



Nepali Folklore Society

नेपाली लोकवार्ता तथा लोकजीवन

Nepali Folklore and Folklife

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Folklore and Folklife of Athpahariya Rais: Exploration through Field Research

Introduction

In the earlier issues of the Newsletter (volume 1 and 2), we had reported our studies on Gandharva and Gopali folk groups under the Folklore and Folklife Study Project. In the course of continuing the same project with Finnish support under Local cooperation, now we have completed several works related to the study of the third folk group – the Athpahariya Rai. Therefore, the activities completed in connection with the field research of this folk group are going to be reported here. The topics that follow will describe the progress of the field study along with its achievements.

Preparatory Works

For the purpose of data collection from field, the preparatory works needed to be done included that of purchasing some equipments and preparing the research tools. Therefore, the equipments necessary for field research were purchased, including the memory cards, rewritable CDs, DVCs (digital video cassettes) etc. Moreover, field sheets, questionnaires and schedules were also prepared, prior to the beginning of the field-based activities.

Pre-Field Work

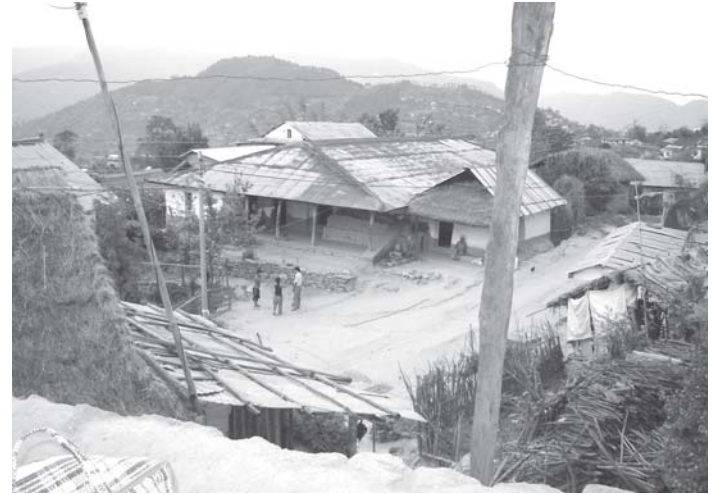
From February 28 to March 3, 2006, a preliminary survey of Athpahariya Rais' settlement area was carried out by the project team leader Prof. Tulasi Diwasa and researcher Mr. Shambhu Khatiwada. They had visited Dadagaun and adjacent areas of Dhankuta Municipality, whereby feasibility study of the field research was carried out.

Based on the survey, it was reported that Athpahariya Rais have some distinct ways of life and social characteristics, which differ from the rest groups of Kiranti community. As such, with the view to preserve their language, culture and traditions, the need for a detailed study of their folklore and folklife was strongly felt.

As mentioned in the survey report, Dhankuta Municipality, Bhirgaun and Belahara VDCs are the main settlement areas of Athpahariya Rais; and altogether 1442 households of this folk group are living in these localities. Regarding their population, the report has mentioned that a total number of 7405 people of this ethnic group are residing in Dhankuta Municipality, Belahara VDC and Bhirgaun VDC respectively.

Prof. Diwasa and Mr. Khatiwada had mentioned 40 names of local informants, who were willing to assist the field researchers in course of data collection. In addition, the names of two local organizations working in the Athpahariya Rai community were also mentioned in the report, which could help the field-based activities. These are: 1) Athpahariya Rai Samaj Dhankuta; and 2) Triveni Sanskritik Group.

Four researchers were appointed, and agreement was made with them in the last week of April 2006. The research team comprises these experts: 1. Mr. Amrit Yonjan-Tamang (Team Coordinator); 2. Mr. Shambhu Khatiwada; 3. Mr. Bulu Mukarung; and 4. Mr. Luisang Waiba.



Thenapang(A big priest house with 52 separate kitchen), Majhagaun

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¹Folk musical instruments of Athpahariya Rai (Dhol and Jhyamta)

From April 28th to the 4th of May, the researchers learned operating the essential equipments/ tools needed for data collection (digital camera, video camera, and audio recorder). They also collected the available literature related to the folk group, and were involved in the orientation programme, whereby they were given the necessary guidelines for field research.

Besides, an interaction programme was organized in the project office to share the experience between them and the earlier field researchers who had already completed their field work. On behalf of the earlier research teams, Prof. Dr. C.M. Bandhu (Coordinator, first research group) and Mr. Tej Prakash Shrestha (Coordinator, second research group) had shared their experience of working in the field for data collection. The programme was organized in the presence of the project team leader Prof. Tulasi Diwasa; and he had given the necessary guidelines for the researchers.

Field Work in Dadagaun and Adjacent Areas

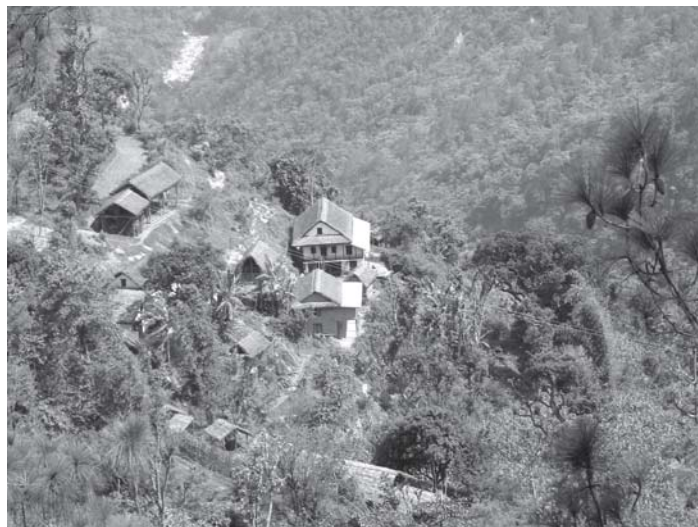
Spending the period of 3 months (from May 5th to August 4th, 2006) in the settlement areas of the folk group in and around Dhankuta Dadagaun, the field researchers collected data on Athpahariya Rai folklore and folklife. The work of data collection was divided into four different areas of Athpahariya folklore and folklife: 1) folk language and folk communication, 2) material folk culture and folk heritage, 3) folk literature and performing arts, and 3) socio-cultural folklife and folkways. Mr. Amrit Yonjan (Team Coordinator), Mr. Shambhu Khatiwada, Mr. Bulu Mukarung and Mr. Luisang Waiba had taken charge of collecting the relevant information in the 4 areas respectively.

During their stay in the field, the researchers had sent reports in the interval of every fortnight, mentioning their activities, collections and achievements, to the project office, Bhatbhateny, Kathmandu. They had collected the relevant information by visiting the key informants of the folk group, interviewing them and audio recording the speech, taking photographs, and video-recording several aspects of their life, community, culture, language etc. They also used the field notes and questionnaires for the purpose of data collection. During their fieldwork, the researchers visited almost each and every corner of the folk group settlement area from Yakchana (to the South-East of Dhankuta Municipality) to Akhisalla (to the west of Belahara VDC). The Athpahariya Kirant Rai Samaj helped them a lot during their field visits and data collection.

The project team leader Prof. Tulasi Diwasa also visited the field work area (Dadagaun and the surroundings of Dhankuta Municipality) from 30th July to 6th August 2006, with the cameraman Mr. Mohan Bikram Shah, for the purpose of facilitating the field research activities and for video-recording the relevant aspects of the folklore and folklife of Athpahariya Rais. On the occasion, he inaugurated a symposium organized by Athpahariya Kirant Rai Samaj in corporation with the field researchers, in which the first ever prepared Athpahariya Dictionary, Athpahariya grammar and the newspaper *Phungning* were released. The programme was organized to

get the feedback on the information collected by the researchers on the ethnic group's folklore & folk life. Inspired from the research activities, the members of this organization were also involved together with the researchers in making the dictionary.

On the occasion, the Athpahariya Kirant Rai Samaj had given the letters of honour to the researchers, for their contribution in exploring the cultural and folkloristic matters of the folk group, as well as for their inspiration in creating awareness among Athpahariyas towards the preservation and promotion of their folk cultural heritage. In the symposium, the researchers had presented the important findings of their field work, which were discussed by the participants and local experts, and feedback was derived.



Baire Village, Bhirgaun

Problems and Rapport Building

Some of the community leaders in the folk group narrated their past experience with some experts who had visited the Athpahariyas' settlement areas, consulted them and collected some materials; but the Athpahariyas had not understood the purpose of such "studies", since the experts never informed them about the research findings. Moreover, they even narrated the events of distrustful acts done by the experts earlier in the name of research – like taking valuable documents from the villagers but not returning them back. Mentioning such a context, several informants raised a doubt in the present research as well and questioned regarding what could be expected as the outcome of the research for their own benefit.

Realizing the need for raising the informants' confidence in the field activities, the researchers convinced them by saying that they will disseminate the research findings among the people of the folk group. After some discussions with the members of Athpahariya Kirant Rai Samaj, they were convinced that the researchers' field activities will, of course, contribute a lot for the preservation and promotion of their cultural and folkloristic heritage – which can be one of the inspiring sources for their community empowerment. Thus, the researchers were able to build up a good rapport with the informants through the members of Athpahariya Kirant Rai Samaj, and to seek all sorts of necessary supports from them in the field.

Post-Field Work

In the 1st week of August 2006, the researchers came back to the project office after completing the work of data collection from the field, and submitted their field survey report. The information collected from the fieldwork is documented in the office, mostly in the form of digital audio/video recordings and photographs. Besides, some items representing Athpahariya Rai material folk culture, collected from the field research, are also preserved in the office. Now the researchers are transcribing, analyzing and interpreting the data, in order to prepare the detailed research report.



Derapang (youth cultural club)

Collections and Achievements

The field researchers have handed some items representing the folklife and material culture of Athpahariya Rais over to the project office. These items include: *Mekhli* (dress item, covering upper part of body), *Takombi* (shawl), *Murali* (musical instrument like flute), *Thunche* (basket made of bamboo), *Mahala* (that covers the mouth of cattle), *Khungi* (small cage for chicken), *Perungo* (for carrying the piglets), *Halo-Juwa* (the farming instruments), *Dhol* (folk musical drum), *Khukuri* (cutting device), *Hasiya* (for cutting grass), *Dhiki* (for beating rice), *Dhanu-Ban* (arrow), *binayo* (musical instrument played using the mouth), *Chhitasim* (woman's dress like sari), Bamboo comb, etc.

