



Cultural Dances as Performative Arts: A Study of the Cultural Dances Associated with the Newar Community

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Abstract— This paper attempts to analyze the cultural dances associated with the Newar community of Baglung Municipality as performative art from the perspective of Performance Studies theory. An effort is made to clarify the historical context of the dances and their present conditions with the problems and possibilities. Our discussion aims to bring to light the glorious history of the cultural dances and the great possibility to develop the cultural identity of the Newar community of Baglung. Similarly, these dances can be discussed and exposed in the world of academia as performative arts. This study reveals that these dances are facing so many problems at present. They are being victims of the western influence in our culture. These problems can be solved only with the united effort of the local government and the local people. If managed properly, they can function as means of promoting tourism in Baglung. This research work uses mixed method and the critical ideas of Performance Study theorists like Richard Schechner for analyzing the dances as performative arts.



Keywords— Cultural dances, cultural identity, performance, rituals.

I. INTRODUCTION

Baglung Municipality is rich in cultural heritages and history, but it is far behind in getting benefit from it. People of different cultures perform their cultural practices with great enthusiasm. Typically, in the case of performing cultural dances, Newars of this Municipality are far ahead of others. In the past, cultural dances of Newars were so popular that people from the surrounding areas used to come and stay here for many days to watch and enjoy their performances. Such trend, of performing cultural dances was first brought to Baglung from Bhaktapur and Palpa by the Newari people who first came in Baglung from those places. In the same way, Brahmins and Chhetris have their own cultural practices and Magars perform their cultural activities in their own ways. In fact, Baglung Municipality is a place of cultural harmony. Among other cultural practices, cultural dances are popular and performed with cultural importance in Newar community. Hanuman Nach, Basha Nach, Lakhe Nach, Jogi Nach and Ropai Nach are some notable cultural dances of this community in Baglung.

These dances are not just for enjoyment but have strong connection with cultural rituals and have performative value as artistic works. There are guiding ritualistic rules for them. At the same time, the dances have their own value as performative art with different artistic rules of performance. They have their own history and at present, they are facing different problems with the encroachment of western culture upon our traditional cultural practices. If managed properly, these dances have the great potentiality of helping to promote tourism. Their possibilities of promoting them as performative arts can be better explored when they are analyzed with the help of the critical ideas of Performance Study theorists like Richard Schechner, who take performance more seriously.

II. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Baglung Municipality is culturally rich and has its glorious history. Brahmins, Chhetris, Newars, and Magars of this Municipality have different cultural practices. This

Municipality has many cultural heritages, but systematic studies have not been done till now. Now we are having an overview of the ideas expressed by the scholars on Nepalese culture, cultural dances and dances of the Newar community.

Academician Prem Chhota is a renowned writer who has written about different cultural heritages, especially about Newari culture. In his book *Hanuman Nach: A Cultural Identity of Baglung* he asserts:

"Hanuman Nach is a prominent cultural dance of the Newar community. Though it is under Hindu culture, basically Newars have performed it as their cultural dance. In Baglung, its original place is 'Chhahara ko Dhara', which is now in Baglung Municipality 3. A big statue of Hanuman is there. Even at present time, *Hanuman Nach* begins from the same place (69).

This dance is based on the story of *Ramayana*, a Hindu epic, but it is performed especially by Newars.

In the same way, Ganeshman Lachhi in his article "Newari Sanskritima Lekhanach", published in *Madhuparka*, has taken cultural dances and other activities of high importance:

Culture has broad limitations. It is second man-made nature. All the man-made physical and mental means come under culture. The lifestyle, ideology, faith, religion, and philosophy are also culture. Culture is divided into two types: tangible and intangible. Physical cultural heritages, like temples, gumbas, churches etc., come under tangible culture, whereas dances, music, festivals, rituals, jatras etc. which we can't touch, are intangible culture. Government has brought different plans and policies to protect tangible culture whereas nothing is done for protecting intangible culture (20).

As mentioned by Lachhi there are two types of culture: tangible and intangible. Between them tangible culture is focused by the government making different plans and policies, but intangible culture is neglected. But they are also equally important. "So the UNESCO Conference of 2003 began different programs and policies to protect them" (Lachhi, 20). After 2003, the intangible cultural heritages are also getting space.

