

# FOLKLORES OF CHEPANGS:

## A STUDY IN THE PERFORMATIVE IDENTITY

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Authored by  
Suresh Aryal



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## Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge and render my warmest thanks to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Shiva Rijal for his scholarly guidance, regular encouragement and suggestion. I am profoundly grateful to all my teachers for their help and suggestion during this research work. I am grateful to Professor Dr. Anirudra Thapa , former Head of the Central Department of English, for his valuable suggestions to improve the draft of the dissertation. Similarly, I extend my gratitude especially to Prof. Ross Caughly and Dr. John Reinhardt for their valuable ideas, kind support and keen interest in my work. I would like to say thanks to Central Library, Kirtipur , Martin Chautari, for providing me access to the much needed for research materials.

My family has equally been important to me in the pursuit of this project. I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my late father, Mr. Devi Prasad Aryal and I am deeply indebted to my mother, Mrs. Kopila Aryal and lovely brother, Mr. Shambhu Aryal. I am thankful to my friends Sujan, Maya, Reena, Angel and all my class and university mates who directly or indirectly helped me to complete this dissertation. Lastly my thankfulness goes to those senior citizens of Chepangs who provided me valuable information about their folklores, shamanistic rituals and cultures. I respect their faith and cultural practices.

-Suresh Aryal

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# **Dedication**

Dedicated to

My late father Devi Prasad Aryal

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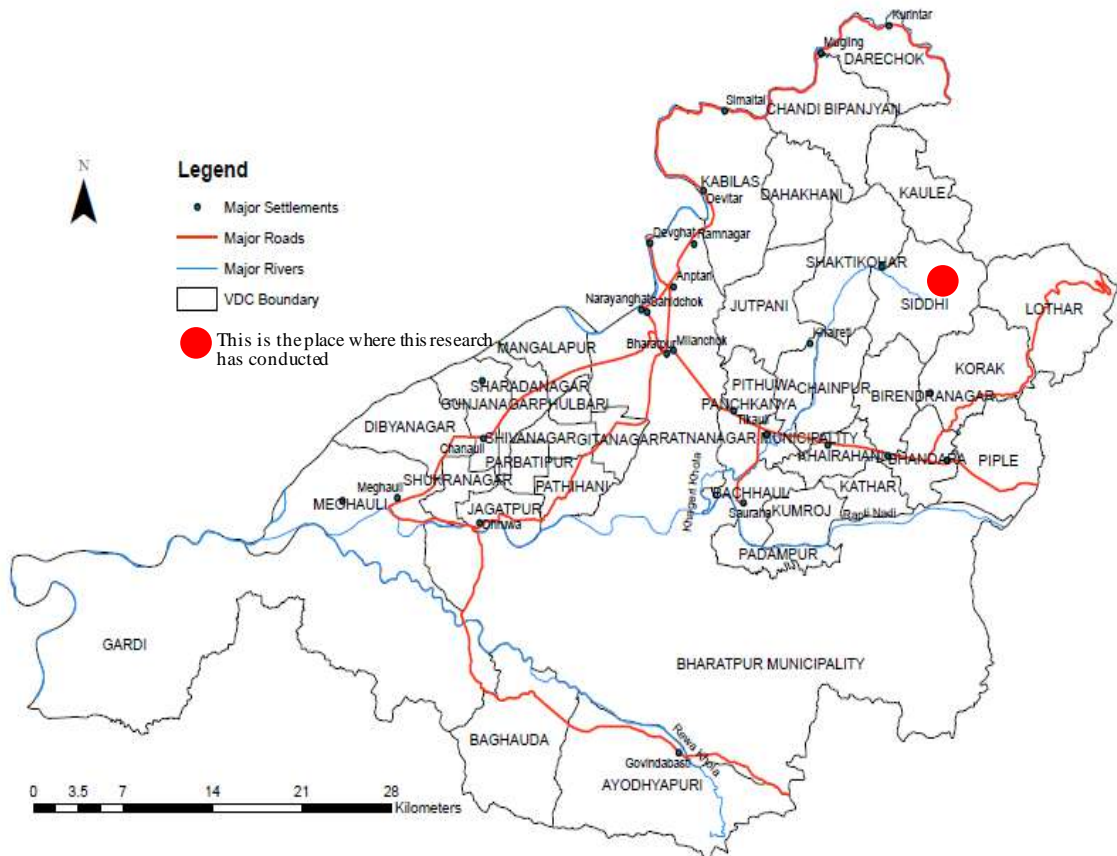
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Suresh Aryal

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## Map of Chitwan District



## Abstract

*This dissertation analyzes folklore and cultures of Chepang community of Kalika municipality -10, Chitwan. It is based on performance studies; it argues that performance of rituals, folklores, myths, and shamanistic performance of this indigenous group are essential to affirm their identity in the contemporary times when their economic, religious, demographic changes become dominant. The myths of Chepang also affirm the privacy of their dwelling places and its domestic livestock and nearby wild animals which they hunt for food. The symbolic representation of folklore makes their land of habitation including their vegetable garden a sacred place. The sanctity of their place of dwelling comes from the fact that it had sheltered and fed their ancestors. This dissertation analyzes their songs, dances, rituals and shamanistic performances in the light of Richard Schechner's notion of performance, Erving Goffman's idea of everyday activities (performance) and Clifford Geertz's idea of culture and performance. In the present times, the cultures of different communities are being intersected and from this Chepangs are not exceptional. However, they are able to preserve their culture and identity through their folkloric performances. Folklores and rituals are the cultural performances and folklore like songs, Shamanism and rituals are cultural representation of this ethnic community. Therefore Chepangs mark their identity through their folkloric cultural performances by giving it continuity and preservation.*

**Keywords:** Ritual, Shamanism, Chepangs, folklore, identity, cultural performance

## **Chapter I:**

### **Identity, Folklores and Performances**

This dissertation analyzes the folklores and cultures of the Chepang community of Kalika Municipality- 10, Siddhi, Chitwan in order to find out cultural identity of them that they produce through their folklores, myths, cultural performance of Shamanism. To examine their songs, myths, folklores, cultures the researcher has used Richard Schechner's notion of performance, Erving Goffman's idea of everyday activities (performance), and Clifford's idea of culture and performance. This ethnic community has their own language, culture, values, norms, traditional knowledge, skill so that they are different than other ethnic group which results their unique identity. The Chepangs, residing in areas of Makwanpur, Chitwan, and Dhading and southern part of Gorkha, are among the least known of Nepalese indigenous ethnic people. They have their different myth regarding their origin. They call themselves 'Chyobang' or 'Chebang'. 'Chyo' means "on the top" and 'bang' means "stone". In other words, "the people living in the hills" are called Chepang (Caughley, Dahal and Bandhu 1971:78). They state their forefathers used to live in rock shelters and caves, most of them believe they originate from stone. The face of Chepang resembles to Mongolian. The physical structure of Chepang is not different from that of other local ethnic groups. In this regard, Ganesh Man Gurung states, "they have flat and short nose, round face, dark and brown complexion, then and medium ears, dark eyes and prominent eye brows" (6).

Though this ethnic group celebrates the some festivals of Hindu we cannot claim that they are completely Hindu. They became followers of Buddhism too. They started farming after long period of their nomadic life style and impact of other castes lead them closer to Hindu but they are not followers of Hindu (qtd in Dhungel). They

have their own set of beliefs. The witchdoctor of Chepang is known as 'Pandey' and he/she performs various cultural practices. For them, Pandey is just like a Jhankri in other ethnic communities of Nepal. He/she is the essential person among the chepangs, as his/her presence is important in the social, religious, cultural activities such as name giving ceremony for new baby, purification day and many other activities. If anybody becomes sick, the Pandey is invited to find out what causes to lead him sickness and to heal them by beating one-sided drum. His magico-religious practices enter into process of the diagnosis and healing of all kinds of sickness. The faith upon pandey is accepted whole-heartedly by the community. This community belief such types of illness is caused by certain deities such as spirit of various witches. The Pandey invokes and propitiates various deities and ancestors. The Pandey has mutual relationship with his one-faced drum is known as 'ring' which is designed from the wood of buchico-sing, a tree and the skin of a goat. According to the cultural belief of Chepang, the Pandey and drum resembles the relationship of husband and wife. The pandey is communicator between dead and the living. He is moderator among chepang community and supernatural powers by leading a central figure in their community. His cultural performance of this drum, declares that they are cooperative and crucial in maintaining social unity, connecting with past and present and stimulating members of the community to live mutually. Nowadays the 'Pandey' is called Shaman which refers to a person who is responsible for communicating with spirits, gods, and ancestors for the people living in communities. His/her identity is associated with the Shamanic knowledge and wisdom. They celebrate different festivals in their own way. Most of their own cultural festivals are celebrated agreeing to the suggestion of Pandey in his presence.

Religion spreads practically through all societies and every religion, in one way or the other includes faith in supernatural powers. Each religion, culture run for some sort of visible activities i.e. prayer, hymns, offerings, faith upon Shaman whereas failing to this perform results as evil and trouble to man's harmonious connection with supernatural powers. That is why religion, culture, rituals, myths have become prominent aspect to discuss in relation to Chepang ethnic group.

Numerous critics have examined the Chepang ethnic group in their own viewpoints. Most of them worked through the perspective of anthropologically and sociologically. Thus the researcher has interested in this issue through the perspective of performance. At present some sociologist and anthropologist, both from home and abroad, have embarked upon the study of various ethnic groups of Nepal. In respect to the recognition of the Chepang in the Nepalese society, the credit goes to a British diplomat to Nepal, B.H. Hodgson, the first scholar, who mentioned the Chepang "as primitive inhabitants of Nepal" (655). Similarly Hodgson again describes Chepang in ethnological terms in the following manner:

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

Brian H. Hodgson, who first conducted the ethnographical study of Chepang and Kusunda tribes back in early nineteenth century, found Chepangs living in primitive

stage. He described they have bows and arrows of which the iron arrow-heads are procured from their neighbors, but almost no other implement of civilization, and it is in the very skilful snaring of the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air that all their little intelligence is manifested . He found much lingual similarity of Chepang language with that of Lhopas of Bhutan that asserted the connection and derivation of Chepangs from ‘Lhopas’ tribes. He also refers, Chepang belong forest dwelling tribal community of Nepal. They are not completely touched with modern human civilization. Chepang and Raute belong in such groups in Nepal.

The study of Chepang conducted by Ganesh Man Gurung is based on his doctoral dissertation submitted to Benaras Hindu University. The book deals with people and social ecology, economic aspect, social aspect, village administrative aspect, religious aspect and the development scenarios of Chepang communities. This book is useful to understand social, ecological and economic aspects of Chepang with technical details and statistics.

Likewise, Eden Vansittart captain of Gorkha regime highlights about nature and behaviors of Chepang in the *Asiatic Journal* (1884), thus:

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

Vansittart too has focused on how Chepangs are distinct than other race and ethnicities from Nepal. They are basically centered on their own community far from main stream Nepalese society and politics. However, he highlights that Chepang

traditional isolated identity is vanishing day by day since now they are in touch with modern civilization.

After the last quarter of the 2000 A.D., several research articles and books have been produced on Chepang. In 1971, Ross Caughley compiled the first dictionary of Chepang language. Dor Bahadur Bista, N.K. Rai, Ganesh Man Gurung, Rishi Ram Adhikari, have explored about the Chepang. However, few writers like Dianna Riboli, Rishi Ram Adhikari worked on Chepang through the Shamanistic Practice whereas researcher tries to explore manifestation of Cultural identity through their folkloric representation, rituals, Myths. Till now no one has researched in this specific issue. One of the anthropological Critics, Dianna Riboli observes Chepang as she states:

The festivals would appear to be slowly adapting to the evolution of the Chepang themselves. The Pande has the most important role in almost all functions and restores equilibrium in situations which are dramatic both for individuals and the community. The events in Chepang mythology are continuously re-enacted thus founding a plausible and acceptable vision of the world which is indispensable for all the components of the ethnic group. (222)

Dianna Riboli focuses on the ritualistic aspects of Chepang community. She highlights on shamanistic ritual and Shaman is called 'Pandey.' Shaman refers to a person who is responsible for communicating with spirits, gods, and ancestors. Shaman's identity is associated with the shamanic knowledge and wisdom as well as regarded as witch doctor.

The Chepangs worship different types of deities. Of these the worship of namrung (the hunting god), bhumi –puja(the earth deity) and gaidu puja (worship of livestock) are measured the essential ones. The namrung is hunting god. Since the

chepangs are hunters, hunting is important for their survival. The hunting should be done at least once a year if not; the god namrung may get furious and harm people. After their successful hunt, they offer the blood from the heart of the animal for their well being. Likewise, the chepangs observe bhumi puja before they cultivate maize in March in order to please the earth deity. Hoping of successful agricultural products in the coming year is ultimate motto of this ceremony. Gaidu puja is observed by the chepangs for the security and prosperity of cattle. Aaitabare puja is celebrated to keep them safe from the epidemics around the August- September. Both of these gods resembles the benevolent gods. So they are essential and propitiation takes place commonly with the offerings of fowls, handful of rice and millet. Focusing on the cultural aspects of Chepang, Another critic N.K. Rai examines Chepang ethnic group as he demonstrates:

Chepang have preserved their culture and language, vital to their ethnic identity, to the extent possible, but changes in their social and economic organization are coming about. Because of continued deforestation, the traditional subsistence patterns are disappearing, and Chepangs are devoting more and more time to agriculture. The barter system is being replaced by cash economy. Both men's' and women's' dress, which remained the same till a decade ago, are changing. Chepangs are increasingly hiring tailors to stitch clothing on a piecework basis. Whereas only locally grown tobacco was previously smoked, factory-produced cigarettes are now popular. (98)

N. K. Rai not only focuses on their traditional way of works division but also presents how they have been adopting a new way of lifestyles. In this sense, Chepang community is in the phase of transition from tradition too modernity. Various changes can be seen in that area e.g the barter system is replaced by monetary values.