The researchers have also made the folk group's household survey, and brought the survey record to the project office.

The main collection from the field includes the oral texts recorded from the informants in the form of interviews, songs, narratives, photos, and video records of the various aspects of Athpahariya folklife. Altogether, the researchers have video-recorded the relevant information with the total length of 15 hours. Similarly, 2948 pictures have been taken and 72.44 hours' long audio texts have been recorded from the field. All these are preserved in the project office.

Besides, the office has also got 371 photographs and video record of the relevant aspects of the folklore and folklife of

Athpahariya Rais collected by Prof. Diwasa and Mr. Mohan Bikram Shah, with the length of 13 hours.

Covering the 4 different research areas mentioned above (cf. 'Field Work in Dadagaun and Adjacent Areas'), the work of data collection was divided among the members of research team. So, the data collected by the individual researchers are reported below separately.

I. Folk Language and Folk Communication: Mr. Amrit Yonjan

Mr. Yonjan has spent 457 hours with the informants in the field, and has taken 291 photos depicting the folklore and folklife of Athpahariya Rais. He has audio-recorded altogether 66 oral texts having the total length of 7.46 hours. Moreover, he has also video-recorded the relevant information, which is 3 hours in length. This collection includes morphology, communication, multilingualism, language attitudes, baby talks, sociolinguistic functions of greeting and leave taking, dialect study, identification of consonants/vowels and supra-segmental phonemes, analysis of syllable structure, noun phrase, etc. From his collection, 440 namelores, 130 onomastic words, 7 prayers, 10 folk riddles, 55 proverbs/proverbial expressions, 140 jargons, 65 nicknames, 1450 special vocabulary items, and 50 curses/taunts have been collected.

II. Material Folk Culture and Folk Heritage: Mr. Shambhu Khatiwada

Spending 332 hours with the informants in the field, Mr. Khatiwada has taken altogether 1130 photos and has audio-recorded 24 oral texts with the total length of 21.59 hours. The subject matter covered in the collection includes rites and rituals, folk medicine, dress and ornaments, handloom, folk architecture, god and goddess, traditional occupations etc. From his collection, 7 folk rituals, 4 folk food items, 39 folk clothes, 3 folk festivals, 7 folk feasts, 12 folk gods/goddesses, 12 folk arts/crafts, 34 folk architectures, 11 folk medicines, 35 folk weapons, 15 folk furniture items, and 42 different forms of traditional technology/wisdom have been documented. He has also produced a video record of 3.55 hours.



An Athpahariya woman weaving traditional cloth



Yechhem(Dhuri puja) Dhankuta-5, Majhgaun

III. Folk Literature and Performing Arts: Mr. Bulu Mukarung

Mr. Mukarung has taken 1040 pictures, and has audio-recorded 230 different oral texts, with the length of 26.33 hours in total. He has also produced a video record, which is 4.30 hours' long. He has spent altogether 604 hours with the informants in the field. The collection involves folk songs, folktales, performing arts, narratives, myths, personal



Maruni Dance, Dadagaun

memories, folk music, musical instruments, etc. He has collected 10 folk narratives, 15 myths, 55 folk tales, 2 legends, 9 personal memories, 23 annotated jokes, 7 folk poems, 73 folk songs, 4 seasonal/festival songs, 5 work songs, 1 ritual song, 3 folk dances, 4 children's songs, 5 musical instruments and 2 folk games.

IV. Socio-Cultural Folklife and Folkways: Mr. Luisang Waiba

Mr. Waiba has spent 420 hours with the informants in the community of Athpahariya Rais. He has taken 901 photos, and has audio-recorded 23 different oral texts, with the length of 23.07 hours in total. He has also video-recorded the relevant information with the total length of 6.06 hours. The subject matter covered in the collection includes: the clan, social heroes, day-to-day life activities of people, rites of the passage, division of labour, gender issues, decision making procedures, kinship, religious beliefs, etc.

Concluding Remarks

Overall, the researchers had a wonderful experience of working in the field among Athpahariya Rais. Not only has the field research been successful in exploring several aspects of the folklore and folklife of this community, but it has also become a highly encouraging endeavour in increasing the awareness of the people of this folk group towards the preservation and promotion of several dimensions of their folklife, culture and language. The people of this folk group, influenced from our research activities, have become highly enthusiastic to initiate programmes for the upliftment of their community and for the promotion of their valuable folk cultural heritage. We have experienced that, if the awareness of the folk group is maintained in this way, no doubt, any folkloristic research will not simply remain the matter of expert's task; instead, it will also be the part and parcel of the folk group's life - which, in turn, will be more meaningful. We have learned this great lesson from our field-based activities among Athpahariya Rais, in which the people belonging to the folk group have cooperated with us as if they are themselves the responsible persons to handle the research activities.

Folklore Studies in Nepal: A Historical Survey¹

C.M. Bandhu

Folklore studies and collection of folklore materials in Nepal employing modern approach began very recently. But there were traditions of teaching and learning, as well as preservation and promotion of folklore. This paper attempts to make a brief survey of the growth of folklore studies and collection in Nepal. In order to outline the trends of development, I would like to discuss in the survey three periods: the period of promotion, the stage of collection, and the era of academic exercises.

Gunadhya was probably the first great scholar who collected folktales from different cultural groups and compiled them for wider use. The original work was written in Paishaci, the folk speech of the time, which was destroyed. Later, some writers retold the stories in Sanskrit and there are four versions of these stories available at present. One of them is *Brihatkatha Sloka Sangraha* by Buddhaswami of Nepal (Diwasa 1975). Another important work of the earlier times preserved is *Carya Giti*, one of the old Bengali works discovered by Hara Prasad Shastri. There are also various texts of Nepali and Newari translations of *Panchatantra*, *Hitopadesh* and *Tantrakhyan* at the National Archive of Nepal.

There is also a long history of oral tradition of the people. Hajari Prasad Dwivedi, an Indian scholar, has mentioned that the songs of Krishna Dhamari, preserved in the foothills of the

¹A paper presented in the 2nd International Folklore Congress, Kathmandu.

Himalayas, were taken from the plains of the Northern India during the invasion of the Moguls. Some of the Dhamari songs performed in the western part of Nepal in Doti and Baitadi districts are similar to those mentioned by Dwivedi. There are also some ballads and songs which narrate the stories of the heroes of medieval period of Nepal's history, particularly of the western region.

A brief introduction to the movement and migration of the Nepali language speaking people will help to understand the composition of present day Nepali folk culture. Around the 12th century, the *Khasa* kings of the western Nepal occupied a large territory comprising of western Nepal, part of Tibet and India. The old form of Nepali that the people used in the 14th and 15th centuries are available in the documents like the copper plate and gold plate inscriptions. The *Khasa* kingdom was split into various smaller principalities until Prithvi Narayan Shah, a king of Gorkha, started his unification campaign and laid the foundation of modern Nepal in 1968.

I must mention here two powerful kingdoms that shaped the culture of modern Nepal, which existed in the middle ages. They were the Malla rulers of Kathmandu valley and the Sena rulers of the central hills and Terai. Mallas, being highly influenced by the great traditions, were able to promote their folk traditions by constructing stages and encouraging the performers. The Sena rulers, who spoke Bhojpuri and Maithili languages, were closer to the traditions of Northern India and Bengal. They encouraged the promotion of various forms of folklore including those ballads carried by the followers of Gorakhanthis.

After the unification of Nepal, Nepalese people who spoke different languages were tied by a common language known as *Khasakura* – later as *Gorkhali*. This was an earlier form of Nepali which was already spoken in the large territories of western and central Nepal. The speakers of various Tibeto-Burman languages slowly became bilinguals, with Nepali as their second language. They created their own styles of tunes of the songs of Nepali language. They were also entertained by the singer class called *Gaine*. The saints and sages, who have been traveling to Kailash, Mukti Nath and Pashupatinath for centuries, helped to carry the oral traditions from one part to another. The Gorakhanthis saints who traveled in the vast territory of northern India, Nepal and Bengal have also contributed by taking the oral narratives even to the interior parts of Nepal. The narratives of *Sorathi*, *Bharathari* and *Gopichan* are some of them.

The political boundary of modern Nepal was settled after the Anglo-Nepal war of 1814. According to Kali Bhakta Panta (1971), two of the warriors of the Anglo-Nepal war, Gorya Siras and Mana Bir Khatri, fighting in the fronts of the western borders of Nepal were left in Garhawal for some time. They learnt the local tunes of Garhawali and brought them to their home in the western Nepal. They sang Nepali songs in the tunes of Garhawali, which became very popular. *Jhyaure*, the most important folk song of today, is the development of this particular style of song. After the treaty of Sugauli in 1915, Nepalese young men were recruited in the British army and several battalions were formed. These young men, who

belonged to different ethnic groups speaking different mother tongues, sang Nepali songs and told the tales in Nepali language. As commercial publication Nepali books also started in Banaras, the books of Nepali folk songs and tales were printed for the neo-literates of Nepal and the Gorkha soldiers and their families living outside the country. Thus, Nepali folklore forms such as folksongs, ballads, tales and folk dances were promoted even in the foreign land. Foreigners got interested in music and dances and encouraged the promotion of Nepalese folklore. Even within the army some of the promoters of the tradition found their ways to work. Men like Bahadur Singh Baral and Mitra Sen Thapa helped to create an atmosphere to promote Nepali folk performances and Nepali culture among the Nepalese people living in India.

In Nepalese history, the Rana regime of 104 years was a dark period from the point of view of folklore promotion. The autocratic rule of the Ranas did not allow the foreigners to enter the country; publication was censored; and very few people were enrolled in the limited number of educational institutes. Though Nepali was the contact language and the oral tradition was handed over from generation to generation, the enthusiastic youngsters were discouraged to take part in the folk performances and activities. In Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal, the Ranas built theatres to perform English, Hindi and Urdu performances. But they did not encourage the local performances and the performances found among the different ethnic groups living in the country.

There are some historical turns in the promotion of Nepalese folksongs, as described by Kali Bhakta Panta in his book *Hamro Lok Samskriti*. The mechanical recordings of folk songs for gramophones helped to bring them to the doors of rich people. Printing of folk songs collected from the people was encouraging; and creations of new ones in the style of the traditional songs were also done. The social situation and mentality of the Nepalese people who fought in the 1st and 2nd World Wars were very clearly reflected in the songs of that time. Maintaining the literary trends of the uses of folk style, Laxmi Prasad Devkota, the great poet of Nepal, created his immortal work "Muna Madan" which was published in 1935. This was based on Newari folk ballad sung during the plantation season in Kathmandu valley.