Such cultural dances are found everywhere in Nepal. Particularly, they are highly popular in the Newar community of Kathmandu valley. "Such cultural dances began in Lichhivi Period and while coming to Malla Period they had already become much famous" (Lachhi, 21). When we talk about such traditional cultural dances, Harisiddhi

Nach comes first. It is believed that this dance is continuously in practice for about the last 2400 years.

Different writers have written about Nepalese cultural diversity, cultural dances of Nepal and the cultural dances of Newar community. "As Nepal has geographical diversity people of different castes tribes and ethnicity live here. It is a naturally beautiful country having spell-binding cultural heritages" (Parajuli 61). Another cultural scholar Prem Chhota in his book *Dhaulagiri Ka Kehi Sanskriti Haru* argues "Nepalese culture is the harmonious uniformity of language, music, dance, norms, values and rituals of people of all castes, tribes and ethnicity spreading from eastern Mechi to western Mahakali" (1). Purushottam Shrestha, another famous cultural scholar writes, "In the different stages of Nepalese history political changes have taken out rulers and ruling systems but such changes never could uproot the root of social cultural practices of life" (6).

When we talk about cultural traditional dances of Nepal we should remember Harisiddhi Nach. According to Ganeshram Lachhi "In Nepalmandal, the researchers have brought out that Harisiddhi Nach is the eldest one. According to the *Bhasha Banshawali* and *Dev mala*, before 2400 years the Indian king Bikram Sen (Bikramaditya) from Ujjan Nagar brought his ancestral god Shree Harishiddi in a vase and established it in Nepal. From that time Harishiddi Nach began in Nepal" (23).

Cultural dances of Nepal are based on the geography of our country. They are helpful to strengthen patriotism. Famous cultural scholar Dr. Jaga Man Gurung writes "In Ghatu Nach the water of our own rivers Sapta Gandaki is regarded more pious than that of Ganga, Yamuna of India" (32). While writing about the cultural traditional dances of Nepal Purushottam Shrestha writes "Religious and cultural dances aim at providing entertainment to us and at the same time they present important events and trends of the society. They also provide religious influence as well" (5). Prakash Baral(45), Kantipur correspondent, argues "Kathmandu valley is the mine of art and culture from where they spread to different parts of our country". The place of origin of so many cultural dances is Kathmandu valley.

Such cultural practices are everywhere in the hooks and corners of the country. "Especially they are found immensely in the Newar community of Kathmandu valley. It is the live museum of folk cultural traditional music, songs and dances. Such dances basically began during the Lichhibi period and developed widely up to the Malla period" (Lachhi, 21). Among the three towns of Kathmandu valley Bhaktapur is regarded as rich and prosperous in cultural property like dance, music, songs, jatras and crafty palaces and temples. When King Prithvi Narayan Shah attacked Kathmandu valley in 1825/26 B.S., the members

of the Newar community went to different parts of Nepal, and some of them came to Baglung as well.

Highlighting the "Among others Newar community of our country is rich in cultural dances. Their place of origin is Kathmandu valley. Later they moved to different parts of our country, to trade centers and carried their cultural practices with them. So they are economically as well as culturally rich" (Parajuli 64). More than 40 types of dances are popular in the Newar community. Satya Mohan Joshi, Mrigendra Man Singh Pradhan, Dr Safalya Amatya, Prem Chhota are the prominent writers who have written about the dances of the Newar community.

Mahesh Chandra Pradhan, a scholar of the Newar community, has written about the Newari culture of Baglung Municipality. In his review of Prem Chhota's book *Baglung ko Basha Nach* he mentions:

"Baglung Bazaar, which is 27 2 K.M. west of Kathmandu, is a renowned name of the people of the capital city. The structure of the old market of Baglung as well as the chowks, temples, gumbas, and cultural dances and other performances prove that the Newars who came here were skillful persons and lovers of their culture. They have paved paths for cultural activities and made them part of their life at the same time left great cultural influence to the members of the new generation (II).

Similarly, in his review of the book *Baglung ko Basha Nach* Baikuntha Man Bijuksha writes, "Another purpose of Basha Nach is to keep the memory of late dearer and nearer fresh in mind". He further puts, "The artistic aspect of Basha Nach is so attractive, at the same time its spiritual aspect is very serious." About its history Prem Chhota argues, "Basha Nach began in Baglung in the initiation of Aswini Kumar Shresth" (12).