Writing in 1967, Bista Dor Bahadur states, “Some of the Chepangs believe that their community is an offshoot of Kiranti group that came from Sunthali, Dolakha in the east...” (117). *People of Nepal*, Written by Bista, is the first and foremost book on systematic ethnographic study on diverse ethnic groups from Terai, Mid-hills and Himalayan regions. The custom, traditions and rituals of Chepang have been described in this book. There is story about the origin of Chepang and Kusunda who are the descendants of two sons Lohari and Kusari of Sita, of the famous Hindu epic Ramayana. This book identified two distinct economic groups among Chepang, those who have developed a purely agricultural economy and others who still partly depend upon food gathering, hunting and fishing. The former group lives in the eastern part of the region and is known as the Pukunthali; the latter lives in the western part and is known as the Kachhare. Some Chepangs believe that Thami, Pahari and Chepang are descendants of the Kiranti ancestor. Although some Chepangs believe their forefathers came from eastern Nepal, most of them believe they originated from the stone of the Mahabharata mountain range. In this regard Bista writes “Some other Chepangs say that the Chepangs and the Kusundas have same origins as the Thakuris. Kusundas are still in their primitive stage. Only a few have been reported to have settled permanently and begun cultivation. Others gather wood and hunt in the forest. Chepang, lives in caves or in temporary huts in the forests of the southern parts of Gorkha and the south central parts of Tanahu districts” (118). As he says Chepang and Kusunda have same origin. Kusundas are still practicing their tradition. Among them only few of them have been settle permanently. Chepangs used to live in caves or temporary huts in southern parts of Nepal.

N.K. Rai depicts regarding the Chepang ethnic people as he says “The Chepang practice food gathering and hunting, and get many necessary household

items such as firewood, fibres and leaves. Livestock are also grazed in those areas” (15). The Chepangs are surviving only by changing their way of life. For several generations now, the Chepangs have been adopting gradual shift from hunting and collecting subsistence to one based primarily on agriculture. No one is sure about when Chepang began to practice fixed cultivation.

Rammani Dhungel carried out the in-depth study of the Chepang society and culture in his book '*Chepang Samaj Ra Sankriti*'. This book deals with the social and cultural aspects of Chepang with greater understanding of their specific religion, language, customs, rituals and festivals. This book also describes the significance of shamanism in Chepang life, religious and social relationship with other groups and gradual development process of Chepang society.

Ganesh Man Gurung (1995) describes the position of Chepangs in leadership and authority. In this context, he says that, “Before political unification of Nepal, the Chepangs had their own pretty states and rulers. There prevailed a great legends and myths which assumes that they were pretty states and Chepang rulers (Bhure Takure Rajaharu)” (66). In the same line Dor Bhadur Bista identifies Chepang through highlighting the history. According to him, “There were at a time four Chepangs Rajas who were subsequently defeated by the Rajas of Patan. The four Chepang Rajas were called Poney Raja, Gill Raja, Rani Raja, and Roji Raja” (93).

There are various concerns about the origins of Chepangs. They are based on myths, hypothesis and aphorism. One of the senior researchers, Prof. Ross Caughley states that the word ‘Chepang’ has originated from the original word ‘Che-wang’. He further writes, “In the Chepang language ‘Che’ means ‘dog’ and ‘bang’ means stones or bow and arrow. So that those people who live in the cave or stone with dog or arrow are known as ‘Chewang’ finally that appears as word ‘Chepang’ (4). Likewise,

Bayju writes “The Chepangs are the progeny of a holy man called ‘Chewan’ and that later the word ‘Chewan’ is pronounced ‘Chewang’ and ultimately becomes ‘Chepang’” (10). Some researchers also prefer the Lohari and the Kushari myths as the origin of the Chepang. Multiple versions of the *Lohari and Kushari* myths are available regarding the origin of Chepang. One of them goes:

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

Many senior researchers such as Ross Caughley, Dor Bahadur Bista and others also state the Lohari and the Kushari myths as the beginning of the Chepangs. However, others researcher oppose with the opinions that the Lohari myth is the origin of Chepangs. They argue the researchers for needlessly Hinduizing Chepangs. According to them, the word ‘Chepang’ is used by the Nepali Speakers to refer the ethnic community who lived in narrow area or cave. In Nepali any narrow area or space is called ‘Chep’. They debate that the ancestors of the chepangs staying at narrow area (Cheps) of Mahabharat range therefore locals might have started addressing them by

saying the word 'Chepang'. Likewise other argues that the word 'Chepang' has originated from the Nepali verb 'Chepinu' which means to remain being sandwiched. So the people staying in the oppression are referred by the Nepali speakers as 'Chepang'. Another saying about the origin of Chepang is, the descendents of Laba are Chepang and descendents of Kusha are Kusunda. (Bista 1969). Unfortunately, the origins of Chepangs are not certain and there are many sayings. The people of this ethnic group have very finite and various origins are still prevalent. The chepang language has been defined as belonging to the linguistic group of Tibeto-Burma languages: up to one or three decades ago it was used by all the people belonging to this ethnic group.

Dor Bahadur Bista, encountered the Chepang , they are the descended from the Kirati (Rai-Limbu) who live in Sunathali, east of Dolakha. (24). Another myth tells that when Lohari and Kushari grew up, they were both quite good at using the bow and arrow. One day they decided to compete against each other on condition that the one who lost would have to move out towards the western part of the Narayani River and never show his face again. (Quoted in Riboli, Diana). According to the myth told by the Chepang, the two brothers i.e. Lava and Kusha became sworn enemies when they know about their truth of their different origins and this is what led the hatred among the two tribes of the Chepang and the Kusunda. Even today the Chepangs are extremely afraid of the Kusunda, though they have never actually come into contact with any of them personally.

Some accounts of the Hindu tradition of the Ramayana can be found in the Chepang . In the Ramayana, the twins are called Kusha and Lava and they both are sons of Ram who were born while sita was exiled in the jungle. Sita had been exiled because her husband had heard of the rumors about her doubtful virtue which many

believed to have been sullied during her long imprisonment at the court of Ravana, the king of Lanka.

An explorer, Reinhard Johan goes onto say of the Chepang that:

The Chepang, a group which lives to the south of the Kusunda area, believe to be related to them... one of them told me that a long time ago a father wanted to see his fortune divided amongst his two sons; but after his death the two sons fought it out for their inheritance, and their descendants, the Chepang and Kusunda, have remained enemies ever since. The Chepang are still afraid of the Kusunda despite never having met one, they believe that the latter would not have any arms with which to defend themselves. The Kusunda are not aware of the fact that they are the enemies of the Chepang and have denied that they are related them. (32)

The myth related to Chepang recounted through the Kusunda has not anything in familiar that the Chepang and is, wonderfully to say, in entirely gap to this. It also shows that how the two brothers became enemies each other and still Chepang are scared of Kusunda though they never encountered. Dor Bahadur Bista says about the Chepang “When Lohari and Kushari grew up they became natural enemies. The descendants of Lohari were called Chepang and of Kushari, Kusunda, the food-gathering and hunting people living in the forested area west of the Chepang Country. Chepang says that the Kusunda use bows and arrows and kill the Chepang on sight (117).”

Some other Chepang claim that their and Kusunds' have the same origin as the Thakuris. Kusundas are still living as their ancient phase. Among them only few have been settled permanently and started farming. Others collect firewood and hunt in

jungle. They stay in caves or transitory huts in the jungle of southern parts of Gorkha and south central part of Tanahu District. The population of them is not to number over a few dozen. Chepang declare that there used to be four Chepang rajas, who were consequently defeated by the raja of Patan. The name of four Chepang raja were called Poney Raja, Gill Raja, Rini Raja, and Raji Raja(Qtd in Bista, Dor Bahadur) Their regular court was at Pukanthali and Raji Raja was the superior among them.

Chepang hardly ever coddle in brutality. Since they are uneducated and unaware and the majority of them shy and fearful. They are dominated by Brahmins, Chhetris and even Tamang . No Chepang is known to live outside his habitual regions, consisting of the southern part of Dhading districts, the western part of Makwanpur, the northern part of Chitwan and the southern part of Gorkha. They stay along the steeper slopes of the Mahabharata range at elevations of between 2500 and 4000 feet. Tamangs live higher and Brahmins, Chhetris, Gurungs and Newars live lower than the Chepangs along the same range of mountains. (CBS)

In Chepang community, they are discouraged to marry paternal kinship however; marrying to maternal kinship is accepted but not encouraged. Chepangs , having both son and daughter search the families where they can find spouses both of them. This process helps to be economically viable. The couples generally search their partner and get married in their own wish without performing rituals and feast. In the community children are married by parents at the age of 15, 16 or 17 with people's participations and feasts. But the girls of about early and mid 20's, generally eloped to save expenses.

Traditionally, in each and every ritual, maternal kinships are must. Whereas in the case of capture and elopement this tradition is discarded until the new family member born or the wife dies. The husband goes to the wife's family to request for

the participation of kinship in the funeral procession. In some cases, the time span between elopement and wedding ceremony, paying due respect to the parents may be half century or more than it.

According to Suniti Kumar Chatarjee (1974), Hunters of Mongolian community have been living since 1000 A.D. in Himalayan Range, speak oral and written language has relation with Kumod province language of north-east India. In that region, water was called 'Tee' and river was uttered as 'Dhee'. This seems the origin of Chepang people using it same. Because of this, it is considered that this caste had lived in Himalayan mountain range for long time. The next logic is related with lingual definition and its geographical relation. In this debate, Senior Researcher, Ross Caughley's argument is much interesting and factual. According to him, the word Chepang is divided in two division. In respect to lingual origin, in which 'Chyo' refers to 'Tip' or the 'descendents of clan' whereas 'Bang' means, living on 'Top of the stones' and community which was cursed to live in valley and comfortable places at length. (Own translation)

From the few decades ago, the Chepang, who was spending nomadic life at forest, had less keep in touch with other ethnic group, entirely beyond the Hindu caste system, were followers of the shaman rapidly initiate themselves in the caste system, which leads them to the lowest caste of its hierarchy due to their economic status and the fact that they rear and ate the meat of Pigs. Chepangs are denoted as social outcasts by many in Nepal because they perform disreputable and degrading task frequently measured impure that are avoided by all other castes. There are few groups of people who accept food or water from Chepang where as few groups would not accept this and they are regarded as social outcast. In this regard Cornelia Jest states:

Within social structures of Nepal, the Chepangs are on the same level as the Tamang and Gurung. The latter groups considered Chepang to be an inferior caste, similar to dalit. In fact, the Tamang and Gurung may not accept food from the Chepang and the Chepang may not enter a Tamang or Gurung house. They also raise pigs which is a distinctive feature of lower Nepalese caste. The Bahun and Chhetri call the Chepang untouchable and treat them as such. (178)

According to the social structure of Nepal, Chepangs are same levels with Gurung and Tamang. These both communities considered the Chepangs are the lower caste because they rear pigs, which is distinguish characteristics of lower Nepalese caste. The Brahmin and Chhetri call the Chepangs untouchable and treat them as such. In spite of this activity followed by tribes of Nepali there is mutual respect towards each other and so many different ethnic groups and language co-existed for so long and the practice of Shamanism is still remains in most of the ethnic communities of Nepal.

Oral tradition is the main feature of Chepang literature. It continues since centuries in oral narratives and it got only printed very lately in the form of audio-visual documents, archives, films and documentary, etc. In Chepang community orality has been the only medium to transfer their experiences, myth, and history from generation to generation. Moreover, it is the main identity marker of this ethnic community because it is based on folk traditions in which message are verbally transmitted in speech, for example folktales, sayings, ballads, songs, or chants. Since the message of the past was handed down in oral tradition and folk practices, they are thought to be more real.

Chepang literature evolves with the help of oral tradition and exists mainly in two languages Nepali and Chepang. Before the arrival of Nepali speakers like

Gurung, Tamang, Magar in Chepang area, they used to speak only Chepang language and their narratives and songs were also in Chepang language but when they came contact with Nepali speakers they started to develop narratives and songs in Nepali language too. In recent times, with the campaign of ethnic community and NGOs, Chepangs have again started singing songs in their own language. Orality is the common feature of Chepang literary tradition whatever the language they used. They love to express their sorrow and joy in songs so that they feel get relieved from the burden of life.

Oral tradition and oral folk lore are cultural heritage transmitted from one generation to another. The message or testimonies are verbally transmitted in speech or song and may take form, for example folktales, saying, ballads, songs, chants, etc. in this way, it is possible for a society to transmit oral history, oral literature, oral law, and other knowledge across generation without writing system. Due to the lack of systematic education, chepang language remains only in oral form and they have transmitted their emotions, feelings and imagination through orality. So, orality plays a vital role to continue and preserve their distinct ethnic identities. Oral narratives are the only medium to transmit myth, history, and overall perception of life to project multiple identities of Chepang. It is only very late: the tradition of reading and writing began in chepang community. Although, few folktales and songs are found in written form, the bulk is still in oral form. So it is almost impossible to analyze chepang identities without analyzing their oral literature. In this study, various folklore and shamanistic songs are collected and archived from local people are analyzed to mark their cultural identity.

In present times, there is rapid Christianization in this ethnic community. It plays significant role to shift identities from old tradition to new practices. The

transformation in religion has started a decade ago which distorted the ancient identities of Chepang. Most of them started following the Christian beliefs and norms instead of their original ones. Where this research has conducted, even there Church has built and every Saturday, those who transformed into Christian, they go to church to pray Christ. There may be so many causes for this transformation and most important causes seem to survival strategies. In this regard one of the senior citizen of Chepang, Bharat Chepang says “It was heard that those who follow Christianity have been paid monthly Rs.5000 to 25000 but this allegation has not been confirmed because of highly acceptable of Christianity humanitarian measures, the wave of transformation seems rather strong not only in the chepangs but also other among other ethnic groups” (Field note, 2020) own translation. Another reason for transforming into Christianity i.e. For Pandey they (every Chepang family) have to give certain amount of foods annually and they even provide weigh labor to Pandey at free of cost. Christianity brings changes in cultural and ritual practices and beliefs from birth to death life cycle. The chepangs today are confronted with a fundamental choice to follow Christianity or to retain their ethnic identity by rejecting it. This shows that in present times the Chepangs are getting modern and conscious about politics.

Chepang has its own language, religion, tradition and culture that marks distinct group. Their traditional culture is another aspect in the variety of cultural diversity in the country. With more contact to outside world and also due to encroachment by other groups in their traditional homeland, their culture has been influenced. This study has identified the following specific issues: The economic hardship for rural Chepang communities in Kalika Municipality is visible that drive them outside of the traditional homeland to find the alternative source of income. This

economic situation should have impact on their socio-cultural life. Gurung, Magar, Chhetri and Tamang are also coexisting with Chepang in their traditional homeland which is instrumental to develop the mix culture and becomes hybridization in culture. This is also affecting their traditional values and belief system.

