

Article Received: May 25, 2021; Reviewed: June 26, 2021; Accepted: July 4, 2021
 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/jodem.v12i1.38725>

Majesty of Limbu Love Songs: The Case of Sambahamphe's *Char Maya Palam*

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Abstract

The study of folklore, also known as folkloristics, studies customs, traditions, artifacts and beliefs being transmitted from past generations to the present. Transmission of these artifacts is a vital part of the folklore process. This article examines how the Limbu love song, known as palam, splendidly characterizes the multiple aspects of love functioning as a sense of propriety and decorum. Palam is a popular folksong in Yakthung Limbu community of Nepal. It is also sung in many other countries of the world where Limbu community populate including India, Bhutan and Myanmar. Focusing on the text Char Maya Palam by Ambika Kumar Sambahamphe, the study attempts to analyse how the palam or Limbu love song, which is sung while dancing ya?lang, undeniably holds substantial popularity and esteemed value in Limbu traditional folksongs.

Keywords: *Palam, ya?lang, Yakthung, Limbu folksong, love song, identity, cultural heritage, Char Maya Palam.*

Introduction

Thangben¹ (Male youth):

*Lipling-ang khi:ga anlipsin-be
 ka?i: re ni:sse angkhipsim-be
 Nettiphung phekel, ambi hekkela
 Singghak nu lungghak agachhiro
 menchhya nu thangben ayachhiro
 sesephung sarik, akhkhe larik
 Hembari heplek ahemsiro
 netti-ang phung-le akhemsiro
 Samyangphung amleng nammetti
 kasang se mimmi:n sammetti*

Menchhya² (Female youth):

*Semukti lung-le lung-a phung-le
 saretang yanha ta?jeng panha
 Wagunno chwatin hukung-senu
 thigekchang tho:tho: yukhungsenu
 Liplingang khi:ga anlipsin-be
 ka?i: re ni:sse angkhipsim-be
 Sumna?la thyang, alla jyang
 Pembenglung tehi:m, lungma pehi:m
 I:ksading khambek khammetti aa
 kasang se mimmi:n sammetti aa
 (Sambahamphe 42-44)*

'Since we do not belong to the same blood relation and hence we are well-suited to be a lover and a beloved, let's sing the noble song of love, and dance together.'

These are some examples of love song extracted from *Char Maya Palam*, published in 2015. The book *Char Maya Palam (Lili:m Palam* in Limbu) by Ambika Kumar Sambhahamphe is a comprehensive and intensively creative compilation of *palam* [pa:lam], a cultural folksong of Yakthung Limbu community. This bilingual and bi-scriptual book, written in Nepali and Limbu language and *Devanagari* and *Srijanga* script, comprises a wide ranging aspects and significance of the traditional Yakthung Limbu song, *palam*.

The Yakthung or Limbu language, both verbal and written, belongs to the Himalayan group of Tibeto-Burman eastern sub-groups of complex pronominal dialects. Limbu language is highly lyrical as it characterises the use of appositives and paired expressions, longish/periphrastic forms, lexical parallelism, aesthetics, and figurative languages.

The Limbu, known also by endonym "Yakthung," are "a small but historically important ethnic race of the Nepalese and Indian Himalayan regions" (Dutta 41). This community resides also in many different regions of India including Sikkim, Darjeeling, Assam, etc., Bhutan, Myanmar, and now in many other countries around the world. They have their own distinctive culture based on traditional ritual performances guided by the *Mundhum*. The *Mundhum* is an ancient religious scripture and folk literature of Limbu. Literally, "*mundhum*" means "the power of great strength" in Limbu (Chemjong 4). Limbu are rich in tradition, culture and literature as they have distinctive folklores, primitive customs, myths, folksongs and folkdances based on oral tradition. Roger Abrahams thinks of folklore as "items of traditional performance which call attention to themselves because of their artifice," or more succinctly "traditional activities" (145). Therefore, "the full analysis of a tradition or genre," he declares, "calls for study of the organizational elements of both items and performances" or in other words, the rhetorical use of folklore (145). For him, "tradition and the agency of tradition-bearers could be viewed as a reconciliation of folklore as oral and folklife as social-material phenomena" (qtd. in Bronner 8). In Limbu community, *hakpare*, *khyali*, *palam*, *hamlakwa*, *tamkye* are some of the major folklores and /or cultural / ritual songs, and *kelang* and *ya?lang* are their folkdances. Among them, *ya?lang* or *ya?lak* is a popular folkdance. This traditional Limbu folkdance consists of the genre of dancing *ya?lang* and singing *palam* that both go in unison. Such song (*sa:mlo* in Limbu), sung concomitantly with *ya?lang*, is called *palam* (Limbu 75). Being a duet song, the involvement of male and female participants is a must to imply the Limbu cultural/traditional folkdance *ya?lang* and folksong *palam*. This performance holds an esteemed value and substantial space in Limbu folk literature.