Ishwor Bajracharya, a retired teacher and active member of Shakya community of Baglung, says "Still now no systematic study of Jogi Nach has been done but it has been shown in Baglung Bazaar every year since long. Mukesh Rajbhandari, a journalist and former chairperson of NJA, Baglung, responds telling, "Newar community of Baglung performs different cultural dances basically in Bhadra, after the completion of the task of paddy plantation". He adds, "Ropai Nach is performed imitating the act of paddy plantation where male participants wear the dress of a female and act as if planting paddy. They go around the town performing the act

Our literature review reveals that Nepal is culturally rich and the Newar community is known for the regular performance of different cultural dances. Although certain plans and policies have been made for protecting

tangible culture, intangible culture is neglected. Up to now, their studies have been done randomly so there is the strong need of analyzing them systematically focusing on their performance in artistic manner. This is the research gap this study aims to fulfil.

III. METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the process of data collection and theoretical tool of analysis and interpretation. For the study of the cultural dances of *Newar* community of Baglung, data are collected using both the primary and secondary sources. As primary source, the persons related to the Newar community of Baglung as well as of Bhaktapur are interviewed. At the same time direct observation of the dances and recorded materials are observed. As secondary sources, different related documents, news articles, and books are studied. As theoretical tools, the critical ideas of Performance Study theorists are used.

Performance Study Theory and Performative Arts: A Theoretical Modality

For the better study of the dances and their cultural connection, different theories have been developed. Among others, 'Performance Study' takes performing arts seriously. It is an interdisciplinary field that studies the performative activities and uses performance as a tool to study the world. It is a broad term that includes so many diverse events and activities. It draws theories from different fields like performative art, anthropology and sociology, literary theories and legal studies. Richard Schechner is the pioneer of Performance Studies, and Victor Turner and Abhi Subedi have also contributed. In his innovative text *Performance Studies: An Introduction* Schechner divides performance studies in two categories: Artistic and Cultural Performances. Artistic performances are marked and understood as art like performance of literature, plays and performance poetry etc. Cultural Performances includes events that occur in everyday life in which cultural values are exposed. Rituals such as parades, religious ceremonies, dances, community festivals come under it.

Nepal is recognized in the world as a state having various cultural practices. These cultural practices are fixed in a social frame with their own varieties of different performance practices. As Schechner has said "Rituals are performative: they are acts done; and performances are ritualized: they are codified repeatable actions"(613).As we have already stated that Jogi Nach is performed in different artistic steps having other steps within one and giving meaning. So the performers demonstrate their creative performance based on their cultural identity. As Schechner views:

In every culture, either entertainment or efficacy is dominant; but the situation is never static: one rises while the other declines. The changes in the relationship between entertainment and efficacy are part of the overall pattern of social change. Performance is more than a mirror change, however, it participates in the complex process that creates change (624).

The performance of Jogi Nach and Basha Nach is directly related to the ritual of the *Newar* community. Therefore, the audiences are already familiar with the events the performance refers to. "The performances are social events not separate from the community activity. The actor is an active member of his community...." (Schechner 184). In cultural dances, both the performers and audiences are from the same community.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical Context of Jogi Nach and Basha Nach in Baglung

When we discuss the historical context of different traditional cultural dances of the Newar community the roots go to Bhaktapur. Regarding Jogi Nach, there is no uniformity among people of the Newar community of Baglung. Mukunda shakya, the founder chairperson of Shakya Community of Baglung argues "It should have come from Bhaktapur. When the king of Parbat State brought some pot makers from Bhaktapur, they brought Jogi Nach with them and later Shakya Community took the dance as their cultural property". He also adds, "It might be the original creation of our ancestors in Baglung". Prem Chhota, in his book *Dhaulagiri Ka Kehi Lok Sanskritiharu*, writes "The lap of Dhaulagiri Mountain Range is known as 'Kailashkut Parbatmala'. Religiously it is believed that Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati reside there for penance. To pay homage to them, the Shakya community began this dance from the ancient time" (17).

Even the eldest person of the Shakya community Krishna lal Shakya (87) tells that he remembers the performance of Jogi Nach in Baglung from his childhood. As mentioned by him "When I was a very small child our elders used to perform this Nach and we used to watch with joy ". In the past, there was no organized community of Shakyas for performing this dance. In spite of that, they performed the dance in communal form regularly. From past to present the beginning place of the dance is the same. It begins from the eastern side of Baglung Bazaar where there was a temple of Bishwokarma in past and there is Buddha Bihar now. In past this dance was performed for

many days beginning from Ghantakarna to Teej. Later on, it was performed for two to four days and while coming to present time it is performed once a year.

