93	Walung	1148	0.01
94	Jaine	1015	0.00
95	Munda	660	0.00
96	Raute	658	0.00
97	Yehlmo	679	0.00
98	Patharkata/Kuswadia	552	0.00
99	Kusunda	164	0.00
100	Khatwe	74972	0.33
101	Dhobi	73413	0.32
102	Dalit/Unidentified Dalit	173401	0.76
103	Unidentified Caste/Ethnic group	231641	1.02
	Total	22736934	100

Source: National Planning Commission Secretariat (C. B. S. 2002)

## Appendix II

### CHECK-LIST

#### Birth Rituals

S.N	Ritual Practices	Before Migration Practiced (✓) Not practiced (✗)	After Migration Practiced(✓) Not practiced(✗)
1.	Performing <i>sappok chomen</i> (kokh puja)	✓	✗
2.	Performed normal delivery at home	✓	✗
3.	Use of Limbu priest while naming a new born child ( <i>Yangdang Phongma</i> )	✓	✗
4.	Use of bamboo made cradle for baby	✓	✗
5.	Use of Hindu priest to make horoscope for new born child	✓	✗
6.	Naming a child by English name or celebrities' name	✗	✓
7.	Performance of <i>Mangenna</i> (a ritual for the well being and protection of child) followed by <i>Yangdang Phongma</i>	✓	✗
8.	Use of Limbu priest during feeding ceremony	✓	✗
9.	Offering gifts to the child during his/her feeding ceremony	✗	✓

contd.

**Marriage Rituals**

S.N	Ritual Practices	Before Migration Practiced (✓) Not practiced (×)	After Migration Practiced(✓) Not practiced(×)
1.	Marriage by theft or abduction among the Limbus residing in study area	✓	×
2.	Marriage within the member of same clan	×	×
3.	Degree of consanguineous relations while matching the marriage is followed	✓	✓
4.	Negotiation for matching the marriage is conducted inside the future bridegroom's house or bride's house	✓	×
5.	Firing of guns in pair during the marriage ceremony	✓	×
6.	Use of container (Doli) to carry the bride during the marriage ceremony	✓	×
7.	Conduct of feast ceremony at party palace	×	✓
8.	Use of commercial liquors and beverages during feast ceremony	×	✓
9.	Observing marriage ceremony for three days	✓	×
10.	Use of Serilung (a white shining stone given	✓	×

	by the bridegroom to bride) during <i>Mekkamthim</i> (Lagan)		
11.	Custom of carrying Phudong after the successful completion of marriage ceremony from the bridegroom's house to the bride's house	√	×
12.	Custom of playing panche baja instruments during the marriage ceremony	√	×
13.	Custom of playing <i>Ke-Lang</i> (chyabrung dance) during the marriage ceremony	√	√
14.	Custom of performing <i>Yarakma</i> (paddy dance) during marriage	√	√

contd.

#### Death Rituals

S.N	Ritual Practices	Before Migration Practiced (√) Not practiced (×)	After Migration Practiced(√) Not practiced(×)
1.	Single firing from the gun to inform the neighbours after the death of the person	√	×
2.	Use of advance communication system such as cell phones to inform the far relatives of the deceased person	×	√
3.	Use of wooden box to carry the dead body to the graveyard or cremation site	×	√
4.	Use of vehicles to carry the dead body	×	√
5.	Mourning used to observe for a long period by the deceased family members and close relatives	√	×

6.	Use of meat during the final feast ceremony of death rite <i>Khauma</i>	√	×
7.	Use of commercial liquors and beverages during the death rituals	×	√

### **Appendix III**

#### **KEY INFORMANTS' SCHEDULE**

1. What sort of rituals do you perform preceding the birth?
2. What sort of rituals do you perform after a birth of a baby?
3. What sort of rituals do you perform during marriage ceremony?
4. What sort of rituals do you perform for death rites?
5. What sort of rituals do you practice now-a-days? Do you perform rituals by Limbu priests?
6. Do you follow Mundhums (a scripture living in oral tradition) during the performance of rituals?
7. Do you invite your neighbours when you perform rituals? Do you include your neighbouring other caste community members during the performance of rituals?

8. Do you participate at other's rituals performance?
  9. Have you found any change in rituals you practiced now-a-days? If so, what are the causes for that change?
-