According to Bairagi Kainla, *ya?lang* is the ethnic folkdance denoting identity of Limbu community, whereas *palam* (song) is the community folksong sung while danced a

ya?lang (7). It has its unique cultural processes, practices and formalities. To begin *ya?lang*, a proposal or a request for dancing is extended mentioning the temporal, contextual and spatial meetings. Youths perform this dance in different ways such as moving in a circle, turning front and back sides, and sometimes stepping forward and backward in a line according to the tempo, beat and rhythm of the song, *palam*. At the end of every verse of song, they dance turning their sides back and forth. Their companions, who participate together in the dance, follow the steps of dance and chorus the tune and lyrics of song sung by the youth hero or heroine.

Review of Literature

Limbu folksongs and dances incorporate various day-to-day activities including devotional, ritual or cultural and recreational ones (Limbu 77). From the perspective of rhythm and technique of dancing, *ya?langs* are of various types. According to I. S. Chemjong, the main types are *panthare*, *tamrange*, *tambarkhole*, *siridhakpe*. For Kajiman Kandangwa, *panthare* and *kusarakpa* are the most popular ones. Similarly, Yehang Laoti finds *shorokpa* (common), *thurupya* (high/jump), *tamrangya*, *sirthappe* and *kengjori* as the major types of *ya? lang* (qtd. in Limbu 79).

Ya?lang, as Dor Bahadur Bista states, "prepares the youths for future love adventures" (44). Bringing reference to the birds called *felyere fempu:na* (in Limbu), Shiva Kumar Shrestha states that the birds provided Limbus the paddy seeds and taught them to plant and harvest it. At the time of harvesting or thrashing paddy from its ears, they uttered the sound/words "*chhuiya ha, ha...*" in order to chase birds away "with which the tradition of singing *palam* began" (12). Sesemi Se Nalbo estimates that the tradition of *ya?lang* and *palam* began in Limbuwan in around six to seven thousand years ago when *ghaiya* (one of the paddy species sowed spreading in dry soil) plantation was begun (33).

Govinda Bahadur Tumbahang has listed the melodies of Limbu folksongs which are *manggha* tune, *mundhum* tune, *tuwa* tune, *khahun* tune, *nuwa:pma* tune, *palam* tune, *khyali* tune, *hakpare* tune, *kesam* tune, *pangsamlo* tune, festive tune and *hamlakwa* tune (159-165). Tumbahang also categorises Limbu folkdances into four types: *ya?lang* or *ya?rakma*, *kelang*, *samba/yeba/ yema/yuma lang*, and *manglang*. According to him, *ya?lang* means paddy dance in which 'ya?' means 'paddy' and 'lang' means 'dance' (169-170). Ramesh Kumar Limbu considers the dance *ya?lang* and the song *palam* that both go concurrently as one of the most notable cultural heritages of Limbu community. For him, *palam* features "the subject of love and affection, world genesis, past and present experiences and future prospects" (82). As a collection of Limbu folksong, Nar Bahadur Yanghang published a book entitled *Palam* in 1995. Yanghang asserts that *palam* is "a versed folksong traditionally sung only with *ya?lang*" and hence is a "*ya?lang* song" (3). In this way, although some of the writers sporadically have worked in this genre, but not any substantial works were accomplished before at this length and

content. Thus, in the area of *palam*, Sambahamphe's *Char Maya Palam* holds a substantial accomplishment worthy of artistic majesty.

Methodology

Some writers tend to divide folklorists into literary or anthropological categories due to identical problems. The basic methodology of studying folklore in literature and studying folklore in culture, Alan Dundes claims, is "almost exactly the same; in other words, the discipline of folklore has its own methodology applying equally well to literary and cultural problems" (136). Utilizing literary or anthropological interpretation of the folklore studies and applying qualitative research methodology, the study investigates the artistic majesty of Limbu love song, *palam*. For this, the study attempts to delineate the essence of socio-cultural categories of love among male and female youths with special reference to Ambika Kumar Sambahamphe's *Char Maya Palam* as the primary text of discussion.

Glimpse of Nepali Folksongs

Nepal is a country of one hundred and twenty five different communities (Census 2011), characterizing multiplicities in terms of ethnicity, language, culture and religious faith and possessing distinctive folk and traditional cultures, rites and rituals, songs and dances. Hence, Nepal is a treasure land for cultural and natural heritages. Traditional and cultural songs are sung by a specific group of people or community in their own local tunes with or without their special musical instruments are called folksongs. They are sung on different occasions, ceremonies, celebrations, various customs, rites and rituals.