According to Mukunda Shakya (70) "Once in the past Jogi Nach was performed under the management of Buddha Bihar of Baglung as there was no organized shakya community. After the establishment of the Shakya community in 2048 B.S. The dance is organized, managed and performed by that community. Lal Prasad Shakya is remembered while talking about Jogi Nach. He used to play the Dholak, a difficult task in this dance, and lead the performance. Dr Badri Narayan and Krishna lal Shakya were the renowned dancers of their time.

Many cultural dances of Newar community originated from Bhaktapur, and later on spread to different places of the country in the process of migration of Newars. In case of Basha Nach also same rule applies. When we see the historical context of this dance in Baglung it was performed in 1983 B.S. for the first time. As Basha Nach is inseparable from Gaijatra its historical root also goes to the history of Gaijatra. Basha Nach is an added flavor in Gaijatra. Generally on the occasion of Gaijatra, the statue of cow is prepared in different forms and taken around the town, in memory of the family members who died that year. The performance is named differently at different places like: Ghintakishi, Tahasha, Pari Nach, and Toyamacha etc. At the same time, in memory of a dead person, local boys and girls are decorated in the form of different gods and goddesses like: Bishnu, Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Laxmi, Saraswati etc., and taken around the town with music and hymns. They sing songs in praise of god as well as describing the life events of the dead person. They also request God to open the path for heaven to the dead persons. This performance is called Basha Nach. Before the beginning of Basha Nach in Baglung, Tayomacha and Bull were made and taken around the town. This was performed in the beginning under the leadership of Kajiman Chaudhari, Mathabar Chaudhary and Pahalman Chaudhary. According to Prem Chhota(69)

Satyalal Shrestha, grand- father of Aswinini Kumar Shrestha, came to Baglung from Butwal-Palpa. At Palpa the Newar community from the past used to perform Basha Nach. When he went there he got a chance to see the attractive Basha Nach and thought it better to perform the Nach in Baglung, too. As a result the trend of Basha Nach began in Baglung. For the first time, Basha Nach was performed in Baglung in memory of Krishna Bahadur Shrestha and organized by Aswini Kumar Shrestha.

In the beginning (from 1983 - 2013 B.S.) Basha Nach in Baglung was performed just singing hymns in the name of gods and goddesses going around the town. But, only after 2013/2014 B.S. the written hymns related to the life events of dead persons began to be sung with others." With the increase of awareness from 2013/14 B.S. the written hymns about the life events of the dead persons began to be sung with special focus". (Chhota,2065, 14). From 1983 this dance is continuously performed as a cultural performance of the Newar community of Baglung. In the past Hira Man Shakya, Govinda Shyam Baidhaya, Badri Narayan Bhari were famous for writing hymns and providing music. At present time Subha Ram Bhari, Uttam Raj Bhandari, Sudarshan Shakya, Mahesh Chandra Shakya are renowned for the hymn, music as well as for the act of singing.

Jogi Nach and Basha Nach at Present: Problems and Possibilities

Now Jogi Nach is performed once a year in Baglung in the month of Bhadra. This dance was once a part of the chain of dances performed by the youth of Newar community of Baglung beginning from Gathemangale to Teej. According to Gaganlal Shakya (59)

"In Baglung Bazaar different cultural dances were performed during the leisure time after the paddy plantation. The chain of dances used to include the cycle of paddy plantation. First dance was Hobai Nach, a dance performed imitating the action of ploughing. Second was Katwal Nach , a dance imitating the action of Katwal (community messenger of the time) inviting female workers for paddy plantation. Third was Ropain Nach, a dance performed imitating the action of paddy plantation. The last dance of the chain of dances was Jogi Nach, a dance imitating the action and activities of Jogi (sage) and going to the holy places for religious purpose after paddy plantation".

Now the chain has been broken. Among them, Ropain Nach and Jogi Nach are regularly performed in Baglung but not the others. For the performance of Jogi Nach the youths of Shakya Community train themselves in the leadership of seniors for a few days. In the past, only male members of the Shakya community used to participate in the dance but recently even the female members are also showing their interest to participate in the dance. As informed by Mukunda Shakya (70) "At present time even the females of Shakya community are participating in different activities of Jogi Nach and at the same time they are also participating as dancers". It indicates that different things have been changed related to the dance with the passing of time.