During the promotional period, activities mainly included performing them on various occasions, learning from other groups and adapting them in the local situations. The performers and carriers were rewarded for their works. The professional classes of singers, dancers and drummers were able to learn their livelihood. Even the feudal system of the time helped to promote oral tradition which is referred to in many Nepali folksongs.

Beginning of Folktale Collection

As stated earlier, a systematic collection of Nepali oral tradition is quite recent in Nepal. In the middle of 1940s, Nepali Language Publication Committee felt a need to collect folktales. The committee issued a notice to the school teachers in the districts asking them to send folktales for publication. Thus, some stories were collected from different parts of Nepal. Sijapati (1938) admits that he has used some of the stories

which were collected during this time. Another book of folktale entitled *Nepali Dantyakatha*, a collection of folktales retold by Bodha Vikram Adhikari in Nepali language, was published in 1938. This book was used as a textbook for several years.

Another important work published in 1941 was a collection of Nepali proverbs and idioms by Puskar Shamshere Rana who used the collections of Arjun Shamshere Rana. Collections of folksongs were actually started by Satya Mohan Joshi in 1946 who brought some folksongs from the villages of Pokhara. Dharma Raj Thapa, the popular folksong singer and creator, also collected folksongs from different parts of Nepal. In Darjelling, Paras Mani Pradhan who published *Bharati* (a magazine) in 1946 to bring out articles and comments on the oral tradition of Nepali language, also published the collection of songs as well as a collection of proverbs in 1956.

Nepal enjoyed freedom of expression and movement in 1951 following a political change and advent of democracy. This democratic atmosphere utilized the folk medium such as folk songs, plays and performances for the expression of public sentiments. Dharma Raj Thapa established *Lokgit Sangrahalaya* (archive of folksongs) to collect and archive folklore materials, particularly folk songs. He also started to publish a magazine *Danfuchari* devoted to Nepali folklore. Joshi won the first Nepali award *Madan Puraskar* for his unpublished collection of articles on Nepali folklore in 1958. Laxman Lohani also published his collection of articles on Nepali folksongs entitled *Rodighar* in 1958. Kaji Man Kandangba, who was active in collecting folksongs of the eastern hills of Nepal published his book on Nepali folk songs in 1963. Thus, some collection works were done and published by the middle of 1960s.

The Era of Academic Activities

Teaching of folk songs and folk dance was started from 1966 in Padma Kanya College by Prof. Tulasi Diwasa. This was the beginning of the era of academic activities on folk performing arts. In 1967 the Department of Culture under His Majesty's Government of Nepal started to publish a magazine entitled *Hamro Sanskriti* ("Our Culture"). This magazine published several articles on various aspects of Nepali folklore. Collection of folklore materials continued. In addition, scholars were also engaged in discussing and teaching the discipline of folklore. Diwasa (1967) wrote an article on folklore entitled *Lokavarta: Gatisheel Vajinjanik Shastra* ("Folklore: A dynamic and Scientific Discipline"), which was published in *Hamro Sanskriti*. It was the first article written in Nepali to introduce folklore to the Nepalese readers. Tripathi (1968) wrote on folk literature and folktales. Songs from different parts of Nepal were published and four issues of the journal were devoted to the folktales collected from different parts of the country. Various journals and magazines not only brought out new folklore items but also interpreted them. *Lok Sanskriti* was a popular word among the Nepali scholars; and it was suggested that the best translation of the term 'folklore' should be *Lokavarta* in Nepali.

Folklore was also included in the university curriculum. Undergraduate and graduate students of the Humanities and

Social Sciences were introduced to some components of folklore. Oral literature in Nepali, Newari and Maithili languages was also included in the post-graduate courses. Department of Ancient History, Archeology and Culture as well as Sociology and Anthropology also helped to develop knowledge and interest in folklore. The newly devised post-graduate level curriculum of Nepali and Linguistics has emphasized the theoretical aspects and methodology of folklore.

Some important research projects were carried out by Royal Nepal Academy in the 1970s. The Karnali Folk Culture Project was led by Satya Mohan Joshi and the Dhimal Folklife Study Project by Tulasi Diwasa. The results of these projects are published in book forms. Various other small scale research projects were completed during this period. Under the auspices of the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Deva Kanta Pantha collected ballads and oral poetry from Doti, Harihar Bhattarai and Ganesh Man Gurung collected some more materials from the same area and Purna Prakash Nepal Yatri collected folklore materials, mainly folk poetry, from the Bheri zone of Nepal. Some Nepalese and foreign scholars also have completed their research projects under CNAS and other projects on various aspects of folklore and folk studies.

Various fieldworks were conducted by the students of Nepali literature at the Department of Nepali. The study of Nepali folk ballads of Pokhara was completed by Moti Lal Parajuli (1980). Hom Nath Sapkota (1985) worked on the folk ballads of Gulmi. Mythological folk ballads of Baitadi were studied by Atma Ram Bhatta. Folk culture and literature of Doti by Vijaya Chalise (1982) covers various genres of oral tradition. Collection and analysis of *Ghantu* performance was completed by Krishna Prasad Lamsal. Collection and classification of the folk songs of Syangja by Narayan Prasad Adhikari (1986), folk songs of Paiyu Khola by Kusumakar Neupane (1987), folk songs of Kamala Khoc by Rajendra Paudyal (1986), folk songs of Tanahu and Dhor by Ambika Prasad Bhattarai, and the folk songs of Gaines of Batulechaur by Purna Prasad Sharma (1994) are some of the research works done in the field of folk songs.

Seminars and conferences were other activities of this period. One of the important memorable events was the three-day seminar on folk culture organized in 1977 by Royal Nepal Academy and coordinated by Tulasi Diwasa. Other important seminars were organized by the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Kathmandu in collaboration with South Asia Institute of Hiedelberg University. Nepali Folklore Society also organized lecture programmes on various aspects of folklore. In addition to these, various literary and cultural organizations have arranged seminars, lectures and discussion programmes focused on the folk culture of Nepal.

Current trends in Nepali folklore collection and studies show a continuation of promotional and collection activities of the earlier times. There are regular programmes of folk songs and folk dances in Nepal Radio and Nepal Television for children and adults. Competitive performances are organized and the performers are encouraged and rewarded. Generally, the performances of folk songs for entertainment have gained popularity. Various performances are dying out as there are no

carriers of these performances. The new generation is reluctant to learn such traditional performances. The schools mainly teach the songs and dances which are heavily influenced by the Indian films. There is very little fieldwork and research done in order to promote the traditional performances. Some of the dances of Kathmandu like *Carya* and other mythological dances may disappear if they are not preserved and promoted. The traditional styles of telling the folktales and riddles are also disappearing. The children read stories of their own and of the other countries in their books.

In recent years, research activities have grown as more university students are taking interest in research in the field of folklore. Current trends show that they are involved in data collection and analysis. But most of them are not well trained. The result is that the materials they collect are incomplete in quantity and poor in quality.

Despite the interest in folklore, the scene of publication in folklore is not very much encouraging. Lalit Jung Sijapati (1967), Ram Mani Acharya Dixit (1970), Dharma Raj Thapa (2032, 2041, 2044, 2056) are some of the scholars who published their works in this period as well. The works of story collection were done by Karma (1985), Griffith and Shakya (1982), Diwasa (1975, 1993). Songs, ballads and epics are included in the publications of Thapa(1975), Pantha (1975), Panta (1998), Parajuli (1980). Regmi (1984) is only the presentation of idioms. Karma (1966), Thapa (2041, 2044, 2056), Thapa and Subedi (1984), Diwasa (1975, 1976, 1978a, 1978b), Rimal (1971), Panta (1971), Rakesh (1994, 1996, 1998), Malla (1995) and Banabasi (1998) deal with various genres and discuss on their general characters. There are also various anthropological studies by Nepalese and foreign scholars which need to be discussed separately.

As folklore is recognized as a distinct discipline, Nepali folklorist of this generation should remain in touch with the development in the field of folklore. In order to refresh themselves, they need to know the recent theories and methodologies developed and practised in the academic field. Regular contacts with the folklore scholars of other countries as well as publication of a scholarly journal on folklore will be helpful in promoting folklore studies in Nepal.

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Folk, Classical Nexus in Theatre¹

Abhi Subedi

The division between the folk and the classical theatres is tenuous. I would like to put my arguments on the subject of folk theatre and its generic relationship and tenuous division with the classical theatre on the basis of my own observation and the views presented by scholars at the seminar organized by the Nepal Centre of the International Theatre Institute (I T I) to mark the World Theatre Day on the 27th of March 2003 at the Balakrishna Sama theatre at Gurukul, Baneshwor, Kathmandu.

Talking about the folk, classical nexus, especially made clear by academics and scholars, a number of concepts and ideological challenges come to my mind. My own experience and encounters in theatre matters speak volumes to me. But putting across common ideas about folk and classical theatres, in a task that I must confess, is not an easy thing to accomplish. The answers that the speakers Tulasi Diwasa (who spoke about the folk theatre of Nepal) and the octogenarian scholar Satya Mohan Joshi (who spoke about the classical theatre of the Kathmandu valley and the blend of folk and classical elements in the performance arts of Nepal) did find to the above questions, depend on how we interpret their assumptions.

I would like to share some of my previous experiences in this matter. My first experience is about the Greek theatre. I was very surprised and awed when the professor, who guided me through Delphi of Greece in October 2002 explaining the pattern of performance in the ancient theatre there, said that the contenders for the best performance there hailed from the villages and performed on theatre in the 4th century B.C. The performers there would have brought the village, the folk element and power in their performance. They brought the gestures and body language and the very ethos of performance with them there. But where they came to perform was a theatre of classical order. The structure of the theatre, its very carefully planned acoustic engineering, the space designed on the hillside

for visual accuracy and the shape of the actual stage were classical in nature. The unique blend of sportive spirit, revelry, classically defined movements and the wild spirit that the people brought from the countryside represented the unique power of mankind for performance. That spirit emanated from the strong mélange of folk and classical modes of performance.

Thespis, who was probably the first known poet-playwright and actor belonging to the 6th century Greece, acted as part of the chorus who told the story to the audience on the occasion of the singing and performance. But suddenly he decided to get out of the chorus composed of diverse groups of people and held what is called of dialogue with the chorus itself. He assumed many roles by wearing different masks. The most important point in this gesture was that he was obtaining the power of the folk performance, folk theatre, whatever we may call it today, with the defined and refined rules. That gave birth to the classical order of dramatic performance.