Political power and discourse also play vital role to create identity of Chepangs. Due to the lack of writing culture of them, no evidences in the official history are found. So they are also excluded from the main-stream literature. However, there is long oral tradition and practices which help establish distinct identity of Chepang with separate language and culture. Similarly lack of agency also can be found in this community.

Traditionally Chepangs were a forest-tribal community but gradual development of their food culture leads to them as neo-peasants. The Chepangs, who lived in happy isolation with their own ritual, culture, life style since ancient times now is encountering the problems of gradually social change resulting from the marking of their isolated situation through the development plan, education, new technology and process of modernization.

In modern time, a single community cannot hold its existence without negotiating between national and globalization phenomena. Modern technology and mass media as well as western education system have helped creating thread to maintain traditional life style of Chepang. So it is necessary to make balance between global and local knowledge and skills. For that it is necessary to modify the ethnic entities and the take advantages from modern technology e.g. Chepang may use computers and mobile to campaign for saving language, oral narration, folklore, traditional skills, Shamanistic practice of cultural performance.

Various factors of society play vital role to mark identities. Among them myths, ritual, cultures, folklore, songs play significant role. Cultural practices are also essential for constructing and reconstructing identity of particular community. Cultural performances and myths of community are changeable which affects on identity formation. Identity concerns both self and social phenomena. It is about personal and social that marks relationship to cultural discourse and self entity. The self has been understood as multiple fragmented and de-centered entities where as culture is constituted by multiple discourses.

Cultural identity is the identity of group or culture or of an individual as far as he/she is influenced by his/her belonging to a group. Cultural identity overlaps with, but is not synonyms with identity, politics. There are modern questions of culture that are transferred into question of identity. Historical culture also influences individual identity, and as with modern cultural identity, individuals may pick and choose aspects of cultural identity, while rejecting or disowning other associated ideas.

There are various stories, chanting of mantras of Chepang which are their identical performances. Similarly, in our childhood age we have heard and seen different stories, ancient songs and dances, we clearly see such folklore are not just a hobby, it has a important role in our cultural life. Chepang people also share their common behaviors through their folklore and performances. Their folklore is the result of long term practices therefore their folklore is their identity. Then what degrees does chepang folklore influence or transformed their life or viewpoint? What does their folklore bring them and how their generation after generation, practices keep on finding their place, no matter how much their society alters towards modernity? These all course concerns chepang people and folklore involved. In a wider sense folklore is the part of chepang community.

People hear many stories and mantras of Shamanism and watch the performance of songs and dances of culturally important order. They believe that watching or listening to such folklore is not mere simple hobby. Instead, they believe that such songs and dances play significant role in their life. Their worldview, the way they grow up are supposed to be the result of such faith they have on such songs and dances. Then what degree does folklore influence or transform peoples' life or viewpoint? What does folklore bring to people? It believed that the sphere of folklore is pervasive. People grow up practicing it in multiple forms and vibes. Evoking this very power view of folklore, Stephen Sims writes that folklore can be found in everywhere and in every community. He further writes that:

Folklore exists in cities, suburbs and rural villages, in families, work groups and dormitories. Folklore is present in many kinds of informal communication, whether verbal (oral and written texts), customary (behaviors, rituals) or material (physical objects). It involves values, traditions, ways of thinking and behaving. (265)

It seems that folklore can be found in many forms and has multiple facets. Folklore has powerful impact in the way human beings live their life. It is available to us or its impact on human beings is so deep that most of the times, we happen to perform folklore without noticing it. This means to say that folklore is incorporated deeply into our way of being; therefore questioning its role in our social reality is worth exploring.

The folklore and identity are intersected term. Folklore with its performance marks the identity of any particular folk group or community. Simon J. Bronner bewares us that any one studying should realise the changes which have taken place in the very domain of studying folklore. In stead of focusing archaic or old tales and

faiths, we should have vision to observe folklore in daily activities of people. He writes,

For folklorists recording people in action, such expressiveness included not only familiar items of folklore but frequently focused on the behaviors that produced them. Some behaviors, in fact, were not comparable as textual forms but were noticeable as repeated practices, and in actions referred to colloquially such as play fighting, kidding around, hanging out, and schmoozing, to name a few, appeared to be symbolically significant as situated processes that were understood to have cultural associations. (11)

The Chepangs, like the people of many other ethnic groups of Nepal, believe in an unknown supernatural world. They have evolved a system of beliefs and practices through which they have established a close relationship with spirits who are believed to influence the destinies of mankind. They believe in natural deities and worship their natural gods and deities like trees, stone, and other natural powers. While celebrating Chhonam festival they recite their natural deities. It is believed that their natural deities can save from their all kinds of pains and hazards. They have inherited these beliefs and practices from their ancestors through which they enter into relation with various deities and spirits for their livelihood, security and prosperity. These beliefs and practices help to strengthen their social unity and contribute to the existence and maintenance of problems of problems of survival for the primitive peoples like the Chepangs.

This research aims to explore how folklores such as shamanistic songs, (the songs while Shaman recites while healing to sick people) myth and ritual of Chepangs become important sites where they perform their identity in the change and continuity context. It also highlights the folkloric text of Chepangs like Shamanistic songs,

myths, cultures, songs in order to find out the connection between chepangs folklore and their identity. Chepangs have their own language, culture, values, norms, traditional knowledge and skill so that they are different than other ethnic group which results their unique identity. This ethnic community is socially, economically, politically privileged.

Chepangs belong to a unique ethnic community since their rituals, cultures, folklores, way of life, myths, and livelihood are very different from the mainstream Nepalese people and culture. In terms of civilization, too they are little bit influenced by modernity unlike other communities. However, they are in transitional phase since they have been gradually affected by modernity and influence of modern culture. Present generations of Chepang have been adopting new way of life. They have somehow access on education too. In terms of religion, some have been following Christianity. Thus, it could be assumed that Chepang's community traditional values, myths, rituals, would be same in upcoming days. Keeping all these factors in to the consideration, this paper interprets the juxtaposition of socio-reality of Chepang with performance of various ritual, folklores, myths, and Shamanistic songs. Caughley et al. write:

... the Chepangs are preoccupied with and predominated by their own faiths and beliefs. They believe in some invisible supernatural beings and powers. Their beliefs in these powers and the ways of entering into relations with them constitute their religion. Their relationship with these supernatural spirits is one veneration, fear, meekness, dependence, and propitiation. So various spirits are invoked to obtain their goodwill. They believe in a type of religious magic, and by beating drums they call on their dead ancestors and their gods,

both good or evil. They believe that the destinies and fortunes of mankind are influenced by supernatural spirits. (85)

Chebang is the solo community. They have their own set of beliefs. While performing their any kinds of cultural performances they recite and invoke their natural deities which establish them distinct from other communities. The Shaman known as communicator between spirits and living beings beat drums to propitiate the soul of dead person. Their destiny and fortunes are influenced by supernatural power. So they performs various activities to please their dead ancestors

The term 'ethnicity' refers to cultural boundary between groups of people who have been discursively constructed as sharing values, norms, practices, and symbols. It is centered on the commonality of cultural beliefs and practices (Barker 62-63). In Chebang's context, the term 'ethnic identity' is based on National Foundation for Upliftment of Adibasi/Janajati Act, 2058 (2002) which defines "Janajati (ethnic community) as a tribe or community as having its own mother language and traditional rites and customs, distinct cultural identity, distinct social structure, and written or unwritten history" (1). Linda Degh writes, "Ethnicity is an observable and instrumental element of cultural communication. The modern age continues to witness a growing desire for ethnic recognition in individuals and groups, a search for ethnic identity, and a conscious exhibition of distinctive ethnic traits" (36). The original Nepalese tribal or community composed two sub groups i.e the major tribes and minor tribes. The first consists of Newar, Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Gurung, Magar, and Tharu. The latter include tribal sub-groups such as Rajbanshi, Satar, Sunwar, Danwar, Chebang, Kusunda and Thakali (Toni Hagan 1961:56-60).

On the subject matter of ethnic caste composition of Nepal Gurung Harka writes:

The term ethnic group or Janajati refers to people with own language, culture and native area. Caste group, on the other hand denotes a social group that is classified into status hierarchy (Jat). In other words, ethnic groups are horizontally distributed in space where caste group are vertically stratified by ritual status. (1)

From the above quotation it is clear that those people having their own language, culture, traditions, and oral stories, ritual are known as indigenous group. Moreover, the caste group refers social group that are categorized according to the hierarchy. Ethnic groups and caste groups are divided vertically and horizontally respectively.

Although population enumeration through decennial census initiated in 1991 in Nepal, there was virtually no data available on the social composition prior to 1952/54. Ethnic/caste data became available for the first time in the 1991 census. The 1991 census provides statistics on 60 ethnic/caste groups. Of these, 31 were caste, 25 ethnic and 40 other groups. The number of ethnic/caste group enumerated in the 2001 census reached to 100. Of these, 52 are caste, 44 ethnic and 4 other groups.

Despite this available information, Dahal (2003) cites that many agencies provide their own information on ethnic/caste groups and thus the number of ethnic/caste groups and their population size differ from one source to another. For an instance, the National Committee of Nationalities (2002) listed 59 distinct cultural groups within janajati and Dalit Commission (2002) noted 28 cultural groups within Dalits (untouchable).

This research paper attempts to describe folklore and cultural performance of Chepang residing at Kalika Municipality-10, northern part of Chitwan district which is 30 Km far from, Bharatpur, headquarter of Chitwan. It is one of the remote areas of Chitwan district. There is no bridge in the river so it is difficult to reach there during

the rainy season. Lack of various facilities likewise in the sectors of health, education, communication can be observed. However, unity in strength is visible in various rituals, celebrations, and other social activities. So they are distinct than other ethnic communities. The researcher has collected information through Shamans, senior people, educated person, and children. The everyday life cycle of them possess specific, protective and prospective which are essential for keeping strengthening the relation of mutual relationship, peace among the individual and whole community. The folklore, myth, rituals, shamanistic poems of Chepangs associated with performance prepares communicative scenery for manifestations of ethnicity and cultural unity with the special objective to demonstrate and experience a particular identity.

The researcher has divided this dissertation in three sections. The first section presents a brief introduction, including the literature review and a discussion on the significance of topic and its hypothesis. In the second section, the researcher has applied the theoretical tools and proved the hypothesis using analytical method. The last section will be the conclusion of the research on the basis of second section.

The cultural, religious, folkloric study of this research is based on the exploration of the following research questions:

- a) How has the historicity of the chepangs established their distinct identity?  
What kind of identity do they borrow from their myths and folklore?
- b) What are the ecological factors from which they determine their way of life?  
How are the cultural, rituals, folkloric performance closely related to the formation of ethnic identity?
- c) What are the changing forms of their economics, demographics, and political activities? How do the religious beliefs and practices respond to the problems

of survival to the chepangs? How do these beliefs protect and help them to survive from sickness, drought, floods, and other natural calamities?

- d) How do family, marriage and kinship constitute the functional core of their social organization?
- e) How are they coming out of isolation losing their identities, adopting the characteristics of Hinduisation, Christianity and entering the mainstream of Nepalese society?

This vivid question attracts the mind of the researcher. He tries to find the valid and reliable answer to these basic questions.

## **Chapter II:**

### **Chepangs' Folkloric Texts and Identity**

Identity has become the central area of concern in cultural studies during the 1990s. Identity is the process how we describe ourselves to each other. Cultural studies explores how we come to be the kinds of people we are, how we are produced as subject, and how we identify with descriptions of ourselves as male or female, black or white, young or old, Asian or Europeans. As perceived within the domain of cultural studies, identities are not things which exist simply there with universal qualities, rather they are discursive constructions. Thus, in this sense identities are constituted or made. As Balibar opines, "Cultural identity is never a peaceful acquisition: it is claimed as a guarantee against a threat of annihilation that can be figured by another identity or by erasing identities" (186).

Identity is an indispensable element of human experience as it resolutely affects the way we embody ourselves both as individual as in relation to other people. Our individuality is expressed through identity, it also influences the way we perform and how other retort to us. Aspects of our identity as language, race, ethnicity, religion and occupation are the principal markers of our cultural identity in the post-modern age. Tomlison suggests that in the ancient time people were living in their own places without moving to other places. They were rejoicing their own culture. They were practicing their own culture by following their ancestors performances but with the development of time the situation have been changed and while culture is meeting to another culture by giving and taking some stuff. He further writes that:

[B]efore the advent of pre-globalization, there used to exist local, distinct, well-defined, and culturally sustaining connections between locations and cultural experience. This identity was identified as an existential possession that traditional long dwelling people inherited to their offspring: a merely link to the past. While identity-construction via cultural practices is a constant of the human experience, we cannot affirm that this 'experience' shapes into identity if we consider the global-modern west. This sort of social-psychological attachment to places is a common and complex phenomenon.

(6)

Identity is not just a narrative of cultural beliefs. It represents a communal treasure of local communities. However it also represents something exceptionally brittle that need to be preserved and protected by external factors.

People move around the world and come across several external factors. They are bound to address their personal and familial needs and necessity. But there are some cultural performances which cannot by pass. They need such performances to keep their relationship with society and family intact. Performance related activities keep them united. The people communally perform their traditions and their folklore. Performing the folklore or any culture is representing themselves in the community. People also represent their personal self and communal self through their performance in their community or society. They mark their social and cultural identity. And in the community whatever they do, perform helps them to sustain their identity. The cultural performance and folklore not only marks the identity of particular group or community but also are the medium of identification of the group or community. Brubaker and Cooper write:

[T]he term 'identity' is made to do a great deal of work. It is used to highlight non-instrumental modes of action; to designate sameness across persons or sameness over time; to capture allegedly core, foundational aspects of selfhood; to deny that such core, foundational aspects exist; to highlight the procession, interactive development of solidarity and collective self-understanding; and to stress the fragmented quality of the contemporary experience of 'self', a self unstably patched together through shards of discourse and contingently 'activated' in differing contexts. (8)

Identity is changeable and can be constructed. Identity is sameness in one homogenous community and discreteness in heterogenous community. So, how should we write and talk about 'identity' and 'identification'? Well, first we need to recognize the limitations of both terms when it comes to explaining or predicting what people do. We also need to recognize that if we use 'identity' to talk about everything, we are likely to end up talking about very little of any significance. We need to remember that we are talking about processes, and to beware of casual reification. We need to unpack these processes of identification, rather than treating them as a 'black box'. We need to recognize that identification is often most consequential as the categorization of others, rather than as self-identification. Last and absolutely not least, we need to adopt a critical stance towards public discourses about 'identity', rather than simply taking them at face value because identity – and understanding identity – really does matter.