It is the fact that our cultural activities are passing through the stage of crisis because of the influence of western culture as well as modern means of entertainment. Jogi Nach is no exception. It is also facing a critical situation because of the influence of western culture, availability of modern means of entertainment as well as scarcity of young people capable of the active participation of the dance. Scarcity of young people because of migration to the foreign countries is another problem. Manjul Shakya (38), an active participant in the dance in recent years argues, "At present time we are facing a great problem in the performance of Jogi Nach because of the tendency of the young people going to foreign countries for different purposes". He also adds, "It needs great strength for the perfect performance of Jogi Nach and for this purpose young and trained persons are needed". The lack of youth in the community is hindering the quality of the performance.

The performance of Jogi Nach has also faced financial problems. They need money to buy Dholak, which costs about 10000 rupees and Jhayali, which costs about 12000 rupees. The expenditure of dress up of the dancers and the other decorations as well as cost of preparation and the day of performance and other artifacts used in dancing leads to the total cost of about 100,000 rupees for the performance of a year.

In spite of the different problems that the members of Shakya community are facing for the performance of Jogi Nach, they are regularly performing the dance as the cultural identity of the whole community. Among the cultural dances of Newar community of Baglung, Lakhe Nach and Jogi Nach are performed by the members of Shakya community and associating these dances with their cultural identity. Almost all of them support the performance doing one or another work related to the dance performance. While performing on certain important occasions of Baglung Bazar like Baglung Mahotsab, they don't do the other rituals but just perform the dance. Mukunda Shakya , the founder chairperson and active member of Shakya community expresses his sadness telling that, " Up to now we have got no support from any government organization for the performance, protection and promotion of the dance".

Nepal is rich in cultural heritages. In Kathmandu valley and outside, many traditional cultural dances of different castes, tribes and ethnicities are performed every year. Jogi Nach is a cultural traditional dance which is typical of Baglung as this dance is not performed at other places. Although this dance is managed and performed by the Shakya community of Baglung, it has now become a cultural property of Baglung. Like that of Tharu Nach of

Sauraha, Chitwan, this dance can be made a part of this community to promote tourism in this locality. This will ultimately help for both cultural promotion and tourism development. For the promotion of Jogi Nach local government should provide financial as well as other support. If it is not supported and promoted by the concerned authorities, it might be extinct like other traditional cultural dances.

Basha Nach is a famous traditional cultural dance of the Newar community of Baglung that continues even at present time. For the organization of the performance of this dance, a good amount of money is needed. That is why only selected families can organize the performance of the dance. Only those who are economically strong organize and others participate in the performance.

Our culture is under the cultural attack of western culture. Our cultural practices are labeled as superstitious practices. Because of the influence of modernization, young people of the new generation do not find this performance interesting. They take-part in the performance of the dance out of compulsion not with enthusiasm and interest. This might make the dance more ritualistic and less artistic.

The cultural dances like Basha Nach are related to the cultural identity of the community. They should be performed and promoted regularly. For its continuity and effectiveness as well as regular performance, the members of the Newar community should be awarded, motivated and inspired. Mukesh Rajbhandari (49), the former chairperson of NJF Baglung, points, "Still now such performances are not supported by government organizations. Just small financial support can't do anything; it needs holistic planning for the protection and promotion of the cultural dances of the Newar community of Baglung". If we were able to create the united effort of the local government and Newar community with the support of all others, we would be able to promote such traditional cultural dances and develop Baglung as a cultural center for tourists. Their regular performance can only pass from them to the coming generation.

The performance of Jogi Nach and Basha Nach

Jogi Nach is not just tradition, it is an artistic performance. Its effectiveness depends on the performers' performing capacity as well. There should be a perfect combination of music and dance to make it effective. The dancers act like Jogis and sometimes they act as if they are fighting a battle with Trishul and entertain the audience. As Schechner argues, "From theatrical perspective performance is the transformation of technique into entertainment"(455). This dance is so attractive, when the dancers appear in the dress of lord Shiva and Jogis and

begin to dance, the onlookers feel as if real Shiva and Jogis have come.