Tulasi Diwasa, a poet and folklorist, speaking about the difference between the folk theatre and the modern theatre, said that the latter uses the gestures and form of the folk drama. I was very impressed by his explanation of the power of theatre in terms of its use of the natural energy of people to act in stylised forms. According to Diwasa, in Nepal where over one hundred languages are spoken and where over six dozen different cultural identities exist, folk theatre is a generic name of the plurimorphous forms of performance art. In such plurality of forms, folk theatres employ languages or words to delineate their stories, or use only gestures, musical sound, or rhythms and minimum of semiotics to suggest big events. The dynamics of the folk theatre, Diwasa said, could be captured only by watching the performance, getting a feel of the ethos of the culture where it is being enacted.

Diwasa is an apologist for the on-the-spot observation methodology of any folk theatre study. He has precisely done that in his study of Dhimal folk theatre, in the early seventies. His critique of the scholars who use only secondary sources to study the folk theatre, I think, is applicable in other areas as well. Theatre critics and the so-called writers make judgements about the drama without ever seeing a play performed on the stage. That practice advised the theatre workers, present on the

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occasion, should not be given any place in the performance culture.

Diwasa touched upon an important issue of the regeneration and rejuvenation of the theatre that could be done by incorporating the elements of folk theatre in the texture of performance culture. The variegated folk forms of performance employ many methods for the effective use of dramaturgy. A contemporary play can use or has been using such folk forms for the transition of moods and events. The subtleties of the folk theatre could give great strength to the contemporary plays if they are handled by the directors and theatre creators with care, attention and love. He said, love for the theatre should be an essential condition, and wanted to make this a subject of interaction among the theatre directors present on the occasion, in the presence of Sunil Pokhrel, Anup Baral, Puskar Gurung and Birendra Hamal, who have been, in one way or the other, making use of techniques of folk theatre. He could see such folk elements and forms in the play *Agniko Katha* seen after the programme, in which Diwasa said there was a unique *mélange* of faith, aesthetics and dynamism of folklife including the shamanistic thrust within the play, the folk song repeatedly sung by a nun; and above all, in the transition of dramatic scenes, in which its director Sunil Pokhrel and his fellow director Anup Baral have been putting the simple folk rhythms alongside the abstract artistic forms.

For any folk forms the main issue to my mind is the meta-theatrical treatment of the subject of performance. Folk theatre is life itself. People do not take meta-theatrical attitude towards it. Folk theatre marks the movements of their lives, their existential quests angst of the natural order. To express these various local and cosmic gestures, folk theatres evolve forms. So when it comes to the heuristic question, it becomes the concern of the scholar or the voyeur who studies them to explain its tangible forms. Therefore, the voyeur who studies folk theatre is a critic and he or she makes meta-theatrical interpretations of the practices of folk performance.

Satya Mohan Joshi linked the folk with the classic in a very interesting way. He said that the story of the *Dabu*, a Newar name for the raised platforms for performance that we can see in the important courtyards and lawns of the old places, suggests that there must have been a unique *mélange* of the folk and classical forms of theatrical performance in the Kathmandu valley towns. The earliest *Dabu*, he said, could be traced back

to the fifth century. Joshi was touching upon an important point of discussion and consideration for theatre artists, i.e. the folk forms should be sought behind the classical forms, too. This brings me back to the point from where I had started my discussion – the Greek solution to the question of the blending of folk and classical forms.

Like the ancient Greeks, the denizens of the Kathmandu valley continue to mix the folk forms with the classical. We can highlight the properties in the classical theatre where the free spirit of the Kathmandu farmers' community enters with the accoutrements of a folk theatre. We can notice these forms in the musical sounds and instruments, travel patterns, and in the very spirit of each of the rituals.

The visits to the famous Greek theatre spaces sometimes sent tingles down my spine because these amazing theatres are located in the countryside, in the wilds if you like. The panorama of the countryside, the quiet landscape and the hillsides with marble rocks made me wonder how powerful this force, this folk treatment of the classical theatre must have been then.

Diwasa gave examples of some folk forms to Sangita Rayamajhi, who presented a paper on the occasion about what she titled 'the place of women in Nepali theatre and dramaturgy', in which only women play roles. Such folk forms are popular and have long historical traditions in South Asia. But here we should not forget what may be called albeit inappropriately a dramatic irony that the secular, artistic and poetic forms of the folk theatre are used as instruments of propagating gender discrimination and undermining the very ethno-folk spirit of performance arts.

The recipients of this year's theatre awards the Maithili playwright Mahendra Malangia (*Gopinath Aryal Puraskar*), Nisha Sharma (*Dabali Puraskar*), and Prakash Ghimire (*Tribeni Puraskar*), all have been using the folk forms in their writings and acting. Use of the indigenous folk forms in contemporary plays evokes many important theatre discourses including the first colonial perspectives. The German playwright Tankred Dorst giving this year's message for ITI World Theatre Day, says that a human being with his follies – I would like to interpret it as folk follies, not the clone and carefully made human being, is instrumental in perpetuating the tradition of theatre. Folk theatre is a metonymic expression for that creative power in performance art.

Trend of Hobalo in Western Nepal¹

Gajab Kumari Timilsina

Background

The society of Nepal has been organized as a mosaic of various castes and multi-ethnic groups with different religions and cultures. Men and women are two major groups to carry out all the cultural and religious rituals existing in the Nepali society. But the responsibility of performing most of the religious and cultural rituals in the society goes on women

rather than in men. Hobalo is a religious and cultural ritual based on the ancient story about the marriage ceremony of Shiva and Parvati, and it is purely run by the women of Kumain community in western Nepal. It is the story of the success of 'good' and the failure of 'evils'. The core of the story comes from Lord Krishna's emotional hymns articulated to King Udhistir to refer to the tragic loss of his parents' seven children because of cruel Kansa's demonic misbehavior to Basudev and Devaki and change of their fortune from bad to good as a gift of Hobalo *Pooja*. In this ritual, the devotees worship Shiva and Parvati as a groom and a bride in accordance to the Hindu marriage culture. Shiva is identified as 'Mahadev' or 'Maheshwor' and Parvati as 'Gauri' or 'Laligaura' in western

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Nepal. The Hobalo Parva celebration in western Nepal coincides with 'Gomara/Gaura Parva' in far-western Nepal, in spite of some differences in the trend of worshipping these deities from one region to another. Though the greatest ritual like Dashain and Dipawali are celebrated in almost all the regions of Nepal, Hobalo or Gomara Parva is specifically commemorated in western, mid-western, and far-western regions of the country. In fact, 'Hobalo' is the name given to the religious and cultural ritual celebrated among the Kumain female community of western Nepal and it is being run from the time immemorial.

Hobalo ritual is identified with different names in different places of western, mid western and far western regions of Nepal. Some of the names used for Hobalo in different regions are Laligaura, Durbastami Brata, Gaura Parva and Gomara Parva, which mean the worshipping of 'Gaura', 'Goma', 'Satidevi' or 'Uma', i.e. Parvati, the wife of Shiva. But the terms 'Durbastami Brata' and 'Laligaura' are the common names pronounced in all parts of western Nepal. People call it 'Durbastami Brata' and 'Laligaura' because the Hindu devotees celebrate it mostly on Durbastami day of Bhadra. The devotees call Parvati 'Laligaura' because she is displayed in the bride's red costumes. 'Lali' means red and 'Gaura' means 'Parvati'. So 'Laligaura' is the representative of all the brides in Hindu culture. But 'Hobalo' is a typical word particularly used in the western region of Nepal.

In Hobalo story, there is meddling of poetry and prose in story telling. The subject matter of the Hobalo Brata story is expressed more in poetry as in *Mahabharat* and *Ramayan* and less in prose. The language of elaborated poetry is found in *Pooja* performance process; and the story is finally told in prose form.

Origin of Hobalo and its Meaning

The term 'Hobalo' is the combined form of 'Ho+ballo', which means 'one's good wishes for other's prosperous life'. Regarding its origin, it must have been translated into practice among the Kumain community women of western Nepal from the 'Gomara/Gaura Parva' celebrated in far western Nepal, as it has not yet been found to be celebrated in the eastern regions of Nepal, except in Kathmandu. It must have entered first in Doti and Baitadi districts from Kumaun, India in the form of 'Gomara/Gaura Parva' and from there in the western Nepal. But about the origin of Gaura Parva, Jai Raj Pant in his article *Masino Akha Bhari Doteli Gomara Parva* raises a doubt on this argument and says that Gomara Parva had already entered in Doti before it existed in Kumaun, India. In his article, he, on ground of his interview with the far-western women, claims that Doti was the original place to celebrate Gomara Parva for the first time. Whatever may be the original place, Hobalo Parva in western Nepal must have been borrowed from far than in Limithana and Phalewas of Parvat, Mulpani and Gairagaun of Baglung, Chidi and Beshisahar of Lamjung and Hugi and Gyaja of Palpa districts in western Nepal, and thereafter in the capital. But it is found to be existed only in those areas where there is the existence of the Kumain community. Kali Bhakta Pant in his research article *Laligaura (Hobalo) Geet* has retained Laligaura and Hobalo in the same footing showing its existence even in some areas of eastern region like Taplejung and Bhunglung,

along with the western and far-western regions of Nepal. But, from the interview with the women of eastern Nepal, it has not been found existed farther than Kathmandu in the east. Even in Kathmandu, it was celebrated only among the Kumain community women up to 7th decade of 20th century and at current time, this trend has almost come to an end due to the influences of modernism.

Celebration

Hobalo is celebrated as a special *Pooja*, and it differs from other cultural rituals. It is limited only to the women from the Kumain community, from which all the married women, unmarried girls and widows can participate in the ritual. They gather in a wide space of a house provided by any benevolent person in the locality and worship Mahadev and Parvati. As the Kumain women are the active participants in this religious ritual, neither the women from other ethnic groups nor any males even from the Kumain group are involved in the Hobalo *Pooja*. But the priest of any Brahmin family plays role in the ritual like that of a referee in the sport.