Folklore described in this research is a cultural performance which is scheduled, temporally and spatially bounded, programmed, characterized by coordinated public occasions and heightened occasions of aesthetic expression. The folklore provides opportunities to observe the communicative system of the culture, conveyed through

semiotic-ally complex performance events. Although folklore enfolds large-scale social units, there obviously occurs small-scale social interactional communication, performance which constitutes face-to-face interaction.

A folkloric performance serves the purpose of the articulation of the group's heritage; it is a communicative situation actively engaging participants, presenting a combination of participation and performance in a public context. Motivation for participation in festivals includes social interaction that allows for the exploration and negotiation of many kinds of relationships. Activities in folklore reflect the concerns of the community, thus providing scenery for expressing particular ethnicity while suggesting personal affirmation, political action, and social revitalization. Folklore facilitates regeneration and enacts social life, it strengthens the identity of the group and its power to act in its own interest, and it contributes to the articulation of social issues. The messages of folklore concern the shared experience of the group and multiple interpretations of that experience. Folklore brings the group together and communicates about the society itself and the role of the individual in it. And such folklore, festivals and other cultural performance are the literature of any particular group.

Analyzing identities of a particular community is difficult task because identity is not fixed in single entities. Identity is based on socio- economic and cultural circumstances such as myth, ritual, cultural festivity, dressing pattern, occupation education etc. These socio cultural entities are only captured by literary texts. So, literary texts play significant role to exhibit identity of Chepangs'. Literary text is the product of society and its content is oriented to the social realities that condition works of arts -its norms, values and customs. On the other, characters reveal their pains and pleasure, ups and downs and favored and unflavored situations.

Class, status, gender, ideology, economic conditions and literacy and so forth define the dialectical relationship between literary, productions and their socio-historical contents. The role of literature becomes important in reflecting overall identity of a person or community. Chepang literary texts are analyzed with the purpose of studying their identity formation. The discussion of various entities such as gender, class, culture, ethnicity, socio economic activities, education, migration and modernization are done to know how they play role in forming of Chepang identities

Chepangs, on the basis of the texts (visual and verbal) under investigation of this study, are as advanced as other people in terms of culture, ritual practices, developing their own food culture, life style, dress, housing pattern, and working pattern in the community. Identities of Chepangs are both fixed and changeable. They are fixed because there are certain characteristics and qualities that are exclusively related to Chepangs. These include education, food culture, use of natural resources, relationship between human and nature, their eccentric behaviors are Chepang-specific qualities. Their identities are changeable in the sense that they have undergone many changes in the course of time. They changed their religious beliefs, dress, food culture, housing patterns, use of tools and working patterns. Chepangs are the children of the soil and there is very close relationships between them and nature. Their activities are nature-friendly. They collect food without clearing the forest. Whatever the forest offers they use it without domesticating the land. There is complete wilderness.

Identity can be assumed in two levels: social and individual. Social identity is a circumstance of having certain features shared by members of the concerned communities. The crucial definition proposes that the characteristics are certain and the social constructionist approaches assumes that identities are socially constructed

and changeable. In this regard, cultural critic, Stuart Hall says “Identities are not unified in modern times, they are increasingly fragmented and fractured, never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions” (22). Hence identities are not influenced by single entity but by multiple factors. Focusing on similar line, John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith states:

Ethnic groups undergo many transformations and adopt multiple identities due to interactions of individual with other kinds of groups. It is influenced by various factors such as gender, ethnic race, and religious belief. Ritual and cultural practices as well as overall day to day activities are responsible to identify individual and a certain community. (56)

Thus, identity cannot be formed through a single entity. It is both fluid and several. It is strategically manifested in language, rituals, everyday life. It can be understood as regulatory discourse from which it can be attached with the process of identification. It is being multiple, fragmented and decentered kind which results in the instability of language, construction of multiple discourses and proliferation of social relationship and sites of activity. In the same way we see that perceptions of constructing identities are also developing in Nepal including the Chepang community. When Nepal Chepang Association (NCA) was established in 2001, Chepang started to claim themselves as the ethnic community. The mission of NCA is to identify and preserve ethnic identities of Chepang and promote their culture towards the nation.

The folklore represents two kinds of activities. i.e what the folk traditionally do and what they traditionally tell. Tradition has been deep rooted in the meaning of folklore. Generally, folklore is the past beliefs, myths, tales and practices of a people which have been circulated in an informal way- mostly through the word of mouth,

despite in today times the internet has become main source of folklore. Thus the term 'folklore' swaps multiple phrases moving around that time. The word instantly became popular not only in English speaking country but also in other nations.

Folklores moves around the mysterious feats- the hidden arts of ghost- busting by the Nepali witchdoctors closely recognized as 'Jhankris' and witches known as 'Bokshis' – are some of the prevailing and dominant factors in Nepal. Well-known myths narrated by the elder sitting at the evening fire about 'Ban Jhankris' i.e. witch doctors from forest are the some of the atypical items amongst of all thinking and superstitious of Nepali social life.

There has been a rising comprehension in our society that verbal custom, particularly folklore is significantly precious materials which throws enough glow both on the traits of an individual's personality and the progress of the inherent importance of the society. This is measured to be rich sources for literature. Taken together, folklores expose a multifaceted trap of factors that influences and determines some of the crucial ethos of folk culture. Other innermost and enigmatic concerns of our daily life, like life and death, love and anger, hope and despair, dreams and frustrations are also criteria of folklore. These expressions are widely found in Nepali Literature.

Folklore is collected, modified, transmitted verbally, whereas literature is primarily written and expressed through analysis and writing. These two subjects have mixed and influenced them. In his famous essay "Verbal art" W.R. Bascom mentions two different dimensions of connection among folklore and literature. The first he calls "literary adaptation" of folklore where application of materials of folklore can be seen in the writings of prominent writers. Bascom provides the reference of famous American novelist Mark Twain. Second dimension is that

reference where materials from written or printed sources have been integrated in the form of oral customs and in course of time edited, compiled and modified. For this he utters “Folklorization”. Bascon also criticizes about the similarities and differences among oral art and literature.

Entertainments, instruction, recounting of history explanation of origin, conveyance of moral values are the primary purposes of Folktales. Similarly, characters and setting (forest, palace, mountain, bridge, hut, bank of river, cave, etc) are the elements of folktales. And dress, food, Customs, values, beliefs, behavior, ideology, problem and solution are the cultural elements of folktales.

To completely understand the folklore, one needs to have some ideas of the functions of folklore. Folklore reflects the worth configurations of the folk, but at the same time folklore provide a sanctioned form of escape from these very same values. In Fairy tales, the hero or heroine is certainly told not to do something; don’t look in the secret chamber, don’t answer the door, etc. of course the protagonist violates the prohibition. He may be punished for his disobedience, but usually he comes in the end.

Performance is a key term that is connected with cross-disciplinary. Performance has been developed to having multiple dimensions. It is difficult to limit disciplines under its scope. Therefore, it is commonly found that performance has been really a tough subject to deal with. It is multidimensional. More importantly, it has extended its scope from ritual to everyday activities. It observes the human behaviors including everyday life. It is complicated task to define the term. However, theorists have come to the point and agreed that performance must be taken as a process not as a product. Richard Schechner, a leading figure in the field of Performance, defines performance in his own words:

Performance is the widest possible circle of events condensing around theater. The audience is the dominant elements of any performance. Drama, Script, theater and performance need not all exist for any given event. But when they do, they enclose one another, overlap, interpenetrate, simultaneously and redundantly arousing and using every channel of communication. This kind of behavior characterizes many human activities, from ritual to art. (89)

The above line refers that performance is the broad aspect of certain circumstances that happens in the theater and the prominent aspects of any performance is audience. Theater, drama, script are interconnected and go side by side. To some degree, theater is the visible feature of the script, the external scenery of an inferior map. Drama is fixed, oral narrative; it allows for slight improvisation; it exists as a code independent of any individual spreader; it is, or can without difficulty be complete into, a written text. In addition to this Schechner writes:

Performance is something else, more consciously "chosen" on a case by-case basis and transmitted culturally not genetically. Performance probably belongs only to a few primates performance. But the rituals of lower animals are indeed prototypes for primate performances. Human do consciously, by choice, lower animals do automatically; the displaying peacock is not 'self-conscious' in the way an adolescent male human is on Saturday night. (92)

The qualities of performance are transmitted culturally rather than hereditarily. Human beings perform deliberately whereas animals do automatically. The actions of peacock and male may be structurally identical; but self realization and capability to vary behavior according to self consciousness sets most animal ritual off from non-human primate and human performance.

In fact, performance is an inherently human activity. It is presented as having origins in pre-historic behavior and having functional value in the evolution of human cognitive functions. In linguistic terms, performance is also seen as an essential aspect of human communicative capacity that cannot be completely understood without a full appreciation of the roles of language and other semiotic behavior in human life. In cultural terms, performance is seen as pervading virtually all institutions of public expressive behavior. Quite normally, performance can be defined as an event in which one group of people (the performer or performers) behaves in a particular way for another group of people (audience).

Performance is showing doing. Showing doing is a kind of display of our awareness (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 19). Showing doing is a display of our awareness of our own distinctive agency—that certain activities constitute a particular way of doing. It is also a display of our awareness that doing is a redoing. Showing doing approves the understanding, reveals as appreciation of the history and the conventions related to doing—that certain activities have preceded ours that certain other practices and activities surround and are contemporary with and influence ours. Similarly, showing doing is a display of our awareness of us as actors, or better, performers engaged in doing and re-doing. It is a display of awareness that our identity as a particular kind of performer is constructed and represented through those very activities. Underlying the notion of display is the presumption of an audience for that display, someone else who attends, who through attending to the display in some way participates. However, the nature of that participation can be various: observational (spectators), experiential (participant), evaluative (critic), and so on. So, while showing doing is a display of our awareness of doing, redoing, and through doing and re-doing our identity; it is always display for someone else.

According to Victor Turner, an anthropologist performance is subjunctive. Turner has used the terms 'Liminality' and the phenomenon of liminality extensively in his discussion of ritual and performance. Liminal states dissolve all factual and commonsense systems into their component and 'play' with them in ways never found in nature or in custom, at least at the level of direct perception (Turner, 25). Victor Turner finds performance in every society: primordial or modern, civilized or uncivilized. He uses the term 'social drama' to which he finds performative in qualities. He analyzes such social dramas using theatrical elements. Turner Writes:

Social dramas are units of a harmonic process, arising in conflict situations. Typically, they have a four main phases of public action... These are a) Breaches of regular, non-governed social relations... b) Crisis during which... there is a tendency for the breach to widen... Each a public crisis has what I now call liminal characteristics, since it is a threshold between more or less stable phases of social process, but it is not a sacred limen, hedge around by taboos and thrust away from the centers of public life. On the contrary, it takes up menacing stance in the forum itself and, as it were, [ranging] from personal advice and informal mediation or arbitration to formal judicial and legal machinery and to resolve certain kinds of crisis or legitimate other modes or resolution, to the performance of public ritual... c) Redress, too, has its liminal features, its being 'betwixt and between' and as such, furnishes a distanced replication and critique of the events leading up to and composing the 'crises'. This replication may be in the rational idiom of a judicial process, or in the metaphorical and symbolic idiom of a ritual process... d) The Final phase... consists either of reintegration of the disturbed social group or of the

social recognition and legitimization of irreparable schism between contesting parties. (Qtd in Schechner 187)

Turner describes cultural performance as a part of that social dynamics which he referred 'social drama'. He associates social drama with performative quality which carries four phases. They are breaches, crisis, redress and the final phase (reintegration). He developed this notion of social drama in his early anthropological work relating on 'Ndembu' a community of Zambia. Each of this performance links with liminal quality. The first phase is 'breaches' which is disruption of the current way where life is lived by a community. This phase of disruption can be observed in terms of power challenge among particular group. The second phase is arises by breaches where people individually and collectively feel in the position of disorder. He maintains there is momentum in the stage of crisis which leads to third phase 'redressive'. He further depicts genre of cultural performance functions the redressive phase of social drama, theatre, ritual and narration. The reintegration which is final phase occurs after agreeing upon by the protagonist. As Schechner finds performance in aesthetic dramas, Turner in social dramas, Erving Goffman finds performance in everyday life. The summary of his book 'The Presentation of Self in everyday life' is almost equivalent to its title: everyday life is a performance. Performance is the matter of interaction, which presupposes an audience. At extreme, he argues that when alone, an individual still performs for his or her own sake.

Ritualized actions enlarge around the complete range of human behavior, but performance is heated field of ritual, and theater, script, and drama are heated and compact areas of performance. However, something else is associated in performance, and that is play. Play also happens in much variety, but nowhere is it so wide; nowhere does it penetrate so many activities. In this regard, Schechner writes

Something else is involved in performance and that is play. Play also occurs in many species, but nowhere is it so extensive, nowhere does it permeate so many activities, as in human beings... a tentative definition of performance may be ritualized behavior conditioned/ permeated by play. The more “freely” a species plays, the more likely performance, theater, scripts, and drama are to emerge in connection with ritualized behavior. (93)

Performance, in different instances and context, remains as multiple forms. It is generally considered as a whole category that must be structured as a ‘broad spectrum’ or ‘continuum’ of events encroaching from ritual, dramas, sports, well-liked entertainments, the performing arts and everyday life performance to the endorsement of social, religious, professional, gender, race, and class roles to curative and to the different representations and formation of actions in the mass-media and the internet. In performance studies, questions of enactment of actions, behavior, and agency are discussed with inter and multi cultures. This process acknowledges two aspects, first in global scenario where cultures are always interacting with one another - no group exists largely and soliloquy. Secondly, the cultures differences are so thoughtful that no theory of performance is considered universal: neither one side theory incorporate all, nor remains as a playing fields where cultures interact at different levels. The present means of cultural interaction and globalization functions imbalance of power, money, media access, and control over resources.