Different group of peoples or communities have their "own unique folksongs" (Limbu 76). They might differ from place to place. For example, folksongs of the people living in Terai are different than that of people living in the mountain region. Folksongs also differ according to caste, ethnicity, creeds, culture, religion, etc. For example, different communities have their own folksongs. Such as *sakelasilee* is sung by Rai peoples, *hakpare* and *palam* are sung by the Limbu, *teej* song is sung by the Hindu women during Teej, *syabru* is sung by the Sherpa, *selo* is sung by the Tamangs, *kaura* is sung by the Magar community, *sorathi* is sung by Gurung and *karkha* is sung by the Gandharva communities. Regionally, *hakpare*, *palam* and *sakelasilee* are sung in the eastern part of Nepal, *deuda* song is sung in Doti district, *nyaule* song is sung in Salyan and Pyuthan, *newari* song in Kathmandu valley, *roila* and *jhyaure* in Gulmi and Palpa, and *hori*, *salhes*, *karikh*, and *jhijhiya* songs are sung in the Mithila region of Terai. Some folksongs are sung on special occasion like *asare* song is sung during paddy cultivation, *teej* songs in Teej, *malashree* in Dashain, *deusi* and *bhailo* in Tihar, *sakelasilee* in Udhaul/Ubhaul, and so on.

A central theme in community song is active music making, including performing, creating, and improvising. All genres and diversities of song may be involved and they may be part of cultural and arts events, linked with celebrations, ceremonies, rituals, play, education, social uplift, or life passages.

In traditional Limbu songs, for instance, *khyali* is a conversational song in which young lads and lasses sing in very poetic expressions and in a sweet tone. *Sakpa palam samlo* is sung during the *kusarakpa ya'lang* dance in a fast beat. Likewise, *kemba palam samlo* is sung during the *kemba ya'lang* dance in a slow beat. *Domke akma palam samlo* is sung when doing the normal chores and also during the *domke akma* dance. *Hakpare samlo* is sung by middle-aged men and women who have interest in the *Mundhum* and who are well versed in it. One can find spiritual and worldly specialties in this song (Limbu 98-99). Similarly, *nisammang sewa samlo* is sung during religious functions. It is a devotional song. Hence, the culture of singing and dancing is an important aspect of life among Limbus.

Origin, Meaning and Structure of Palam

At the beginning, no one had any idea of singing a song. At first, Samkelokelo Kewafungba is said to have started producing the melody of 'eh...'. According to Laxman Menyangbo, a brother and a sister named Funglang-hangba and Fungloti-hangma respectively planted flowers for the first time bringing the seeds from Muringla Kharingla. Sister's flower blossomed earlier as she sowed in land of a lower altitude but brother's flower slowed to blossom as he sowed at a higher altitude. So, the brother was jealous of his sister and he attacked his sister's flowers with his flowers. Both of their flowers' smells resulted in producing injurious smell and caused them intoxicated and unconscious for weeks. When they came to consciousness, they found all the flowers lying on the ground as wild animals entered and trampled them. To revive those flowers to their previous state, Samkelokelo Kebafungba produced the sound 'eh...' from his mouth and revived the dying flowers with this melodious tune. The tune of *hakpare* began with this melody (Menyangbo 100-105, Mabuhang 168-169). Thus, in its origin, no *palam* song was sung but only the tune of sound 'ha... ha... ha...'. This sound was used to chase birds to save the harvested crops. Later, the very sound or word 'ha... ha... ha...' changed into a melodious tune of the *palam* song -- truly sonorous, slushy and melodic. The term *palam* is said to have originated from *pa:tlam* (to speak + way/medium), a medium to express one's feelings towards others. It tends to be a medium of being intimate and of extending one's love in the company of male and female when it is accompanied with *yalang* (Kainla 8). But it becomes just a *samlo* or a song if it is sung on other contexts and occasions without the dance.

The author, Sambahamphe, has clearly mentioned that *palam* is of two types, structurally. In the first type of *palam* with an elongating tune, the word 'ha... ha... ha...' is not

used. In the second type of *palam* with a fast beat and rhythm, the word 'ha... ha... ha...' is used at the end of each verse. A verse of *palam* consists of two lines, and each line consists of nine syllables (21-23). Similarly, according to I. S. Chemjong, in primeval time, one of the ancestors named Sarakpa taught at first to dance by moving five steps to left and right, and three steps at the centre in view of harvesting and thrashing the crops (73-74). With this, Limbu cultural dance *ya?lang* is said to have begun.