Hobalo starts with *Biraula Bhijaune* (dipping the mixed pulse beans in water) ritual that takes place in Panchami day of Bhadra Shukla and ends on the fourth Durbastami day. On the first day, women go to the holy river early in the morning taking a copper bowl with varieties of pulse beans to take a bath and wash the beans. The bean variety dipped in the bowl-water is called *Biraula* in western Nepal and *Bidaula* in far western Nepal, which will be the main *Prasad* of the ritual. The *Biraula* bowl contains seven *Mana* (3.5 KG) beans of seven varieties, which the devotees wash seven times and sprinkle *Biraula* water round their body seven times taking it as holy water. Out of the washed beans, seven handfuls are wrapped in a piece of thin white cloth with varieties of pious things like *Abir*, *Akchheta*, vermilion, etc. and varieties of flowers. A bundle is made out of them and dipped at the centre of the *Biraula*-bowl, which the devotees untie at the final moment of the ritual. Next to it are laid seven *gattas* (stone pieces), which the devotees play on the final day of *Pooja*. The women come back to their home with the *Biraula* bowl and place it on the holy place of their house. On the second (*Shasti*) day, the images of Shiva and Parvati are made of *Pati* (*artemesia vulgaris*) plants tied with *Kusha* grass (*demostachyo bipinnata*) and dressed in groom-bride costumes. If mahadev is dressed in Labeda-Salwar, cap, shoes, spectacles and watch, Parvati is in the red sari-blouse and decorated with golden ornaments, bangles and *Tika*. They are placed side by side.

So far as the *Pooja* process is concerned, the final day, *Astami*, is the most ceremonial day and the *Pooja* is somewhat longer than the earlier one. On the Saptami day, Mahadev is worshipped with the groom's *pooja*, after worshipping Ganesh and nine *Grahas* (the sun, the moon, sani, and other planets). It is exactly like a groom's *pooja* before he starts for the bride's house. On this occasion, cooked dishes like Malpuwa and other varieties of food items prepared out of wheat and rice, along with fruits and coins are offered to Mahadev as a *Prasad*. On the Durbastami day, Parvati is worshipped as a bride with much respect providing various precious ornaments like finger ring, *Tilahari*, new clothes and *Saubhagya* items like bangles, beads,

vermilion, *Tikas*, comb, mirror, etc. If Parvati is placed on the right side and Mahadev on the left on the Saptami day, their position is changed the next day – Parvati on the left and Mahadev on the right.

Food Items for Devotees

When the Saptami day *pooja* is over, the devotees put on the *Dors* (sacred thread) of seven lines with seven *Granthas* (knots) round their neck, and eat cooked food items prepared from the selected cereals, vegetables and pulses, without the use of garlic, onion and tomato. But on the last day, they cannot eat cooked food items. They put on pious threads in eight lines with eight knots, swallow seven *Biraulas* without touching with their teeth, and take uncooked food items like plain rice dipped in yogurt out of unboiled milk and fruits only one time a day.

Contrast between Hobalo and Gomara Parva

There are some similarities and differences in the celebration of Hobalo Parva in western Nepal and Gomara/Gaura Parva in far-western Nepal. In both regions, the ritual is celebrated in the form of the marriage ceremony and the date of ceremony is also the same – *Durbastami* or *Krishnastami* day of Bhadra Shukla. In both regions, *Biraulas* (*Bidaulas*) are taken as a *Prasad* to be eaten as fried or other ways and some distributed among the relatives. Again, the process of offering things to the deities and *Bisharjan* rituals are the same. When the *Pooja* is over, the holy food items and fruits, along with *Saubhagya* goods offered to Gauri are given to the priest, the images of Shiva and Parvati are immersed into the pious river and taken off ornaments are claimed by the owner devotees.

But differences lie in the ways of celebrating *Hobalo* in western Nepal and *Gomara/Gaura Parva* in far-western Nepal. Five varieties of seeds, namely *Guras*, *Gahat*, *Maas*, peas and maize grains are used for *Bidaula* in the far-western region. But in western Nepal, seven pulse-seeds of holy nature are used for *Biraula*. If only married young women can participate in Gomara Parva, the married, unmarried and even the widows of all ages of Kumain community involve in Hobalo *Pooja*. Again, Gomara Parva must be celebrated before 21 Bhadra to avoid the bad star of of Augusta Rishi rise.

Importance of Hobalo

The term 'Hobalo' has gained as much popularity in western Nepal as 'Gaura/Gomara Parva' in mid- and far-western regions of the country. The story ends with the comic message, and the devotees can go home with their light-hearted mood. The title 'Hobalo' comes from the devotees' own utterance 'Hobalo' they continuously repeat fifty-five times, at the end of each sentence when the priest tells them the story in Nepali vernacular from Sanskrit at the final session of the ritual – e.g. 1) "In Ayodhya there was a king named Naharsha." – 'Hobalo. 2) "Bishoman was his priest." – Hobalo'. It means the devotees wish the king's good luck and priest's skillful performance and fortunes from the gift. The story glimpses the success of Bijmati, the Brahmin woman, and failure of Rajmati, the queen. Bijmati becomes the prosperous mother of seven

sons because she continuously runs Habalo Brata and always puts on the *Dors* round her neck. But the queen faces tragic incidents in her several births, being the mother of a defunct son and even losing him forever, as a result of her proud nature wearing the *Dors* of gold, stopping her Brata all of a sudden, tread on the *Dors* and burning them hatefully. However, the story ends with the happy message of Bijmati's grandson's rise up from his mysterious death and Rajmati's prosperous life with the boons of new generations and good fortunes after she realizes her weak points and puts on the *Dors* again, by performing her Hobalo Brata very devotionally.

Presently, people all over the world are crying for gender equality. So it is not good to limit Hobalo ritual in only one ethnic group and gender. As men and women are like the two parts of the same coin, the males and females of all ethnic groups of society should be included in the Hobalo ritual, without any discrimination. As Hobalo celebration is not as costly as Dashain and Dipawali, it is to be continued even in the days to come, with the participation of both genders and all ethnic groups for their solidarity and the welfare of human beings.

Conclusion

From the overall study, it has been found that more prominence has been given to the women in Hobalo, by involving only the women and detracting men from the *Pooja* rituals. The titles *Laligaura* in western Nepal and *Gaura/Gomara Parva* in far-western Nepal have been associated to Parvati only, and not Shiva. Though it has been a great challenge to the males who have taken themselves as superior beings to women, Shiva's inclusion in the ritual with Parvati is a good sign of harmony between the male and female. Besides this, Hobalo has been a means of recreation for the women, with the comical message and persuasive strength of poetic hymns elaborated in the story. As it is relevant to the marriage ceremony of the divine couples, it does not have any sign of serious tragic event. If only the females from Kumain community are found involved in the Hobalo celebration of western Nepal, both male and female of all ethnic groups are found very active in the *Gomara Parva* celebration of Doti and Baitadi. In fact, Hobalo has strengthened women, by providing them with an opportunity to be united because of their involvement in group work. As *Gomara Parva* has linked far western Nepal with Kumaun, India, and *Hobalo Parva* is closely associated with *Gomara Parva* of Doti and Kumaun, it can be said that the trend of 'Hobalo' in western Nepal can be taken as the subject of international importance in the field of culture and religion.

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Athpahariya Rai Folklore and Folklife: A Close Observation

Introduction

The word *Athpahariya* is not derived from the native language spoken by the people of this folk group; rather its derivation is related to the Nepali compound word *Athpahar*, involving *Ath* (which means 'eight in number') and *Pahar* (meaning 'the time period of 3 hours'). Since eight *Pahars* equal 24 hours, *Athpahariya* means 'the person who dedicates himself in working for twenty four hours'. In the past, particularly the kings' body guards were the persons having such a duty to fulfill; therefore it is said that people belonging to a particular section of Rai community who were deputed as the kings' body guards were entitled *Athpahariyas*.

But there are debates regarding who were the kings these people had served as *Athpahariyas*. In one document published by the government, it is said that after taking control over the far-eastern Kirant kingdom, king Prithvi Narayan Shah had deputed the people of this ethnic group in the post of Security Guard, for the protection of Dhankuta Khalangakot; so they were called the *Athpahariyas*. In another folk etymological explanation, it has been said that the *Athpahariya* folk group was developed from the eight families of eight surnames (in Nepali *Ath Pariwar*) of the Rai community who used to live in and around Dhankuta region from time immemorial. In their *Mundum* (oral Veda), Athpahariya people still mention the kingdom of Margahang, which was located within the border points of Mudhe-Guranshe in the north, Tamor river in the south, Tankhuwa rivulet in the east and Uttarpani-Marga Pokhari in the west. Athpahariyas say that they are the descendants of the security force who were deployed to protect this Margahang kingdom.

Settlement and Population

Presently, Athpahariya Rais are residing in the different places of Dhankuta Municipality including Dadagaun, Chharagaun, Sipting, Pangsing, Tekunala, Santang, Karmitar, Thoka, etc., and in Belahara and Bhirgaun VDCs of Dhankuta district. To cover the entire settlement of this folk group, the borders of the settlement area include: Hatikharka and Sanne VDCs to the north, Tamor river to the south, Tankhuwa VDC to the east, and Akhisalla VDC to the west. Topographically, these localities are in the altitude of 300 to 2000 metres above the sea level, where most of the landscape remains hillside. Within the geographical boundaries just mentioned, there are some small rivulets including Tankhuwa Khola, Madhu Khola, Nibuwa Khola, Bakhre Khola, Patle Khola, Ruduwa Khola, and Phongsuwa Khola. Besides, there is Tamor river to the south.

According to the household survey carried out by Athpahariya Kirant Rai Samaj in 2061 B.S., there are altogether 1442 households of this folk group in their entire settlement area, with the total population of 7405.



A group of Athpahariya women

House Construction and Use

Most of the houses in the settlement of Athpahariya Rais are found in dispersed pattern; but in some places they are also in semi-compact pattern. To consider the architecture design, construction materials and the folk belief regarding the use of house, their houses are a bit different from the other groups of Rai community. In this folk group's original tradition, the ground floor is always square sized, and the roof also has 4 sides. From the point of view of use their houses can be classified into three types: a) *Thenapang*, the religious house, b) *Derapang*, cultural house, and c) *Pangi*, for day-to-day use.



A Model house, Dadagaun Dhankuta

Athpahariya Language

This language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman language family, and grouped under the *Kiranti* sub-branch of the family. Till now, it has not been used in the electronic media, nor in any specialized functions such as education, office or press. So far, except for the recent initiatives to prepare the Athpahariya Dictionary, Athpahariya Grammar and the written newspaper *Phungning*, no published material is available in the medium of their language. So, its use is limited to folk communication alone, for purpose of conversation among the people of

Athpahariya Rai community. But there are some studies on the language and culture of this folk group.