Rituals are significant to understand performance because rituals are ages old. They are first kind of document that gives us certain kind of gestures, faith, symbolic experience, knowledge, entertainment. Rituals are the most ancient forms of expressions. This pattern of rituals functions in the art, social behavior, traditional knowledge. Therefore rituals are archetypical, and are used in modern literature too.

We develop the range of imagination within us, a sense of cosmopolitanism within us. We analyze art and literature from poetic sense with a sense of transformation. Literature has a sense of transformation. Richard Schechner articulates studying rituals is like studying modern drama, modern literature. It has more or less all the form that the modern literature has. In addition to this Richard Schechner writes:

Rituals are performative: they are acts done; and performances are ritualized; they are codified, repeatable actions. The functions of theatre identified by Aristotle and Horace entertainment, celebrations, enhancement of social solidarity, education (including political education) and healing- are also functions of ritual. The difference lies in context and emphasis. Rituals emphasize efficacy: healing the ignorant, forming and cementing social relations, maintaining (or overthrowing) the status-quo, remembering the past, propitiating the gods, exorcising the demonic, maintaining cosmic order. (613)

Rituals are part of performance, they are visual and performances are ritualized. They are systematized. The events of rituals are entertainment, celebrations of victory, education, healing capacity. Rituals are codified actions. Custom and ritual can unite our communities together. Naming ceremonies, baptism, confirmation, marriage, graduation ceremonies, funeral procession etc are rituals that allow a person to pass through a threshold, to become someone that they were not before. A ritual must do something that symbolically affirms the identity of group of people. It is also an act that reaffirms the culture, manifest identity and defines community. It is considered that Aristotle and Horace are the pioneer figures to introduce the functions of theatre since the Ancient time.

Communal activities are foundation for the rituals, which develop mutual understanding between the people. In this regards, Catherine Bell writes, "First, ritual

action is communal, involving groups of people who gain solidarity through their participation” (94). Ritual performance, aesthetic performance and social performance are strongly connected each other. Ritual is the part of the distort and bark of every kind of performance, holy and secular, artistic and communal. For Turner, Play can’t be ‘located’ as it is quintessentially relation. It is not to be found ‘in’ the brain (or ‘in’ culture), but is everywhere ‘in between’. (qtd in Schechner) Sometimes ritual performances are unable to clarify the innovative, ‘anti-structural’ playful aspects of ritual. Ritual is more than a preserver of evolutionary and cultural behavior. Turner is distinguished in the ‘anti-structural’ dimension of ritual performance, the creative, and the artistic. There is conflict between his theories and those of the ethnologists and neurologists. For them, rituals manifest as a part of evolution. Ritual can be understood as a performed behavioral ‘artefact’, a structure while ritualizing can be conceived as the in body experience of performing ritual and as such anti- structural, destabilizing and luminal. Ritual organizes, conserves, and narrates, while ritualizing brings on hemispheric spillover, oceanic feelings, and radical, playful volatility. Turner describes Liminality as he says:

Liminality can perhaps be described as a fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities, not only by any means a random assemblage but striving after new forms and structure, a gestation process, a fetation of modes appropriate to and anticipating postliminal existence. It is what goes on in nature in the fertilized egg, in the chrysalis, and even more richly and complexity in their cultural homologues. (12)

Turner has borrowed terms ‘Liminality’ and ‘communitas’ from Vann Gennep’s “Rites the Passage”. Van Gennep himself defined rites de passage as "rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age"(94). Van Gennep, an

anthologist views most of the rituals have three phases: Separation, Liminal, and reintegration. The first phase of separation occurs the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions, state, or from both. Liminal phase is real person dealing with spiritual things or spirits. This is a position of in between. During this phase, the feature of ritual person is vague. The person/chief should pass through a cultural realm that has few or none of the contributions of the earlier period or further state. After luminal phase there occurs reintegration. Normal life begins here and individual behaves as normal. He is probable to act in accordance with certain usual norms and moral standards binding on incumbents of social position in a system of such positions.

Victor Turner elaborates about liminality and *communitas* giving reference of Ndembu community of Zambia. Ndembu community was once conquered by neighboring forces. But in the long run it did not lose its ritual, cultural values. Ndembu community also accepted and practiced the ritual and they conclude by saying Rituals remain forever but kingdom can't. While selecting chief in Ndembu community, he is separated from community and made to stay in a separate hut for a couple of weeks. He is dressed in sparse and should sit in humble posture. His wife should also sparsely dress and she too behaves with people as like her husband. They should avoid sexual intercourse in this period. They should collect the woods which are naturally given means the woods should not cut by the axe or other machinery items. In the hut, he is separated from the society and experiences the liminoid phase. People are there to scold him and after that whole festival take place and he is selected as chief after completing the difficult situations. And people start showing respect to him.

A person who goes through liminal experiences should have humility. It is essential quality because this is a process of making better self. A person who can control desires, thoughts, anger for long time finally he deserved honor in the society. Second entity of liminal phase is servants feel what the masters feel simultaneously. By becoming servants one learns to be master. This is a journey of a quiet mysterious or symbolic order or experiences. Here the chief, in Ndembu community behaves like a servant to become a chief. The hierarchy is reversed here. The reversal of order is another attribute of liminal entity. Third, the clothes that he wear during liminal phase, has ritual significance. Ritual significant object becomes the part of liminal experiences because these objects remind of myths, traditions, culture. Ritual objects provide transformation.

Music, dance, and theatre are incorporate with rituals. They use multicolored and attractive masks and costumes. The procedure, circumambulations, music, dancing, story-narration, food- exchanging, flaming, incensing, rhythmic sound of drum, and bell-ringing along with the body movement and involvement in the crowd generate an overwhelming synaesthetic milieu and knowledge. In the same time, rituals exemplify principles that instruct and mobilize participants. These exemplification principles are musical and cognitive, spatial and theoretical, luxurious and ideological. Theatrical activities, religious myths, dramatic narratives are frequently explicitly violent.

Phelan, Peggy, a feminist has written a book *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993), where she has discusses about performance. She writes:

Performance's only life is in the present. Performance can't be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representation: once it does so, it becomes something other

than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy ontology. Performance is being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through disappearance. (146)

Peggy Phelan is firm in her views that a performance can only exist in the present. There is only live and mediated, there can be no other levels of liveness, other than an original performance. Other forms of performance that are mediated, recorded or repeated are no longer true performance. Phelan refers to the work of Sophie Calle, who responded to the theft of paintings by replacing them with descriptions and drawings of the missing art. This served to demonstrate that although the original art work is gone and is therefore no longer live to view; a new performance may take place based upon the previous work.

Some performance studies projects do focus on great theater, dance or music performance. But it's decisive initiative, however, was to disentangle the terms 'play', 'act', 'acting', and 'performance' from an exclusive association with the performing arts. Any event, action, behavior can be studied as a performance, and a scholar can investigate the various processes that go into making it up. Ultimately, performance studies asserts that all aspects of everyday life, even the seemingly spontaneous or mundane, reveal a 'performative' component- a component that makes them like performance (23).

Like good theatre scholars, performance studies scholars investigate any performance's 'dramaturgy'- the process by which it was composed, prepared and presented. And why study performance? As cultures are often most fully expressive in their performances, many cultural critics, anthropologists and scholars of other related disciplines are very much interested in performances. Performance studies scholars

hope to comprehend and explain what such behaviors might indicate about the individual, group or culture that enacts them.

Richard Schechner has outlined seven functions of performance studies. “To entertain, to make something that is beautiful, to mark or change identity, to make or foster community, to heal, to teach (persuade or convince), to deal with the sacred and/or the demonic” (4). In his book, *The Future of Ritual*, he writes that, in any of these varieties, “performance’s subject [is] transformation : the startling ability of human beings to create themselves, to change, to become- for worse or better-what they ordinarily are not” (Qtd in Comitee 5). By means of performance, then, something is created, born, changed, celebrated, or ended.

By following the statement of Jean H. Speer that “[p]erformance is a way of knowing - a way of knowing and preserving the memorable past, evaluating the present, making discoveries about the self and connecting with others” (131). Researcher's intention was to explore how Chepangs are creating this process of knowing, preserving and evaluating. Is there a connection between performance and coming to a better awareness of these people's individual and shared identity? Researcher has also examined the role of the folklore within this context, as a specific milieu of expressing the embodied memory and to perform. Researcher has also searched if there was a link that relates the folklore with the self evaluation and the connection with others.

It is hard to define what folklore is, it is many things and almost impossible to delineate succinctly. Folklores exists either in cities as rural villages, in families and brotherhoods as well. The people use folklore for interaction, and how folklore is useful for managing social/cultural situations for identity making. With a unique cultural heritage, Chepang community is bountiful with sundry folklore based on

legends, religion, popular beliefs and so on. They are the traditions of ethnic cultures, subcultures, or groups to express feelings. Chepang folklores establishes relationship with their culture, ethno-cognition, using folklore for interaction and unity, for managing social/cultural/ ecological situations in various institutional settings for identity making, explaining the natives as possessing an exclusive system of perceiving and organizing phenomenon. Prakash Upadhyay writes that folklore is one of the factors of cultural environment. Folklore is assets of human beings and it is the vehicle that carries human identity. He further writes that:

Folklore is a facet of cultural milieu on which Anthropological lens throws harsh light but with soft focus. Based on graphic metaphors of harsh light and soft focus, anthropological worldview of harsh light denotes a concern for basic reality of folklore embedded with Nepali conditions in various settings, soft focus attempts to grapple all facets of that stipulation and the roles folklores play in integrating cultures and societies. (150)

Nepal historically mistreated as a *guinea pig* by Westerners, is known as a country with a distinctive and strong cultural heritage. It is therefore little wonder that Nepal's folklore plays a large role in society for identity making of the *folk* (people) (150). In Nepal there are different folklore based on legends, music, oral history, proverbs, jokes, popular beliefs, fairy tales, stories, tall tales, and customs that are the traditions of a culture, subculture, or group to express grief, happiness etc. that depict the identity of people. It is also the set of practices through which expressive genres are shared.

Chepang folklore belief systems have an ample effect on human attitudes and can hence play a key role in marking their identity. Gazing into their belief systems is instrumental in ascertaining the collective unconscious of a group, that is, the

underlying values of a culture: ambitions, their uncertainties, fears, motivations and morals. They represent collective and inherited patterns of thought in the form of folklore. Folklore, mythology and storytelling articulate to spiritual concepts and values, but they also encompass ideas on contemporary Nepali history and localized environments, something that religious texts alone do not; folklore best exemplifies the shared unconscious of both dominator cultures and partnership cultures hence making folklore study crucial.

Chebang's folklore consists of different folk tradition like, story, folk song and dance and folk practice like shamanism and fishing, their house structure and so on. These all folk traditions are rituals where Chebang people perform and through their folk performance they mark their identities.

The generic Nepali word for shaman is jhakri which is widely used everywhere. But other terms are also used by Chebang for shaman like pande, faal, dangre and gurubau. Also each ethnic group has its own term, like ghyapring puret is used in Gurung community.

The pandey, called 'Jhankri' in various parts of Nepal, is the leading form, who performs all kinds of ritual, social functions of the Chebangs. Actually, the Shaman is ritual whiz in this ethnic community. All types of transitional social functions are celebrated by Pandey and in this case, after examining the chosen sites the Shaman performs divinations and not infrequently the sites has to be changed on account of the negative influences of the souls of the dead who have not yet found peace (Gurung 1989). Diana Riboli writes:

Thus, to judge by the words of the pandey themselves, it seems that Chebang Shamans (In Nepal considered the most proficient and powerful in the country) can only travel in the underworld. The mode of travelling also

appears peculiar, since the Pande revealed to us that Chepangs Shaman neither fly nor ride the drum. The repeated bows should not therefore be interpreted as a sign of subjection to the divinities, but rather as a means necessary to seek out the divinities themselves with a peculiar faculty of sight that can penetrate underground. (10)

In Folklores of Chepang 'Pandey' is kept in center. Before the beginning of any rituals and ceremonies of Chepang, 'Pandey' first invokes their deities by enchanting shamans. He enchants the mantras. It means that without worshipping their deities Chepang cannot proceed their any rituals. And in their any rituals 'Pandey' role is significant, it is who carries and heals the all miseries of whole chepang community. In this respect Pandey is the center of chepang community.

An essential tool not only in Chepang Shamanism but in Shamanism general, and not only in Nepal, is the drum known as rin or ring in the Chepang language. As Francesco Giannattasio points out:

The sound- producing object used in Shamanic ritual are seen by the direct protagonist as instruments of mediation between the human and the supernatural; as intermediaries between the heavens and the underworld; as apotropaic agents able to drive and keep away the spirits; as generators of signals or calls to them. (187)

'Drum' is one of the major cultural performances of chepang. In their every festival and ritual performances they beat drums. While worshipping they beat drum. Even in death ritual they beat drum in order to recite their deities and to propitiate the dead soul. And drum is generally carried by pandey. So that drum is also one of the major factors through which chepang community define their identity.

Human beings are using shamanic technique for healing and treating the ill person for many thousands of years across all around the world in a wide variety of cultures not because these people were naive or ignorant, but because they worked. It has been our understanding in the base that the shamanic state of consciousness is part of our biological and spiritual design; thus, the widespread ability of people to successfully journey and access these hidden worlds after even one weekend. While the basic methods of shamanism are relatively easy to learn, the effective practice of shamanism requires dedication, discipline and practice. The shamanic practitioner must be a 'master of both realities,' able to change consciousness, visit to the spirits, and return completely to normal consciousness at will and as needed.

Ioan Lewis expresses different perception, taking into account spirit possession as the key component and manages that shamanistic practitioners exercise over the spirits incarnate in their bodies as the defining feature of shamanism, which he describes as an ecstatic religion. For Lewis "a shaman is an inspired prophet and healer, a charismatic religious figure, with the power to control the spirits, usually by incarnating them" (9).