To perform Jogi Nach, 25-30 dancers of the age of 15/16 to the age of 44/45 are needed. Except the dancers, the persons playing Dholak and Jhaili should be trained ones. Those who play music also dance in attractive and energetic ways in Jogi Nach. Though the dance is performed by the people of Shakya community, all people of Baglung Bazaar watch and enjoy the dance as they feel that it also belongs to them and their cultural property. Regarding this issue Schechner says, "The performances are social events not separate from the community activity. The actor is an active member of his community (...) (184). Those dancers who participate in Jogi Nach need a certain type of decoration. If available they need the tiger's skin with fur to put around the waist, Jata to put on the head, Damaru to play, Trishul of five or six feet of height, a big Chimta, Shankha, bell as well as an artificial snake as Naga around the neck. When the dancers dance with such decoration, the dance becomes splendid and highly attractive. The dancers go around Baglung bazaar performing the dance and some members of Shakya community collect money as donated by the public. Gagan Lal Shakya (49), the chairperson of Shakya Community of Baglung argues, "The collected money donated by the people after watching the dance is utilized for the management of the dance and its preparation".

Jogi Nach begins with the worship of 'Nasal devata' for the perfect completion of the whole performance of the dance. It is done with the song 'Deuthaya' that means song of gods. There are five steps or taals of Jogi Nach. First the taal of movement, second the taal of taking to a particular place and making dance, third resounding all Jogis up in the sky, fourth Daiyo Hop taal (the taal of god) and the fifth the taal of farewell. These different taals have different musical compositions and the dancers have to internalize the taals and perform the dance accordingly. The perfect match of music and the performance of the dancers make the dance artistic whereas mismatching destroys artistry and attraction. So the dancers and the musicians should be trained and expert in their parts.

Basha Nach is performed in memory of the dead persons of the family. This dance is both ritualistic as well as artistic. Performance of Gaijatra is a known celebration in the Newar community. Every year after Rakshayabandan, Gaijatra is performed and on the same occasion, Basha Nach is also performed with a certain artistic flavor. It is organized from the family where someone has died in the year in memory of the dead ones. Young boys and girls are decorated in the form of different gods and goddesses like Ram, Krishna, Bishnu, Shiva,

Laxmi, Saraswati ect. Basically two types of hymns are sung during the performance of the dance: one in the name of gods and goddesses and another describing the life history and the activities of the dead persons.

When we see the performance of Basha Nach, we find three purposes. First is to perform it as the cultural identity of the Newar community. In the participation of the whole community the dance is performed as their cultural entity. Second purpose of the performance is to give the continuity of the memory of the dead persons. Third purpose is spiritual. It is performed wishing the dead soul to be in heaven. Baikuntha Prasad Bijukshaya writes "The spiritual aspect of Basha Nach is as important as its artistic aspects"(II).

In our analysis of the hymns sung in Basha Nach before 2013/14 B.S. We find praise of gods and goddesses like: *Hey Bhagwan/ Bato dekhau/ Swarga Janalai* (Hay God! Show us the path of heaven) However, after 2013/14 there we find certain change. The shift is in the content of the hymn. From the praise of god the focus began to be given to the praise of the dead persons. One creative person was given the responsibility to compose hymns. One hymn written by Prem Chhota and music composed by Mahesh Chandra Pradhan goes like this:

Chhadi Gaiyau Hami Sablai

Bilayau Jivan Bhar Hamilai Ruyai

Hare Rama! Hare Krishna!

Kirtan gaiyu

Mirta Aatma Lai Mukti Dayu. (Chhota, 128)

(You left us all forever, disappeared, putting us in lifelong. Let us sing hymn of Rama and Krishna for Salvation of dead soul)

Basha Nach of Baglung includes both artistic aspects as well as it is a part of *Newari* cultural ritual. Its performance needs artistic quality in dance, song and music. It is not only an artistic performance, it is a part of the Newari culture of Baglung.

Performance Theory: Jogi Nach and Basha Nach as Performative Arts

The term performance is contested, slippery and unstable. This is a part of the vibrancy of the study of performance across disciplines and the Academy. Performance has retained immense popularity in recent years across a wide ranging field of study and activities like arts, literature and social science. Generally to perform is to carry out, accomplish or fulfil special tasks in specific standards. According to Deborah A. Kapchon, "To perform is to carry out something into effect whether it is a story and

identity, an artistic artifact, a historical memory or an ethnography. The notion of agency is implicit in performance" (479). It is whether human or animal or of object. Performance can mean not only theatre but also many other disciplines like cultural, ritual, economical, a parade, a protest, terrorism or almost every branch of human science -sociology, anthropology, ethnography, psychology, linguistics. Hence, previously limited to theatrical performance, now the term has surpassed other types of restriction and has become interdisciplinary.