To explore the linguistic features of this language a bit further, altogether 5 vowels and 21 consonant sounds have been identified in it. In the initiation of the researchers of FOFO study project and the local experts of *Athpahariya Kirant Rai Samaj*, a basic dictionary of Athpahariya language has been prepared, which has covered the vocabulary in several areas including: plant/siblings, fruit items, flowers, vegetables, food grains, human body organs, birds' and animals' names and their organs, meat varieties, weapons and tools, dress items, ornaments, musical instruments, handicraft work, kinship, terms related to *jand-raksi* (local beer and alcohol), cultural vocabulary, pronouns, different types of adjectives, verbs, adverbs, conjunctions, child vocabulary, etc.

After a discussion between the FOFO project researchers and the members of *Athpahariya Kirant Rai Samaj*, the work of standardization of this language has just begun, along with the beginning of writing it. But the language does not have its own script; so Devanagari script has been adopted in these works. Some variations have been found this language spoken in the different areas of the folk group's settlement. But the language spoken in the 7th, 8th and 9th wards of Dhankuta municipality has been followed as the norm for the standardization process.

Family and Kinship

Athpahariya Rais have the practice of living in both the nuclear and joint families. In the nuclear family, there are two generations of people, whereas a joint family has three or more generations living together by sharing the same house and kitchen. Normally the son does not get separated immediately after his marriage. But after the marriage of his younger brother, he may wish to live separately. At the time of separation, the parental property is divided equally between the parents and sons.

Mainly three forms of kinship are found among Athpahariyas: i) kinship by blood; e.g. brother and sister, ii) kinship by marriage; e.g. father-in-law, sister-in-law, etc., iii) kinship by social relation; e.g. *Miteri* (friendship bond established after a special ritual) relation.



An Athpahariya Rai Couple

Kinship behaviour varies according to the status of the kin. Some relatives are more respectable than others, while some are in 'joking relation'. For instance, father, mother, uncle and aunt are respectable, but *solti-soltinee*, *sali-bhena*, *anuganakma*, *matengba-matengma* etc. are all in joking relation. In this folk community, son-in-law and daughter-in-law are treated equally as the son or daughter of the family. *Agumba* has a vital role in the kinship system among Athpahariya Rais; and in his absence, they do not want to observe the auspicious celebrations/rituals like the first rice-feeding ceremony, first hair cutting ceremony and marriage ceremony.

Folk Belief

People in this folk group believe that one should always speak the truth, and should not scold or curse anybody. Anyone involved in such 'banned' acts will be considered the culprit and will be punished. As a punishment, the person should offer *Bhakal* (special offering to the folk gods/goddesses, especially animals). According to their belief, no Athpahariya Rai should migrate to a place beyond Sanguri Dada (the hilltop bordering Dhankuta and Sunsari districts). Except for the people belonging to Athpahariya Rai group, no stranger should touch the *Mul Khamba* (the main pillar of the house), because that is the place of their ancestors.

Folk Gods/Goddesses

In this folk group, people worship *Jimi*, *Marga Tinkille*, and *Hang Thalo*. These are the special places where Athpahariya gods/goddesses called *Jimihang*, *Margahang*, *Hangma Rani*, *Shreemarga*, etc. are kept.

There are 2 Margas in Sipting, 1st at Bhibare Haat, 2nd at Pangsing. Besides, there are Shreepanchami Marga, *Khawaduk Marga*, *Phokim Marga*, *Umreuli Marga*, etc.

Jimi Thans (places where Jimi is worshipped) are located at Adheri, Dhankuta Municipality-7, Phokim Thalo (Dhankuta-7), and Belahara VDC - 5.

Six Tinkille Thans are found in Sipting area, two in Dhankuta-5 (called *Ambirhang* and *Hangmarani*), two in Dhankuta-8 (*Hangmarani* and *Hangmakcha*), one in Khalde, one at Pelekpang, one in Belahara-2 and two in Belahara-5. In addition, there are altogether 9 *Bokrohangs* in Belahara.



Marga Than, Bhibarehaat

Folk Festivals

The main festivals celebrated in this folk group are: *Baishakhe* (*Bisu*), *Bhadaure* (*Chamanwagi*), *Mangshire* (*Wadangmi*), etc. *Baishakhe* is celebrated in the month of Baishakh (April-May), when the cultivation season starts. People in this folk group worship *Jimi-Bhumi* (god of the land) as their god on this occasion, which symbolizes that they are giving importance to the contribution of land in their lives.

Bhadaure is celebrated during Bhadra (August-September). In this festival, they offer rice-grains of *Ghaiya* (an indigenous paddy variety) and *Jand* locally prepared beer of *Pangdur* (indigenous millet variety) to their god.

Mangshire is the greatest festival of Athpahariya Rais, celebrated in the month of Mangshir (November-December). On this occasion, the people who have lost their parents within the running year go to the *Mangbung Pujari* (the folk religious priest) with the cloth items worn by their parents. Then they worship and offer those things to the folk gods as well as their ancestors. Some other rituals performed on this occasion include: *Bhejo Lagaune* (killing the he-buffalo and distributing its meat), *Marumi Nach* (a folk dance, in which boys dance in woman's dress), etc.

Most of the Athpahariya Rais do not celebrate *Dashain* and *Tihar*; but those who are *Chhitlinge* by surname are following some major customs and rituals of *Dashain* – like growing *Jamara* and sacrificing animals at *Moula* (a special place where the folk gods are worshipped).



Priest Bir worshipping in Jimi than

Folk Dresses and Ornaments

People of the Athpahariya Rai folk group have their own identity in the dresses they wear. Most of their dresses are made of the threads of cotton which are grown in their own land. Mostly, there is no difference between the dresses they wear in day-to-day life and those worn on special occasions or festivals.

Men in this folk group generally wear *Choubandi Lotling* (also called *daura-suruwal*), *Thute Suruwal* or *Kattu* (like the underwear), *Deudi Bhoto*, *Bhabat* (lagauti) etc. They wear cap on the head. They also wear woolen sweater in winter, which is mostly home-made.

The women wear *Mekhli* (for covering the upper part of the body), *Chhitasim* (the under-garment like lungi with black spots on the white background), *Takombi* (shawl), etc. These dresses are worn when they go to the marketplaces, and during festivals or other special occasions.

Male Athpahariyas do not have any special ornaments; but the women usually decorate their body with various ornamental items. The main items are: *clip* (on the hair), *Nakphuli* and *Bulaki* (on the nose), *Tariwan* (on ears), *Bichkini*, *Patewa*, *Hansuli* (silver necklace), *Chhikima/Reji/Rangchhi* (various sorts of beads made of silver coins), etc.



An Athpahariya Woman, Majhgaun

Folk Medical Treatment

There is the practice of curing illness with the help of shaman among Athpahariya Rais. Besides this, the use of folk medical plants is also widespread. The person involved in the treatment of diseases is called *Mangkata*, *Yawa*, *Janawa*, etc. People believe that the folk medical practitioner has known the ways of treatment after his ancestors taught him those methods in the dream. So, these medical practitioners are ready to go to any person suffering from illness and treat them; but they do not want to share their knowledge of treatment with others.

Folk Literature

Athpahariya folklore is rich in folk literature as well. There is a special house constructed for cultural activities in this folk community, called *Derapang*. Youths in particular gather regularly at *Derapang*, then start their activities of recreation, which involve the creation and performance of folk literary genres including the singing of folk songs and dances. In this society, the folk creators and performing artists are mostly called by their *Phungings* (nicknames) derived from the literary genre or performing art in which they are the experts – e.g. one expert in playing the music of *Murali* (the flute) is called *Muralimang*, a female singer is called *Basanphung*, and lady dancer is called *Rasan Jethi*, etc.

Child song is one of the wonderful examples of Athpahariya folk literature, which is in verge of extinction nowadays. It is sung by adults while trying to make the young child sleep comfortably. The song is the same for both male

and female children; however, there is difference in the use of the word to differentiate gender while addressing the child *Ba* is used for son, and *Ma* for daughter.

Besides, *Mundum* song is also an important heritage of Athpahariya folklore. Basically, this song is religious/devotional in nature. *Mundum* is not only the specimen of folk literature but also the life-philosophy of the entire Kirant community including this folk group. It is found in epic form, which is transmitted orally from generation to generation but not yet written. Athpahariya Rais also have the tradition of forming separate groups for singing this devotional song on some occasions. Such a group works actively during *Mangshire* festival, and huge singing and dance performances are organized on this occasion.

This folk community has a unique form of singing tradition called *Hiya chhamlo*, which is not found in other groups of Kiranti community. People believe that this old form of singing is derived from their *Mundum*. There are two categories of *Hiya chhamlo*, called *Chhiwak* and *Chhembado*. The first one, *Chhiwak*, is in dialogue form and usually sung between man and woman, which is full of recreation but lacking musical rhythm. When it is sung with the rhythm and melody, *Chhiwak* is called *Chhembado*; and it has all the features of folk song.



A group of Athpahariya young girls

Folk Performing Arts

Folk dance, folk drama and entertaining folk games are the most important forms of performing arts found among Athpahariya Rais. In folk dance, two are worth mentioning: *Dhole Nach* and *Maruni Nach*. *Dhole Nach* is also called the *Mangshire Nach*, and usually it is accompanied with *Dhole Geet* (song which is sung along with the music of *Dhol*, the folk musical instrument). The *Maruni Nach* is performed along with the songs that describe the legends and life of Athpahariya kings of the past.

Aathpahariya folk games can be classified into three types: a) games related to children, b) games related to adults and youths, c) games related to the social customs and rituals.

Among the folk games related to children, *Chongchinget* or *Chimusichi*, *Phesreke* or *Nangchhiri*, *Dhukumuku*, *Gatti*,

Sinkauli, etc. are the important ones. The youths play the games like *Chhelo* (throwing the stone), *Dandi-biyo* (striking a short stick with a longer one), *Phalmari* (long-jump), etc. Similarly, the games played on the occasion of social customs and rituals include: *Baghchal*, *Dhanu-Ban* (bow and arrow), swinging on the rope, *Ratyauli*, *Ulangkhutti Maroti*, etc.