An account of Pandey especially treating to ill people, the incident was described by Dhaniram Praja, 50, who is residents of Kalika Municipality -11, Chitwan as he states:

Pandey refers Jhankri, Chepang Shaman. In 2054 B.S. when my mother became seriously sick due to heart problem. My elder brother was a pandey. He treated to her. He even chanted a song and hit the drum. He offers so many things. After half an hour my mother opened her eyes and started to talk. Finally my brother concluded that she was attacked by witches. (Personal interview)

This is an account of Pandey's treatment to sick people. While treating he has to communicate spirits according to the illness of persons. Sometimes it can take long time to diagnose person and even it is difficult to why the person is attacked. He has to offer various things to the deities. During the chants, the pandey has to ask various divinities for help several times. In this regard Riboli Diana mentions one of the chants as she states:

Push it out! Push it out! Push this illness out!

I am worried: this man could die...

(to the patient) why is your soul divided into two?

Even your bones are divided into two, why?

Do not wander about the village: stay at home...

You have been almost devoured by bokshi.

Your eyes have been damaged,

Your eyes have been damaged but you are lucky to be alive.

There has been a theft at your house!!

(to the gods) I beg of you, do not chase this man out of this world.... (159)

The above chants amazed to the man's relatives who confirmed, in a minute of pause, that some time previously there had in fact been a theft in his house which had cleaned him out of what little possessions had. After that Pandey declared that it had been ache and shock which had become man's soul fragile.

It is relevant to quote from the folktale entitled "The story of Chhak Jha" where Rishiram Adhikari mentions death rituals of the Chepangs in the following manner:

People that time used to believe that the soul of a dead person should be buried properly and propitiated ritually by their relatives. When they die, the

dead body of a Chepang should be buried under the Sal (Shorea robusta) tree. They have also to keep the required food and clothes there for the dead one. If the soul would not be satiated with offerings, it could come out of the tomb through a small hole of tomb in the form of small creatures. It would out on five or seven days of the person's death and appear near the home yard of the dead person's relatives. (21)

The evil spirits are regarded the chief cause of death in Chepang ethnic community. When someone dies, all the members including relatives and neighbors mourn and arrange for the funeral process. The dead body is covered by Kaatro( a white piece of cloth which is used to cover the dead body). They usually prepared grave under the Sal tree. The pande is responsible to proceed the funeral ceremony and most important thing is to accompany the soul of dead to reach the area of his/her forefathers. In this regard it is relevant to quote from the Folktales entitled "The story of Chhak Jha" where Adhikari Rishi Ram puts forward:

... the Pandey (Shaman or ritual performer in Chepang community) to propitiate it. This is a ritual observation of exterminating the distracted soul of the dead person. In this ritual, the Pande kills the creature. If the Pande succeeds to exterminate the creature that would not appeared again from the next night onwards. If the Pande couldn't exterminate the creature, it would appear as a form of tiger and would attack domestic animals like goats, pigs, cocks, etc.

Pande is supposed to help the soul to meet with ones of their ancestors. If the soul of the dead person is not satisfied with the offerings it is believed that the soul usually roams around the village and it may bring disasters in the society. Therefore Pandey convinces the soul by offering needed things and purified the soul of the dead person.

This phase is described as 'Liminal' by the Ven Genne as soul of the dead person is in between phase.

Performance assists us to generate perceptions via action, symbols, meanings, codes, roles, status, social structure,, ethical and legal rules and other socio cultural component which make up their community selves. In this regard, Geez Writes;

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

In the same line, Barbara Meyerhoff writes "Cultural performance are reflective in the sense of showing ourselves to ourselves. They are also capable of being reflexive, arousing consciousness of ourselves to ourselves: as hero in our own dramas as we made self aware, conscious of our consciousness" (42).

The performance of Pandey is clear from the folktale "Chhak Jha" where Rishiram Adhikari puts forward:

Pande also came to the Tharu Village. He was requested to capture the tiger and save the village from the menace. Gurau, one of the villagers, persuaded Pande and he turned up to the Chepang village the same night. He worshipped to his gods, gurus and deities one whole day and night, and asked one of the real tiger to fight against 'Chhak Jha'... the problem solved. (23)

Chepang people doesn't eat agricultural products without offerings to Gods (Sime/Bhume i.e. water god and land god). In this regard, it is relevant to quote from the story "Sime Bhume" where Adhikari states:

Suddenly, a voice came from the sky and said ‘please offer some to Sime and Bhume who will save you from the dangerous wild animals and wild spirits’. The girl became very happy and offered few pieces of bread to novel gods and goddess of the forest and then ate the bread... that time, onwards people started to worship Sime and Bhume for security and prosperity of their future life. (63)

M. Eliade in his famous work related to Shamanism indicates, one of the main characteristics of Shaman. As he further states:

Shamanic technique consists of the passage from one cosmic region to another, from the earth to the sky, or from the earth to the underworld. The Shaman knows the mysterious of how to break through levels. The communication which takes place between the cosmic zones is made possible by the very structure of the universe. In fact, it is quite clearly divided up into three levels, the sky, earth and underworld, which are all connected by the central axis. (12)

During treating trance time, the Pandey use divine power to begin which deity is causing illness to the patient and when they have find out they can decide whether to perform a nocturnal ceremony to calm the latter. Every illness are not happened by magic and the communication among the Pande and the patient also provide pande the opportunity to explain about patient condition of physical and not supernatural origin, in which case there would be no point holding a trance. In this regard the following lines are pertinent to quote from the story of “Bhulaune Jhar: The Plant that causes forgetting” where Adhikari mentions:

The king reached there and ordered him to find out the cause of trapped. They found out that it was because of the magical power of the plant and then the

Shaman propitiated it. After this, they could become able to come back home from the forest. (96)

In order to obtain shamanic knowledge a command must come from the spirits or ancestors. The knowledge can gain in dream and it is sent by his or her ancestor. In this regard Diana Riboli asked one of the Pandey that how he become a Shaman Pandey , she further writes “From a dream, coming from an ancestor (male ) [...] I became a pande thanks to a dream coming from a Pande ancestor” (17). According to Pandey the world formed by a supreme god. The Pandes were arrived from the underworld and obtain their condition after the creation of their world One of the Shaman noted that the first Pande who was appear on the world was from his ancestors and more precisely his great grandfather. Regarding his story, Riboli Diana states;

The first pande was my forefather: his son, my grandfather, was a pande too: the first one disappeared in the night, after dinner; his wife was in the same room. He went out, locking the door with a mantra; through the window his wife saw him disappearing in the night. He became a stone and was the first pande: we are just his soldiers. (17)

The Drum which play important role in Chepang , is identity of Chepang. The drum belongs to the first group described by Oppitz in that it is similar to the drums used by many Siberian groups. It generally differs in its diameter which can be anything from forty to fifty centimeters, and the frame, which is about twenty centimeters wide, is made of wood from a tree called Sandan (Sal) in Nepali and Bunsu in Chepang. The Membrane is made of wood goat's hide. The Sandon is the only tree considered sacred by the Chepang who also use this wood to make hoes (Riboli, 96). Chepang

Pandey often Chants some songs while making drum. One of the Chants which is collected by Rishi Ram Adhikari where he writes;

Soul of drum I am looking after some people I am regularly done

O soul take care of these people who help me

I always in front of you

I am the man who lives in these days, I come down here

I am putting into the place where you usually visit...

Listen! Drum, Listen!...

Someone may come from the place where the sun sets

Please cure the sick

If you help that will helpful... (333-334)

The mention chants also portrays the identity of Chepangs. Drum of the Chepang itself represents the identity and while making drum they even performs various kinds of offerings. They offer to their god, spirits, ancestors, jhankris, etc. there is important significance while making drum. Performances are consisting with identity of a person, group and certain community.



Fig. 1: Drum of Chepang's

Source: Personal Field Visit, 2020

In the different cultural contexts within which the shaman works, it is he who has the ability to bring about some form of mediation between the world of humans and the world of the spirits. The shaman moves quite freely between both of these worlds and himself crosses the borders between the different cosmic worlds in very much the same way as a hero (55).

Perhaps one of the first definitions, slightly short, but still valid, of shamanism was given by the Russian ethnographer, Mikhailovski, who described the shaman as being "an intermediary in the relationship man has with the world of the spirits" (qtd in Riboli, 55).

These relationships would be impossible and extremely dangerous if there were no individuals in the community in a position to deal with them, in different manner and form, in order to maintain an equilibrium between what is known and what is not known; health and illness; life and death; mankind and the supernatural.

There is a need for reassurances and certainties which distinguishes the thoughts, philosophy and actions of the human race and, in the culture and society he works in, the shaman is the main actor and font of the culture of the people he lives amongst as well as being a therapist, not in the limited western sense of the word, but in a much wider and complex sense; he cures various types of crises, be they individual or collective.

The shaman owes his power and knowledge primarily to the supernatural world and then, though this does not apply in all cases, to a more expert shaman. He has no use for their doctrine or dogma. Shamanic knowledge is mainly passed on orally, with very few exceptions.

Shamanism has no use for the places usually suggested for the encounters between man and the gods, in other words churches and temples, as there is no need for them, given that it is the shaman himself who goes to the deities or who can bring them, given that it is the shaman himself who goes to the deities or who can bring them to the human world. This also means that the shaman has no need to worship sacred images which would only be pale imitations of a reality which is well known to them and has often been experienced by them (55).

Riboli writes that, "there are many elements in chepang shamanism which can be traced to Nordic shamanism which is of great interest in that chepang shamanism has been relatively little influenced by other religions: the first of these is the single membranous drum, on the other side of which there are a series of chains and iron hangings, very similar to that used by many groups. Secondly, the initiatory crisis and most account of the calling to the profession by the spirits and the kidnapping of the newly initiated by them are strikingly similar to those of Siberian shamanism, as in the cosmic concept and the form of most of the séances (57).

Chepang's shamanic activities are related with cosmology. They believe in their shamanic corporeal act. By performing shamanic act chepang community keep their community safe from natural problems. However there is no base to believe on such superstitious things but such ritualistic performance keeps them different from other community.

Chepang's folklore are also connected with land, they worship their land devotionally perceiving it as *Khoriayama*. There is an intimate relationship between *Khoriya* lands Chepang. "*Khoriyama hamra pita-purkhale bas gareka chhan* means, Chepang's ancestors and deities reside in and around the *khoriya* land." "*Chepang*

*jaatiko pahichaan nai khoriya ho* means, cultural identity of Chepang is *khoriya*.”(Field note text)

For Chepangs, *khoriya* land has spiritual and religious association. According to them, *khoriya* is the land conserved by their ancestors so that they pay great respect and value to it. They believe that their ancestors and gods reside around it. Therefore, they organize *bhumipooja* (worshiping of land) once a year in order to make their ancestors and gods happy. Chepangs also celebrate a number of ceremonies. They celebrate *kulpuja* (worshiping the ancestors) in December and *baipuja* (worshiping for eternal peace) and *diyali* (usually done after the harvest of paddy, maize). *Bhumipooja* is done once a year. They pay great respect to nature – forests, rivers and stones- and consider them as the symbol of god and goddess. In this respect they can be called as worshiper of nature (*prakriti pujak*). A Chepang household must have *khoriya* land. The household that does not have *khoriya* is considered as incomplete. In Chepang communities, there is common saying that is ‘when we see a Chepang house; there must be *khoriya* land nearby’. It reveals that Chepangs have special relationship to their lands and territories.

Gilbert argues that indigenous people are the people, who used to live, continue to live and wish to perpetuate their specific attachment to a defined territory. The notion of a specific historical attachment to a territory is a defining element of indigenusness (2006). In Chepang community there is a tradition of giving *Chiuri* (Butter tree) to their daughter as dowry. *Chiuri* is cultivated on *khoriya*. Chepangs love to eat the meat of bats, which, are attracted by *Chiuri* nectar making easier for Chepang to hunt them. One of the chepang respondent said that, “*Hami ta Chepang jati gita/ vyakur khanchhau* meaning, we are Chepangs so we eat *gita* and *vyakur*”. (Field note text)

There is one folk narratives of Chepang about *Chiuri* which reflects their ethnic identity. As similar issue is presented in the story entitled, “Chiuri Ko Botko Katha”

Chiuri tree originated differently from other tree. In ancient time, a Chepang used to keep a buffalo in his shed. He loved the buffalo more than his children. One day buffalo was died in landslide. Next morning Chepang found dead body of buffalo in the middle of step land. He cried continuously whole year. At last, god changed his buffalo as a chiuri tree and consoled him not to cry anymore. Immediately Chiuri tree provided fruit to the Chepangs and its taste was like buffalo milk. Since then annually the tree gives enormous fruit to Chepang. (173)

The above folk narrative presents the myth of Chepang and origin of Chiuri tree which is their identity too. The symbolic representation of Chiuri tree shows longevity, prosperity and fertility. They even give Chiuri tree to their daughter on their wedding ceremony. The trend of giving Chiuri tree to their daughter represents their prosperity and longevity .In Chepangs area, there are so many Chiuri tree. It annually provides them fruit with taste of milk. Thus, the features of buffalo and chiuri are similar kind. The plant has cultural value too. The myth projects cultural identity of Chepang from the narrative of its origin. In this regard Victor Turner writes “Cultural performance are capable of carrying many messages at once they are capable of subverting on one level what another level seems to be saying and the full reality of meaning and messages is only attained through performance” (24). The study of culture in and through its performance has come a long way from the goal of the British structural functionalist school of anthropology. Turner is one of them

observes, “To exhibits the laws of structure and process which determine the specific configurations of relationship and institution detectable by trained observation” (139).

Performances are constitutive of culture, not something added to culture. After the fact, performances are epistemic in that we learn and know our worlds through our performance are critical lenses for looking at and pushing back on culture. In this regard, D. Soyini Madison’s definition is relevant to address:

Performance is central to the meanings and effects of human behavior, consciousness, and culture. These days, it seems one can hardly address any subject in the arts, humanities and social sciences without encountering the concept of performance. Performance –as the central to the study of humans across academic disciplines did not take centre stage overnight. (117)

Cultural performance penetrates a new dimension for studying culture as a method, play, poetics, and power. It basically presents, offering opportunities to fix and change the values, structure, dramas, and institution. To perform, watch, critique, or studying performance of other cultures is really ethical and political in this regard, Mary Frances Hopkins states “Performative turn metaphor to argue for the performance turn and toss, to suggest that a certain amounts for squirming of discomfort of ambiguity is both necessary and inevitably in any study of performance that constitute culture” (25). Most of the cultural performance belongs to culture’s subjunctive mood. Subjunctive is defined by Webster as “That mood of verb used to express supposition, desire, hypothesis, possibility etc. rather than to state an actual fact, as the mood of were, in if I were you. Ritual, carnival festival, festival theatre, films and similar performative genre clearly posses many of the attributes” (31). Thus Shamanism is also one of the Cultural performances which are still practiced in Chepang Community. It is done in the particular stage to fulfill social, ritual performance

where Chepang Pandey performs significant role. Similarly the cultural performance of this Shamanism is very important to understand the cultural dogma that people live in a certain ethnic or cultural community.