When we talk about Newars, they have distinct ways of ritual performance based on different religious scriptures as well as their traditional cultural rituals. In Jogi Nach and Basha Nach the performance of the dancers plays the role to actualize the message and take the idea/ theory into practice. "Performance study opens the space between analysis and action and to pull the pin on the binary opposition between theory and practice" (Conquergood 145).

This theoretical ground of Performance Studies theory, opens a new way to the analysis and interpretation of Jogi Nach and Basha Nach of the Newar community of Baglung. Among others, Jogi Nach is a prominent dance of Baglung, especially among Shakyas, and Basha Nach, another traditional cultural dance, is associated with the family of dead people. These two dances represent two types of traditional dances of the Newar community. The members of the family in which someone died the year organize Basha Nach and all the members of the community participate in it, and Jogi Nach is organized by Shakya Samaj or by the community itself and all the members of the community participate in the performance. These two dances have their roots in religion or cultural rituals. There are no written rules about the performance of the dances but traditional practices have been guiding principles. The rules have been passed from past to present orally as Elizabeth Bell argues "Information was stored in bodies in cultural memories and in oral tradition enacted only in their performance" (57). As they are not in written form there is the possibility of some aspects being lost in the past. According to Manjul Shakya (39), a member of Shakya community and a regular participant of Jogi Nach, " There are five tals (rhythms) in Jogi Nach and all of them have their particular names but at present no one can tell those names."

Theorists focus three interrelated concepts while defining performance. Elizabeth Bell (2008) argues performance as both process and product. It is productive and purposeful as well as traditional and transformative. Actually, performance is a communicative process, an exchange or interaction between speaker and listener,

message subscriber and message receiver, the source and the goal.

The effect of the dances also depends on the quality of the performers. Therefore, for the performance of Jogi Nach, the dancers are trained for a few weeks before the performance. The process of performance most often described as emergent "is made of twice behaved behavior and performed action that people train to do that they practice and rehearse" (Schencher 22). The performers wear the dress that differentiates them from others. Although they are normal people, their dress up and other artifacts that they use differentiate them. In Jogi Nach dancers wear clothes like that of God Mahadev and others that of Jogi or sage. In Basha Nach the performers wear the dress of gods and goddesses.

When it comes to performance, we should keep in mind two things: Performances are traditional but at the same time each performance is different from others. While defining Performance, Victor Turner Says "Rituals are the performances of stereo typed activities that are well set in any certain ethnic cultural sequences"(81). Regarding such performance Abhi Subedi argues "Heritage of theatre implies a transmission of dramaturgical and performative experiences from one generation to another. Dramatic heritage is thus the continuation of a culture of performance that is vibrant at a particular time and space" (18). In the case of Jogi Nach and Basha Nach the trend of copying from one generation to another generation is continuing.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on our discussion of Jogi Nach and Basha Nach of the Newar community of Baglung with the light of Performance Studies theory, we can tell that both dances are a part of cultural rituals of the Newar community of Baglung as well as artistic performances. In both dances, performers are not just artists but also members of their community. That is why both dances have great cultural value in the community. With dances, the members of the Newar community of Baglung feel associated among themselves deeply and regard them part of their cultural identity.

In spite of the great cultural value of Jogi Nach and Basha Nach in the Newar community of Baglung, these dances are facing different problems. The increasing trend of foreign movement of youngsters for study as well as for foreign employment has created the scarcity of the active artists for the performance of the dances. The influence of western culture and modernization has decreased the interest of the people of the new generation toward the performance of such cultural dances. Lack of concern and

help from the government agencies is also causing problems.

The need of the present time is to increase awareness among the members of the Newar community regarding the value of such dances and creating interest and enthusiasm toward them. If such dances of the Newar community of Baglung are protected, performed and promoted in systematic ways, they will open new potentiality of cultural tourism and develop Baglung as a cultural center of Newari culture. In the past such cultural dances were performed even for the promotion of economic activities, this aspect can be revived at present time as well.

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