Harka and his friends performing Dhol Naach

Folk Musical Instruments

Some of the musical instruments found in this folk group are: *Chyangrumba* or *Dhol*, *Chhangchhuppa* or *Jhyamta*, *Angom* (*Binayo*), *Murchunga*, *Murali/Bansuri*, *Mandala* (madal), *Jhyali*, *Majira*, etc.

To speculate the development of these musical instruments, *Dhol* is considered the oldest one. *Binayo*, *Murali*, *Bansuri* and others were developed later on. Till now, Athpahariya Rai folk group does not have any musical instrument made of strings and bows. However, it is not clear whether these instruments were extinct from this folk group in the past, or they did not exist at all right from the beginning.



Dambar and others playing folk musical instrument (Binoyo and murali)

Gender Issues and Decision Making Procedure

Men and women having equal status in the family and community, there is almost no gender discrimination in Athpahariya Rai society. Although man is usually the head of the family, woman's role is equally important in planning and decision making on domestic matters. The husband decides

almost nothing in absence of his wife. They generally discuss to plan the daily activities collectively in the family after dinner; and decision is made thereupon.

After a year of the death of her husband, a widow can wear her casual dresses. There is no restriction for the widow or widower regarding their clothing. They also have the freedom for remarriage; but whether to marry or not depend entirely on the widow's or widower's wish. An unmarried adult woman possesses very strong role in the family. She is heard by all.

Male and female members of family share their labour in all sorts of activities. However, a few cases are the exceptions; e.g. cooking meal, which is mostly considered the responsibility of women. But when women are very busy, men take the responsibility of cooking as well. Similarly, though ploughing the field is generally considered the work of men, unmarried girls are also found involved in it to support men in their work.

Rites of the Passage

The major rites and rituals of Athpahariya Rai folk group, from birth to death are briefly described below.

Naran (Naming ceremony): After the birth of child, a name is given to him/her on the occasion called *Naran*. It is observed on the third day of birth in the case of girls, but on the fourth day for boys. Generally, there is no need of any special religious priest or expert to carry out this ritual. The father or the grandfather performs it.

On the day of *Naran*, the house is smeared with the cow dung; and both the mother and newly born child are given bath with warm water. Then the father or grandfather perform the ritual. Generally, the child is given name according to the wish of the parents.

Besides the naming of child, *Naran* has another function: that of purifying the mother. After the delivery of child, mother is considered 'impure' or 'polluted' till the celebration of this ritual. During this period of impurity, she is prohibited to carry out any household activities, including cooking, touching plants and animals, fetch water, and even entering the main section of the house. Once the ritual of *Naran* is over, there will be no restriction in her activities.

Chama Chepmana (first feeding ceremony): Prior to the ceremony of *Chama Chepmana*, the child is fed only with the mother's milk. This ceremony is observed when the child reaches the age of 6 months in the case of boy and 5 months in girl's case. On this occasion, the child is fed with solid food for the first time. The food consists of special items, which include: *Kheer* (rice-pudding), *Daal* (lentil), chicken, pork, curd, and *Walang* (chicken's leg). The father feeds the child with the items just mentioned, using a silver coin. Then he puts white tika (mixture of rice grains and curd) on the child's forehead. On the occasion, the child is also given a certain amount of money. After the father, the other elder members of the family also do the same, including the mother, grandparents, and others. Thereafter, the child is dressed with a new cloth for the first time – usually with *Chaubandi daura-suruwal* for boys and *Mekhli* for girls.



Chama Chepmana(First rice feeding ceremony)

Ufyak Khoma (first hair-cutting ceremony): When the son reaches the age of three years, his hair is cut for the first time. This is called the *Ufyak Khoma* in Athpahariya language. Usually, hair cutting is done by the child's maternal uncle. No other relatives are invited on the occasion, except for the maternal uncle. After hair-cutting, the child is gifted with new clothes including a cap.

Biha(Marriage): Marriage in this folk group is not merely a biological and psychological relation between the couple, but essentially considered a social phenomenon that must be approved by the society. Unless the society gives recognition to the couples, they find their marital relation insecure. After the marriage, the woman's clan is not changed, though she stays with her husband; but her children follow the clan of her husband.

Both the practices of monogamy and polygamy are found among Athpahariya Rais; but the system of polygamy is gradually declining.

Some important types of marriage found among Athpahariyas are briefly described below:

a) **Chori Biha** (Theft Marriage): It is called *Chori Biha* by Athpahariyas. If a man takes a woman away from her home secretly without informing her parents, it is called 'theft marriage'. This sort of marriage is a bit different from 'love marriage', in that the man and woman may not have developed personal relationship for a long time, which is found in love marriage. The man may like the woman all of a sudden, which the woman may not be noticing. All of a sudden, the man expresses his wish to marry her when he meets her on some occasion or gathering – like in the fairs and marketplace. In such a case, if some of her relatives or close friends encourage her to elope with the man, she may be convinced and becomes ready to go with him.

Nowadays theft marriage is gradually being replaced by 'love marriage', in which the concerned boy and girl spend some time to know each other without the influence or intervention of anybody; then they can either decide to marry, just maintain their friendship or discontinue it, depending on how far the two parties like or dislike each other.

b) **Zari Biha** (Marriage by paying penalty): Taking the wife of another man away in her consent for the purpose of marriage is called *Zari Biha* in Athpahariya Rai community. In



Bride and bridegroom

such a case, a certain amount of cash is paid as a penalty by the woman's new husband to the earlier one.

c) Senzi Zari Biha (Widow marriage): In Athpahariya Rai community, there is no any social prohibition for the widows to marry. A widow or widower is allowed to get married, though it is not a compulsion. But their marriage is not allowed prior to the first *Wadangmi* festival (in the month of November-December), from the death of the husband or wife.

In this marriage, a certain penalty is paid to the widow's father-in-law or the senior family member, as a compensation for losing a member of the family.

d) Magi Biha (Arranged Marriage): Arrange marriage is performed with the mutual understanding and arrangements of both the families – the boy's side and the girl's side. It is called *Magi Biha*. In this marriage, the consent of the girl, the forthcoming bride, is a must.

Death: Athpahariya Rais distinguish between the natural death and unnatural death in their rites of the passage as well. In the case of natural death, the body is either buried or cremated, upon the wish of the dead person. But the body must be buried in the case of unnatural death. There are many formalities in the death ritual if it is the natural death; but such formalities are less in the case of unnatural death, since it is believed that such a death turns the person into evil.



Astha & his nephew working inside the house

If a baby dies before the growth of his/her tooth, the funeral rite observed is very simple. Such a death is considered a bad omen and categorized under unnatural death. The pollution and purification rituals are completed on the same day in such cases

If a pregnant woman dies, her lower abdomen is bisected with a bamboo knife and the child is removed from her body. The mother and the child are buried at different burial sites according to the ritual of unnatural death. The pollution and purification ritual is completed on the same day.

In the case of natural death, complete funeral rite is observed; and pollution and purification rituals are strictly followed.

Economic Life and Livelihood

In this ethnic community, most of the people earn their living by farming. Apart from agriculture, they are also involved in keeping the livestock, small trade and wage-labour.

Most of the land owned by the people of the folk group is not so fertile, and there is lack of irrigation facilities, making the people depend on the monsoon rain for growing their crops. They grow millet, maize, and some vegetables in their land. In some places, irrigated land is found (though in small area/amount), where rice is produced twice a year.

These people grow some seasonal vegetable items and sell these products in the local market. They purchase the goods for their use using the money they earn from this sort of petty business.

The Athpahariya people involved in live-stock farming tame the domestic animals including cow, buffalo, chicken, pigeon, pig, etc. They also sell the meat, milk and milk products in the local market. Besides, selling the local wine and beer, collecting firewood and selling them in the market, etc. are some other forms of business they are involved in for their livelihood. Some people are also involved in the local wage-market – e.g. carpentry, masonry, and agricultural labour – while a remarkable size of their population has gone to the gulf countries for foreign employment.

Concluding Remarks

People of this folk group are maintaining their folk culture strongly and some of the traditional beliefs and practices are found strong among them. This might be due to their firm belief in *Mundum*, which they have been following since time immemorial. Despite living near Dhankuta Bazar, their original folkloristic tradition is not yet influenced from the changes that much. However, a little bit of change is found in some aspects of folklife including their living, clothing, ornaments, and in some forms of material folklore like house construction. This is essentially the influence of the change in their socio-economic status rather than that of their belief. After the influence of the field research of FOFO study project recently carried out among them, they have been highly aware of their folklore; sothey are motivated towards the preservation and promotion of it.

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Some Major NFS Activities

Discussion and Feedback Program on the Athpahariya Folklore and Folklife Field Study

Athpahariya Kirat Rai Society (AKIRAS) and Nepali Folklore Society (NFS) jointly organized a two-day discussion and feedback program on the achievement of the Field Study of the Athpahariya Rai folklore and folklife at the hall of AKIRAS, Dhankuta on 1-2 August 2006. The program that began after the breakfast at 8:30 morning was chaired over by Mr. Dhruva Kumar Chhara, AKIRAS Central Committee Chairman and emceed by Mr. Arjun Chhara, the Secretary of the AKIRAS District Committee. The Chief Guest of the program was Prof. Tulasi Diwasa, the President of the NFS, Kathmandu. Others guests invitees of the event were- Mr. Asta Bahadur Rai (Chhongden), Chairman of the AKIRAS District Committee, Mr. Gehendra Rai, Chairman of the City Executive Committee and the four members of the Field Study Group.

On the occasion, Mr. Sambhu Khatiwada, delivered a welcome speech on behalf of the Nepali Folklore Society, further highlighting the objectives of the folklore and folklife field study. Intending an effective feedback and meaningful discussion, the organizers arranged an introductory program among the participants. Following the introductory program, the Chief Guest of the program, Prof. Diwasa released an Athpahariya language bimonthly magazine *Fungning*, and a Nepali-Athpahariya dictionary prepared for the first time in the Athpahariya Rai history. At this juncture, Mr. Gehendra Rai and Mr. Indra Chhongden, the Editor of the *Fungning* shared their views. Likewise, Ms. Rajkumari Chhitlinge and Mr. Asta B. Rai also expressed their views on the efforts of preparing the Nepali-Athpahariya dictionary.

Addressing the program, Prof. Diwasa shed lights on the importance of promoting folklore adding that the *Fungning*, the magazine and Nepali-Athpahariya Dictionary will be catalysts to upgrade and promote the language and culture of Athpahariya in the entire region. Prof. Diwasa also appreciated praiseworthy efforts of the AKIRAS members while publishing the magazine and preparing the Nepali-Athpahariya Dictionary. He also thanked the community for their valuable supports to the members of the NFS field study group.