The Chepang community has their own collective rites and symbols. They perform in various ceremonies or in festivals collective. They have their own folklore which helps them to create their identity. Alan Dundes writes;

Any identity system is dependent on an individual's belief on his personal affiliation with certain symbols and with their meaning. There can be collective as well as individual identity. [...]. Folklore is a function of shared identity, pronounced differences (linguistics, religious, economic, and political) are central in the creation of feelings of common ethnicity and notions of kinship. (150)

Therefore, folklore is that art or form of interaction, comprising an assortment of stories, sayings, proverbs, spells, songs, incantations, and other formulas, which employs spoken language as its medium. In Nepali society it includes fairy tales, myths, and legends, superstitions, festival rites, traditional games, folk songs, popular sayings, arts, crafts, folk dances, and the like. It is very much an organic phenomenon underlying many definitions; a body of knowledge, a mode of thought, or a kind of art.

Chepang's folklore and mythology provides extensive insight into the life and identity of them. Folklore traditions in Chepang depict the identity. Their folktales reveal much about ethnic and religious tradition, activities, emotion, superstitions, customs and inhibitions deeply embedded with anthropology and its interpretive tradition. An array of lore that includes anything from spirits, occult practices

(witchcraft, magic, and sorcery), ghosts, monsters, urban myths, old wives tales and luck charms are the parts of Chepang's life and identity.

Not through only shamanism, Chepang also reflect their ethnic identity through festivals, songs and dances. Chepang community is rich in festivals. In their festivals they perform uniquely, they recite their natural deities. They have two main annual festivals (Chhonam and Namrung Puja) which are important occasion on which all those belonging to the ethnic group can meet and gather together (Ribboli, 196), and they sing song that marks their ethnic identity. They celebrate these festivals collectively that keeps their ethnicity. Dundes further writes;

The ethnic group consists of a self-perceived group of people who exclusively share a common set of traditions (any aspect of which can be used symbolically and emblematically) to differentiate themselves from other groups in order to show others who one is and to what group one belong. (150)

Chhonam is celebrated in the month of Bhado, usually when there is a full moon and its main aim is to present the divinities in the patal and the ancestors with offerings of the fruit of the first harvest before it is used for human consumption. The chhonam is also an occasion on which all the village inhabitants and those belonging to other ethnic groups will meet and pay homage to the priests who are central and vital part of the festivities. The main phase of the Chhonam starts at sunset and lasts till the next morning, sometimes even until the early hours of the afternoon.

When the sunsets the priest begins to decorate the altar in their habitation and prepare the offerings, all of which will take them two or three hours: banana trees are brought and placed round the walls. Bunches of rice seedlings which have been tied together are then placed under the banana trees. This rice is known as ghaiya and grows in land which is not flooded.

This operation requires great care and attention and the plants must not lose any of their grains before the festival begins as this would be interpreted as a sign of bad luck. Seven plates of offerings are then placed in front of the banana trees. This contains offerings of fruit, lemons, apples, bananas and oranges along with any other product which has been recently produced or harvested. Wine, liquor distilled from barley or meal, is always present and will be drunk in large quantities by all those present during the course of the night. Ribboli writes;

All the vegetable offerings must be in unprocessed form and must have been touched as little as possible by humans: the ghaiya rice in particular is considered to be particularly sacred in that its roots are believed to reach into the *patal* from where it is thought to obtain its nutrition. The ghaiya, like the other types of vegetables, is believed to belong to the divine underworld and man's consumption of these products is considered to be a concession made by the divinities that must therefore be given the first offerings. (198)

These offerings are also made to the divinities and ancestors who are thought to use the vegetables to plant out their fields rather than for food. The offerings have a double function: they are used to pay homage to the divinities who created them and who are the effective owners as well as being used to re-establish close contact between the world of humans and that of ancestors who are given seeds which can be used for cultivation.

The decoration of the altar is a delicate matter in that it is used to recreate a scene as similar as possible to that in which the divinities of the *patal* (hell) live, which is believed to be full of forests and banana trees and which is symbolized by the two plants placed inside the habitation. All the offerings and other items necessary for the *séance* are displayed in such a way as to maintain the principles of beauty and

harmony. This preparation is followed with great apprehension. The onlookers marvel at the representation of the land of the divinities appearing before their eyes, a place where the divinities are believed to remain for the duration of the ceremony.

In the course of the preparations for the ceremony and, indeed, all through the night, people come to the priests' house with offerings of rice, wine and, depending on the state of their finances, one or more chickens or cockerels (Ribboli, 198). In Chhonam festival the activities that Chepang do is their traditional folklore. They celebrate and perform it in their traditions. The materials and ingredients they use in this festival are organic and connected with nature. Whatever they do, is their belonging. Citing and keeping priest in center is a kind of invoking their deities which is connected with Chepang ethnicity and folklore.

The Chhonam festival goes through several process and they perform to devote their admiration towards their ancestor and deities. Ribboli further writes;

There are several other phases in the Chhonam. Once preparation of the altar has been completed the priest beat their drums and asks the divinities to leave their world and come to that of the humans. During these invocations, the story of how the world was created is narrated, both to teach the younger generations the myth and remind the adults of it while praising the powers of divinities who, on hearing their story narrated, quickly come to take their place beside the altar where they are believed to remain for the course of the whole festival though only the priest can see them. The long narration and invocations are followed by a pause during which everyone drinks, chats and laugh. The worshipping then continues and various plates of offerings are given to the ancestors: the divinities are thought to come to Earth though the ancestors do not and the priest must travel to their world. (198)

This is easily explained by the fact that the souls of the deceased are not allowed to return to the world of humans except in the form of dangerous demons and therefore the priest must go into a state of trance and travel to the land of the ancestors, not to accompany the soul of a deceased person but to take them the offerings given to them by humans. Ribboli further writes; the Chepang have a saying which states that all married women must return to their parents' home once a year so as to pay homage to their parents and in the same way the priest go to visit deceased relatives and acquaintances during Chhonam (199).

The main day of Chhonam is unique in that all the main divinities are in the same habitation as the people gathered there and all the ancestors are looking down on the events taking place on the Earth and can recognize their relatives and acquaintances. This event only happens one night a year and is used by everyone to ask for predictions about future events and cure all types of illnesses, particularly those which have been long-term conditions.

Throughout the night young people gather together outside the house of the priest in the course of the festivities and, to the sound of a drum called *madal* which is usually used for festivities in Nepal, they will form two groups, one of girls and one of boys, and sing courting songs while dancing to the light of the fires which have been lit for the occasion. Marriages are contracted during this ceremony and the boys will ask the girl of their choice if they agree to elope with them, an act which is recognized by the community as one of marriage.

At sunset on the evening of the Chhonam they begin to dress the altar with great care and attention and place one of the banana trees they have to prepare that same morning against the wall opposite the entrance of the habitation. The ears of rice should be placed at the foot of the banana tree in vertical position and numerous metal

plates of offerings should set out with other offerings such as *acheta*, fruit and sweets which have been brought along by those attending the ceremony, along with incense, nutmegs and colored powders. Mats are set out on the ground of the small, one-roomed habitation to allow the public to be seated more comfortably. They begin the ceremony with chant and invocations to the divinities. They sing the song like;

'O god, I am at your service: I am not lying.

Do not joke: I am not joking.

I am saying good things. I am calling on the gods of the patal to give me their support.

Do not be angry: we have begun to call you!

Be good and kind and enjoy yourselves.

Chase out the black magic! A witch might come in: chase her out!

Look kindly: the bhut or prît might come. Look at them!

An attack may come from any side: protect my faith!

Chase out the black magic!

My knowledge and yours could be disturbed by something...

The bhut, the prît, the witches could come!

Listen: Let's look at what is happening.

Listen! Listen!

Listen, I am calling you;

The witches cannot defeat me, nothing can.

Why are you bowing your head sadly?

I am asking the gods and goddesses for help

Gods and goddesses of the patal, the Underworld,

I am asking for your help!" (Ribboli 201-202)

In above song Chepang are reciting their gods and goddesses in order to solve their all problems and cure illness. The way they are reciting and calling their deities is one of the best folkloric moments. Their performance of worshipping and reciting gods and goddesses is unique one by which they mark their sacred identity.

There is a definite ambivalence adjacent the night of the Chhonam. It is the paramount instant in the twelve month interlude in which to endeavor to solve problems and cure serious illnesses for which little can be done in the course of the year, and on the other hand the divinities are not the only ones believed to gather together on the Earth, malign spirits and entities could also be enticed by the food and sounding of the ring. The priest confirm that their lives are in the greatest danger during Chhonam as there is always a certain risk in establishing contact with so many divinities at the same time in that some supernatural being may take offence at the slightest mistake and decide to take revenge for this by taking possession of the soul of the priest.

The priest role is significant in Chepang's milieu. Everything moves around the priest and he is alone is responsible for maintaining the delicate balance: he creates alliance with the divinities so that they will help him to repel any eventual attacks from enemies against the community would be in danger. In invocations and requesting for help they sing the song:

'(To the divinities) I ask you to be intelligent.

God of the drum and other divinities: I am trying to gather you together in this place.

An enemy may arrive in this house. Look out!

Protect the children!

Gods, goddesses, make sure your souls are strong.

You must not go up the mountains today:  
my soul and your souls must not leave.  
Today the souls must stay together in the refuge of the gods.  
A witch might come, check carefully!  
Other jhakri could come and put our knowledge to the test.  
The people who are gathered together here could have problems: watch out!  
(To the drum) Your skin is your clothing, look after it!  
If you lose it, you might have to wander about naked!  
(To the gods) Some brothers may have arrived before me.  
I might be late. Please do not be angry with me for this!  
Do not wander about in the little springs today!  
Please stay here by my side.  
Someone may come from the place where the sun sets.  
When a sick person is cured, the condition may return.  
Shaking violently. Shaking: though not because it is the will of the body.  
He is getting hot!  
Death, you may not enter here: this is the world of humans,  
Be careful! You might fall!  
Today you gods and goddesses may not go into the patal.  
Gods of the akas and the patal, gather together!  
You will be in the hands of a dead man, in the hands of a bayu and a bir: get  
up!  
(To the banana trees) Do not move!  
(To the rice plants) Stay together at the foot of the banana trees!  
Someone may be affected by black magic: so stay here!

If other pande steal rice this rice, we will die.

People are arriving, furious.

A sad person could come.

Gods, goddesses, I bring you this message:

.....

I invite you here from the patal: do not be angry.

You may be tired of hearing the problems if humans

and want to leave this place: please, let that not be the case!

Do not let anyone speaks!

Excuse those who did not come last year,

Have some compassion for those who are not here his year!' (Ribboli 203)

We can see from the above chant there is another danger for the priest, that other jhakri may come to test the power and knowledge of their colleagues. Other priest, adversaries, may arrive and if they are able to steal the rice plants, this would mean certain death for the priest holding the Chhonam. As we have already seen, though rivalry between priests or between priest and jhakri is rare, it is greatly feared as it will inevitably mean a battle between forms of magic which usually ends with one of the two heroes dying. This is perhaps the only concrete earthly danger for the priests who have little else to fear from humans.



Fig. 2: Priest is worshipping his deities. (Source: field visit, 2020)

In above picture we can see the Chepang priest worshipping their deities. He is worshipping in a traditional way by reciting gods and goddesses. This picture also shows that Chepang are nature lover and their all folklore and festival emerges from the nature. So that, they bring their gods and goddesses center to their folkloric life.

The chants invocation are followed by a pause which lasted about forty minutes during which all the adults chat, smoke, and drink wine. The priest recites an abbreviated form of the long myth recounting how the world is created which is listened to with great interest by all those present. The priest again put on the ritual necklaces and recommences the sounding of the drum:

I am asking for your mercy, gods of the patal

Gauthani, sun and moon, protect me.

Protect me, o guru, gods of the akas, of the patal, eighty-four guru.

Arrows and witches could come.

The four rakshasa could come.

The eighty-four kings and four mashan could arrive!

This is why I am asking you for help, guru.

Any bir could arrive and play,

Any prôt could arrive and play,

One hundred pisac could arrive and play

The bir and they bayu could arrive in the form of a wind.

You, Tiwase, Batise, look out!

I am giving you an offering of some new food!

The bayu might come up!

The bir might come up!

The mashan might come up!

I am ready to come with you!

I am ready to come with you! (Ribboli 204)

All séances have moments of hilarity and drama though in the course of Chhonam these occur more suddenly and unexpectedly, both because the public is more disposed to this and much larger than normal, and because there is a joyous atmosphere to the festivities which preludes a season of abundance following a period of forced fasting due to the scarce availability of agricultural products in the months previous to this.

The Chepangs worship a variety of deities. Of these the worship of Namrung (the hunting god), Bhumi-Puja (the earth deity) and Gaidu-Puja (worship for livestock) are considered most important. The Namrung is a hunting god. As the Chepangs are hunters, hunting is essential for survival. Besides, it is believed that hunting should be done at least once a year otherwise the god Namrung may get infuriated and hurt people by bringing miseries. On a stipulated date after offering a chicken a group of Chepangs set out for hunting into the jungle hoping for a successful hunt. Even after their successful hunt, they propitiate Namrung by offering the blood from the heart of the animal for their well-being. This adoration with the offerings is performed to tranquilize their hunting god. So the pleasure of Namrung protects people from epidemics and other calamities.

The mobilizing apparatus permeating such folklores and coordinating the emotions of the participants are mostly singing and dancing. But also dance and music, performed here as part of folk tradition or as a social act. Characteristic of these festivals and folklores is that while a considerable amount of events are intentionally organized and audience orientated, nevertheless the festival sequence

and scenery apparently serve purposes of group life: there occurs constant in-group communication on different levels, both among the performing groups and with and inside the audience. Social interaction reflects the concerns of the community, the shared experience which are enacted as manifestations of ethnic identity.