In the second session, the members comprising the field study group highlighted the achievements acquired during the period of study on folklore and folklife of the Athpahariya Rai. In this session, Mr. Amrit Yonjan, the Coordinator of the field study group presented a paper entitled "Athpahariya Folk Language and Folk Communication" while Mr. Luisang Waiba presented a paper on "Athpahariya Socio-cultural Folklife and Folkways." Similarly, Mr. Bulu Mukarung presented a paper on "Athpahariya Folk Literature and Folk Performing Arts" and Mr. Sambhu Khatiwada shared his views through his paper "Athpahariya Material Culture and Folk Heritages". On the occasion, various participants and key informants representing different walks of life and various villages shared their views on the outcome of the field study while the members of the



Inauguration of discussion and feedback program

field study group responded the queries raised by the informant participants. Having purposeful discussions and meaningful interactions over the information collected by the study team, the participants gave constructive and fruitful suggestions to the members of the field study group.

Mr. Dhruva Chhara who also chaired the second day session, said that the program, first of this kind, was fruitful and effective to promote the folklife and folklore of the Athpahariya. Mr. Gehendra Rai had greeted the guests and participants with his welcome speech. In order to make the session effective and interactive, the participants were divided into four groups. The participants of the programs had shared their knowledge, ideas and views among themselves. On the occasion, various folk dances, reflecting the vivid ways of folklife and tradition of Athpahariya were also performed.

Finally, AKIRAS arranged a concluding event wherein Prof Diwasa along with the 4 members of the field study group and cameraman Mr. Mohan Bikram Shah were felicitated with the Letter of Appreciation. On the occasion, the AKIRAS members also arranged a farewell program in honor of the NFS chairman and the field study group. Speaking in the program, Prof Diwasa, Mr. Dhruva Chhara, including others, had thanked the participants for their fruitful suggestions and praiseworthy supports.



AKIRAS Office members with members of study group, Bihibarehaat

First National Folklore Congress-2006

Nepali Folklore Society (NFS), known for the promotion and preservation of wide areas of folklore covering the various disciplines of social science such as sociology, anthropology, geography, linguistics, literature and architecture, grandly organized its First National Folklore Congress from 15-16 December 2006 at the library hall of the Nepal Academy, Kathmandu, bringing together the hundreds of folklore experts and scholars across the country.

The Congress witnessed a historic participation of hundreds of participants along with above 100 registered participants including folklore experts, university professors, doctors and lecturers from various disciplines of the society. The Congress underlined the needs to be explored in the diverse streams of folklore and also stressed on the holistic approach to study the people and places across the country. Including the inaugural and valedictory sessions, the Congress was divided into nine sessions entitled- Nepali Folklore and Folk-life Field Study, Folklore Gender and Power, Folklore and Folk Performing Art, Theoretical and Methodological Issues in the Study of Folklore, Folklore, Identity and Ethnicity, Folklore, Literature and Language, Folklore, Cultural Studies and Folk Practices which brought together a total of seventy exclusive papers on various topics.

The inaugural session of the Congress, held at the library hall of Nepal Academy on December 15, 2006 from 9:45-10:45, was inaugurated by the Chief Guest: Hon'ble Minister of Culture, Civil Aviation and Tourism - Mr. Pradip Kumar Gyawali and chaired by the NFS President Prof. Tulasi Diwasa. Delivering the inaugural speech, Minister Gyawali said that promoting and preserving the folklore and folklife was a need of the country since they reflect the entire cultures of all the nationalities. Minister Gyawali also appreciated the NFS for its vital role in the protection, promotion and exploration of the cultures of the various nationalities and assured to framing out a policy on the promotion of folklore and folk culture. On the occasion, President of Nepali Folklore Society and the Chairman of the inaugural session, Prof. Tulasi Diwasa shed lights on the objectives of the Society further adding that NFS is dedicated to explore, promote and protect the folklore and folklife. Stating Nepal as a land of diverse cultures, Prof. Diwasa stressed that Nepal play the leading role in the protection and promotion of world ethnic culture. He also thanked Minister Gyawali and the various organizations for their supports in holding the Congress. Prof. Dr. Abhi Subedi delivered his welcome speech shedding limelight on role of the NFS in cultural preservation. Addressing the inaugural session, Mr. Satya Mohan Joshi hailed the NFS for bringing in light the folk songs, folk tales, and folk material culture of the common folk.

Following the historic inaugural session, special second session entitled "Nepali Folklore and Folk Life Study" begun at the library hall of the Academy. Held in the chairmanship of NFS President Prof. Tulasi Diwasa, a total of 12 experts of the NFS field researchers presented their papers on the different aspects of Gandarvas, Gopalis, Athpahariya Rais and



A view of Inauguration session of 1st National Folklore Congress

Danuvars through which they focused the folk language, folk culture, folklore, ethnic literature, ethnic identity and ethnic social practices of these ethnic groups. The third session of the Congress entitled "Folklore, Gender, and Power" was chaired by Dr. Gajab Kumari Timalisina. In this session, 6 experts from various disciplines of the society presented their exclusive papers addressing the folklore, gender and power.

The fourth session, chaired by Prof. Dr. Madhav Prasad Pokharel was entitled "Folklore and Folk Performing Arts," wherein 13 experts representing different disciplines of the society presented their papers exploring history of the Nepali folk musical instrument, development of folk songs, commercial values of duet songs and role of music at the context of social change. The fifth session began on the 16th of December under the theme "Theoretical and Methodological Issues in the Studies of Folklore." In the session chaired over by Prof. Dr. Abhi Subedi, a total of 9 experts floated in various papers depicting the methodological and theoretical importance of traditional architecture, mythical symbols, tradition and sources of folklore and languages, among others.

The sixth session, chaired by Prof. Dr. Yogendra Yadav, took place under the theme "Folklore, Identity and Ethnicity." In this session, 7 scholars presented their papers focusing the folk languages, folk cultures, folktales, folk riddles and folk narratives of the various ethnic groups of the country. The seventh session entitled "Folklore, Literature and Language" was chaired over by Prof. Dr. Govinda Raj Bhattarai. In this session, 15 experts presented their papers on various topics shedding limelight on the folk language and literature. The eighth session, chaired by Dr. Beena Poudyal discussed over the main theme "Folklore, Cultural Studies and Folk Practices." During this session 9 personalities presented their papers mainly focusing the folklore, cultural studies and folk practices among the Nepalese folk groups.

Finally, the First National Folklore Congress organized a valedictory session in the chairmanship of the NFS President Prof. Tulasi Diwasa. On the occasion, various personalities including Satyamohan Joshi, Elke Selter from Unesco Cultrual Unit, Dr. Govinda Raj Bhattarai, Dr. Aruna Uprety and Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Culture, Civil Aviation and Tourism

Workshop on Folklore and Folklife Field Work

Jal Krishna Shrestha appreciated the contribution of the NFS in studying, exploring and promoting the folklore, folklife, folk culture and folk language. Prof. Dr. Abhi Subedi thanked the participants while Prof. Diwasa, delivering the concluding speech, underlined on the need to promote the folklore and folklife further thanking the participants, paper presenters and the support-makers for their encouraging supports.

According to the participants, the Congress has been a unique opportunity to strengthen the ideas and understanding of ethno-language, literature, musicology, folklore, ethno-botany, ethnicity and identity, folk-art and crafts, ethnicity, gender and folklore, folk performing arts and dramatic performances, interpretation of folk rites and rituals and collection and transcribing of oral texts.



Workshop Participants

Workshop on Folklore and Folklife Fieldwork

After the completion First Nepali Folklore Congress held on 15-16 December 2006, Nepali Folklore Society (NFS) organized a weeklong workshop on Folklore and Folklife Field Work from 17-23 December 2006. The workshop was organized to discuss and expose the ways and methodologies of field work of folklore and folklife.

The workshop was participated in by 19 experts and scholars ranging from doctors to university lecturers. Among the participants were the university lecturers from various disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, geography, linguistics, literature, folklore, population including NFS members and other personalities interested in folklore and folklife field studies.

In the workshop, about 20 experts and resource persons provided the participants with necessary exposure on different aspects of folklore and folklife studies through their exclusive lectures on various related topics. The lectures broadly covered the folklore theories and methodologies, folklore and ethnomusicology, collection and transcribing of oral texts, Finnish method of tale type and motif, folk medicines, folklore studies in literature and culture, applied folklore, process of documenting and recording in audio-visual technology, ethnography of material folk culture, folklore and human geography, folkmedicine and ethno-botany, indigenous economic institutions and livelihood, oral tradition and oral history, traditional folk knowledge and technology, language and folklore studies, folklife, ethnicity and identity, folklife, culture and development, folk-art and crafts, visual folklore: digital audio-video recording and photography, ethnicity gender and folklore, folk performing arts and dramatic performances, folklore, context and performances, collection and interpretation of folk rites and rituals and human geography and folklife.

In the workshop program, Prof. Tulasi Diwasa, Prof. Dr. Abhi Subedi, Prof. Dr. C. M. Bandhu, Dr. Moti Lal Parajuli, Prof. Dr. M. P. Pokharel, Prof. Dr. Y. Yadav, Dr. Beena Poudyal, Prof. Dr. Tri Ratna Manandhar, Dr. Dhruv Chandra Regmi, Prof. Upendra Man Malla, Dr. R. B. Chhetri, Prof. Dr. Govinda Raj Bhattarai and Prof. Dr. P. P. Timalisina, Likewise, architect

D. N. Dongol, Dr. Aruna Uprety (medical) Prof. Dr. D. R. Dahal including Mr. Mohan Bikram Shah, a video cameraman, and Mr. Siddhartha Kumar Shakya, an ethno photographer and video cameraman. The discussions focused on the folklore and folklife studies including the sociological, anthropological, cultural, architectural, medical, literary and technological fields. The workshop provided ample opportunities to the participants to understand the concepts, methodology, recent theories, information and knowledge on the field research of folklore and folklife.

Nepali Folklore and Folklife Newsletter

The Newsletter is edited and published semi-annually, by Prof. Tulasi Diwasa on behalf of Nepali Folklore Society, mainly for the purpose of disseminating the activities of the Society. Besides, it also provides a forum for folklorists and the people interested in Nepali folklore and folklife study.

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¹ Folk ornaments of Aathpahariya Rai Woman