Cultural performances occurring during the festivals and folklores are obvious articulations of the Chepang's heritage. One prominent celebration of ethnicity is rendered while identifying oneself by costume - the performers and some of the audience wear traditional costumes originating in the majority of cases from their locality. The event structure of all the folkloric performance include opening ceremony and concluding event, drama and contest has actually been substituted in the cases studied by expressive performance; which tends to comprise both aforementioned elements, the feast occurs only on the small community level, dance and music are the inevitable recreational aspects of such Chepangs gatherings. The ritual of modern festival and folklore tradition includes a festive procession with obligatory insignia and hierarchy, the opening and concluding ceremonies, signal melodies, anthems, and furthermore, each festival strives at working out a characteristic ritual act of its own.

In festivals or in shamanism Chepang show their culture and mark their identity. The activities they do in their culture are their folklore and folklore is performance that helps to keep them discreet from other people and community. Singer writes, 'performance is the defining mechanism of a culture, a way of showing cultural identity to the outside and reaffirming it for the members of the society' (qtd. in Landis and MacAulay, 11). Stauro Hall writes,

[identities] are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity . . . Above all,

and directly contrary to the form in which they are constantly invoked, identities are constructed through, not outside, difference . . . identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude. (4-5)

Chepang's folklore keeps them different from other ethnic groups and it represents their culture and tradition and through their folklore and performance they mark their identity. Speer writes,

Performance is a process by which we construct and negotiate culture and identity, and we have hope that it leads us to deeper identification with one another. Performance is one of the means, perhaps the most potent means, of bringing out the significant resemblances between people. Yet the concept of identification with one another is ambiguous. It implies that we recognize shared similarities, but also that there are in fact divisions between us. (17)

The Chepang community every year celebrates Chhonam and other festivals repeatedly. Every year they heal and sanctify their community with help of their cultural priest. And the priest shamans and chant the mantras in order to call and cite their deities. They repetitively shaman and celebrate their folklore. And such folklores are their cultural performance. Landis and MacAulay write;

Cultural performance often fits in the repetitive nature of tradition because the very act of repeating a thing or action invests that thing with temporal power. That is, if we know that our family has eaten the same dinner every year for generations and will, presumably and connectivity of our family unit. It gives us a sense of place in the world, permanence, and a feeling of comfort in its predictability. Likewise, national traditions do the same thing for countries and

societies. They serve the purpose of connecting the communities under the national banner such that we have a sense of being, place and strength. (14)

Chebang community gathers in their festivals and celebrates with the common purpose. They show their unity through their folklore and culture. Landis and MacAuly further write, 'culture tend to use performance as an integral and concrete component of their identity and to symbolically identify themselves' (20).

One can immediately point to a few general things about the Chebang people from their folk tales, stories, festivals and drum communication are once part of the Chebang societies. Further one can interpret the stories as Chebang cautionary tales about the keeping of confidences, the betrayal of trust and the placement of community interests over personal ones in the society.

Commonly folktales, story, festivals and other traditional genres are seen to discuss or present a world of the imagination or a real world based on agreed-upon criteria for what is real or factual. Chebang's Chhonam festival and hunting festival belongs to their folklore. They perform their folklore. They are intersected with their folklore and these performances ties them in community therefore they intimacy in their community. Landis and MacAuly write, 'the powerful feeling of intimacy is not merely a by-product of performance but directly emerges from this sequence of performed actions' (43).

The shared sense of enacted community binds all Chebang to each other through suffering, sorrow, love and compassion. The concept of ceremonially co-experiencing the physical and emotional suffering of the divine mother and son thus becomes part of the repertoire of the "social imaginary" joining this particular community together through common beliefs and the efficacy of devotional action. In this regard Turner writes, 'community is a felt reality' (466).

Identity is the empirical network of interactions in which culture is created and moves. The constitution or essence of the group or community is fully realized in performance when interactions involved in culture making are dialogue with the notion of the social imaginary the Chepang group performances exemplify both the empirical network and the social imaginary.

Identity is the human capacity – rooted in language – to know 'who's who'. This involves knowing who we know who others are, them knowing who we are, us knowing who they think we are, and so on: a multi-dimensional classification or mapping of the human world and our places in it, as individuals and as members of collectivities. It is a process of identification not a 'thing'. It is not something that one can have, or not; it is something that one does. Following Chepang's folklore, it cannot be said too often that identification does not determine what Chepangs do. Knowing 'the map' – or even just approximately where we are – does not necessarily tell us where we should go next.

The ritual and folklore of Chepang demonstrates the interconnectedness of religious and societal commitment of brotherhood and sorority. This interplay between belief and action defines the Chepang community and privileges the interactive network of relationship at the core of their culture. Collectively, belief and performed actions constitute the melding of a network of interaction with the social imaginary which on multiple levels signify Chepang ceremonies and folklores as cultural performance.

The festivals and ceremonies of the Chepangs are occasions of community participation and reciprocity which help in maintaining their social order and social solidarity. In brief, the social functions of rites and ceremonies enable them to attract the natural forces into their favor and support. Besides, they are supportive in their

vindication and power to encounter the natural environment, and these, meet their survival needs. This descriptive functionalist analysis of the religion of the Chepangs shows similarity with Milanowski's (1948) theory of the social functions of religion which posits religion as part of a culture with certain functions for the fulfillment of human needs and for the provision of solutions to certain difficulties and problems. Besides this, the religious beliefs and practices of the Chepangs look clearly akin to what Redcliffe-Brown has expressed in regard to religion:

In all ages men have hoped that by the proper performance of religious actions or observances they would obtain some specific benefit; health and long life, children to carry on their line, material well-being, success in hunting, rain, the growth of crops and the multiplication of cattle, victory in war, admission of their souls after death to a paradise or inversely, release by the extinction of personality from the round of reincarnation. (153)

The entire circle of the Chepang's life and their folklore are dominated by religious beliefs and performances. All such beliefs and faith in supernatural power, the dependence of the Chepnag's community on such power and their veneration of it constitute the structure of the Chepang religion and marks their identity.

### **Chapter III:**

#### **Conclusion**

Performance is both an object of inquiry and as a nuance to view the world. It prioritizes process, both in understanding performance activity, and identities, culture, and representation. Any practice is not only an important counterweight to theory, but as a model of inquiry in its own right. This gives a focus on a broadly inclusive definition of historical and contemporary performance forms, including consciously staged performance in theater, dance, films, new media, ritual, political activism, public demonstration, music and everyday performance is virtual and real. Studying performance is also studying a way of doing, and that bridging the theoretical and the practical within disciplinary and trans-disciplinary formations is a powerful means of enhancing both theory and practice.

Among the ethnic community of Nepal Chepangs are one of the tribe who in the phase of transition. Turning to the phase of hunting, foraging, cultivation, they have faced numerous positive change in their life. Due to the cash crop production, the cultivation has also changed in these days. Chepangs are rich in their culture, ritual, tradition etc. They have their own language, norms, values, religion. Due to the modernization, values of these traditions are decreasing day by day. From the

perspective of economy, they are still depending upon the agriculture. They depend upon agriculture in recent days. In ancient times, they practice hunting, foraging. Mostly they used to depend upon wild resources. The chepang community is relatively static because tradition plays a significant role in preserving their identity.

The feeling of belonging to a group of people is something that cannot be imposed artificially or purposely, it is a phenomenon that occurs naturally or does not, but cannot be forced to do so. Yet, to maintain the atmosphere of what Victor Turner calls "communitas" there is a long way of efforts to be made, inside group 'rituals' to be established, values to be communicated and preserved.

Disagreements and tension are an inevitable part of a group dynamic, no matter if reasons are inside or outside caused. Although conflict situations are unpleasant, they have the dual nature: they can ruin a collectivity, and yet they have the quality to improve the state of being of the group, to change the paradigm of it, therefore to make it more flexible. Also the resolution of group conflicts often suggests the search of new ideas and ways of development. The same applies to the process of facing difficulties, coming from outside a group - it can destroy it, or it can mobilize the people to become creative, tied up their relationships and deal with surprising solutions. Conflicts and dramas imply change, and as such should be regarded with bigger curiosity and less anxiety.

The folklore is constantly changing through the years, not only by its form. The perception of the people who practice it and the way the audience is living it varies. The dynamic nature of the folklore and specifically of the folklore dance is despite of it related to the natural continuity and adaptation of it. A folklore tradition persists for hundreds of years, but in order to do so, it has to evolve. The folklore is a

milieu that has the ability to bring Chepang people together and create connections between them, but also to connect past and present in a very unique way.

Chepang has a rich and varying history, sewed from moments of joy and moments of difficulties. The group has connected families, enriched people's perceptions and curiosity, created friendships, but also has gone through moments of crisis, has taken difficult and not always pleasant decisions and so on. The story of Chepang people is strongly emotional.

Chepang's folklore comprises semiotic-ally complex performance events and renders Chepang's experience present expressive forms of culture where social interaction is instrumental. Those folklores provide the scenery for the interplay of tradition and innovation in communicative social life. The created communicative situation reflects shared experience of the group, promotes social revitalization, and celebrates ethnic identity in the context of cultural expression.

Every society changes due to direct or indirect impact modernization. Such as transport, communication, education, government plans. In this scenario, this ethnic community is no exceptional. In spite of their poverty, backwardness and aloofness they are undergoing so many changes. However, the changes has been slowly and not what we observe among other ethnic communities. Hence, this study is essential since it tries to fill the gaps of socio-cultural and religious characteristics of the Chepang community in the fast changing social milieu of Nepal.

Chepangs primitive cultures need to be preserved to strengthen the tribe's roles and reinforce the commonly shared values and beliefs. Their history should be written officially and they should keep into center. So they can enter into mainstream of literature. The facilities like education, health, communication should provide them in order to live sustainably. Nepal government should implement the law to preserve

of Chepangs cultures, ritual and folklore. National indigenous commission, NGOs should have provision to welfare for the different ethnics groups including Chepang to strengthen their cultures. Still there need more actions to be implemented to those areas.

No matter what changes occurred to this ethnic community, it could be assumed that their traditional rituals, cultures, traditions, folkloric representation remains same in upcoming days. Although they are in the phase of change and continuity, their cultural values remain same which play significant role to mark their identity. They are in the phase of change in the sense that they have undergone many transformations like economic, social, and religious. The impact of modernism is visible in their community. The different cultures are being intersected and from this Chepangs are not exceptional. However, they are still preserving and practicing their culture and even they are passing to younger generation.

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## **Appendix-I**

### **1. Chanting by Pande during Chonam Puja**

O! Gods I am in your service, I am devoting

Don't take it at joke, I am serious

I am offering you my things,

I am inviting the god from patal for support

Please be happy, we call you!

Be good and kind and enjoy yourselves

Fight with black magic. Witch might appear in the village

Please chase out please save us from Bhut, Pret and other demon

Protect the faith

Chase out the black magic

If anyone disturbs you, use your knowledge

I will support you

Bhut and prît might attack us

Listen!

Listen!

I hope witch can not defeat me

I hope you support me

I certainly attack them

I have already asking god to help me

God and goddess from patal had already appear before me.

I ask you intelligent.

Oh! Almighty! I am together with you in this alter

An enemy may come at this place

Save our children

Make human soul strong than other

You should not go up to mountains

The Soul is waiting to you

## **2.Request to God to fight against Bokshi**

Oh! God! Oh! God!

Oh! God!

Push it out! Please

I am worried this man could die

I found, why our soul is divided

Please stay home do not wonder

Please stay home

Witch is chasing you

Though you are lucky to alive

Your house might to stolen

I request you do not chase this man

This man is out of this world

### **3.Chanting for mercy**

Oh! God!

I am asking for mercy, gods of the Patal

The sun and the moon save me

Save me! O! Guru gods of Akash of the Patal eight four gurus

Arrows and witches could come

Many Rakshashas could come

The mighty kings and four Mashans are arriving

Any prôt could arrive and play

Bir is disturbing us

One prôt is coming

The Bayau could arrive in the form of wind

You, Diwase and Batise look out

I am offering sweet offers to you

The Bayaus might come up!

The Birs might come up!

The Mashans might come out!

I am ready to come with you!

I am ready to come with you!

#### **4. Broken chanting of Female Pande to save life**

Oh! God we women!

Request you

Come up Patal and save our soul

I am dying

Please help us

What bad things are happening to them?

Please find out the disaster

I feel so sad, still I hope

So save me and my child

Look! We are waiting for you

Look! Look!

There may be some little hope

Please come and save me

#### **5. A Magical tone of offering**

I want to exchange the soul

Please take chicken's soul instead of man

I offer you two souls instead of one

Tell me how I can help save this man's life

Give me back this soul

Do not kill this soul!

A chicken will be presented at this time

If you need next I will ready to offer

Do not worry. I am about to give you food

Take it serious and go away

Take it serious and go away go west and take rest

Return this soul

Please return to this soul

## **6. Devotional poems towards yama(Karma)**

Oh! God Yama

I am pulling you! Let's go! Let's go!

Look up! Look up!

You need not to eat human meat on Yama come on

Look! Look! Carefully look

Send the Nui away from here

You never commit mistake

This is not the time of this man

He has right to live hundred years

Not to disturb him

You can not kill him without any reason

You have no right to thread

I request Kal not appear in this house

### **7. Maru sarara (The Wind Blow) (Chepang folk songs)**

The wind silently blow

Tear falls when remember the torture

I carried the load and walked with bare feet

The house is empty, nothing remain to eat

How many days carried the load

How I give for wife clothes

The wind silently blow

Tear falls when I remember the torture

Children cry and beg stale food

Production is less nothing to eat

Reach home evening and badly tired

The house is empty nothing remain for eat

The wind blow silently

Tear falls when remember the torture.

**8. Shaman must address a special chant to God, whatever the ceremony may be**

‘Oh guru, you have given me a single surface drum,

the single surfaced drum has been given.

Upto the three.....

I am playing a single surfaced drum,

But I can also play a double surfaced drum.

Please, guru, hear me,

I will always dance on the right surface

to send away the demons!.

## Appendix -II



Plate no. 1 House of Chepang's



Plate no. 2 Kitchen of Chepang's



Plate no. 3 Chepang knitting fishnet