Issues and Theme of *Palam*

Palam is sung narrating the mythical stories from the origin of the universe to the entire living and non-living things and asking questions so as to share each other the knowledge of the *Mundhum*. The act of testing knowledge is also done through the *palam*. However, while danced *yalang* and sung *palam*, it has become a love song to exchange feeling, establish love and choose life partner for youths. Thus, the chief subject of *palam* is love and feature of *palam* is the song of love.

Cordiality and respect are usually at the core of *palam*. Focus on friendly behaviour and respect the interests of other people are major characteristics of it. At the start of singing *palam* and performing *ya?lang*, the contexts of meeting are discussed, and then a proposal for singing and dancing is put forward. Such proposition is done in the form of *khyali*. The episode of *khyali* is initiated by the males if the females are guests in that village or locality, and the females initiate it if males are guests there. The act of *ya?lang* and singing *palam* takes place only when both parties or female and male youths agree to do so. For an instance, Sambahampe presents the kind of *khyali* initiated by male youth to the female youths as follows:

Eh... lung-nga tarema-se
Netti-gen phung-ha phektene-gara
Lung-ngama phung-se hekkene-gara
Kesangla tehi:m lungma pahi:m
Siyuken muden thodho ne-gara, mudennang hang-lo
Thibongsa a:ni yakthungba ha?re yarakma samlo
khemsing phung phung lep sasinegya-be
yarakma samlo tarema-se hek?ma lasinegya-be
Iksading khambek thong-bek-kinu
Akkhedik ningwa adangma tarema-se pong-bek-kinu (34)

The male youth puts such proposal toward female youth(s) in semi-lyrical tune of *khyali*. Here, he says, 'oh you girl guest youth(s)! Now, we would like to request you to begin dancing

ya?lang together with us as per the custom and culture of ten Limbus. When said so, what do you think of it?

Then, the female responds the proposal of male as follows:

Eh... lung-nga tareba adangba-se
Semikla pha?re, tuttuding-gara tumyahan-sa:re
Khemsing phung phung lep kesari rechha
yarakma samlo kela?ri rechha
Yuppa-ne yang-se tumyang hang-se
Lung-nga tareba adangba-se bahennang panlo
iksading khambek thonge-ang thong-lo
membongna pan-ga the-ange hop-lo lung-nga tareba-se
ya?rakma samlo ponge-ang pong-lo. (35)

In this, the female says, 'Oh you male guest youths! It is known from you that you are extending your request for dancing *ya?lang* and singing *palam*' according to the custom and culture of ten Limbus. There is nothing to say no in this matter, so it is obviously fine to dance *ya?lang* and sing *palam*.

Hence, *khyali* plays the role of a channel of communication or dialogue sung in semi-lyrical tune and thereby helps establish an environment for enhancing the act of dancing *ya?lang* and singing *palam*.

Types and Features of *Palam*

According to the author, the *palam* is primarily a love song. The author himself has classified the *palam* song into four types in terms of the expression of love. They are songs of common love, flower love, physical love, and heart love. *Palam* is a song, especially of joy, an utterance of good wishes, expression of love, affection, cooperation, respect, high regard and cordiality, sharing of idea and knowledge as well as adoration of broader socio-cultural tradition. Another important feature of singing *palam* and dancing *ya?lang* stands for a culture of courtesy, gender equality and self-discipline.

Palam song has unique features. It is "full of rhyme, rhythm and prosody" (Limbu 82). If truth be told, Limbu language itself is highly poetic as most of the socio-cultural activities and ceremonies are orally communicated and observed in poetic form. Each line of *palam* consists of nine syllables and is followed by the sound 'ha... ha...ha' and every two lines that rhyme together make a verse. Sometimes, the words and idioms are used in such a way that it creates a local atmosphere which evokes both love and respect simultaneously, comparing to

the lover and beloved as flower, the symbol of love and youth. Apart from the theme of love, *palam* is sung on various subjects, such as general knowledge, skills, ideas, philosophies, quizzes, narratives of myths, stories, legends, histories, current affairs, future prospects, day-to-day lives and deaths, and so on.

By tradition, Limbu have their own spiritual faith guided by their religious scripture, Mundhum, and they deem Tagera Ningwaphumang [*ningwa?phu:mang*] as the supreme god/goddess, which can be translated simply as "Supreme body of knowledge." They believe that this world, universe, and all living being and non-living beings are originated/created under the guidance of this Supreme power, Tagera Ningwaphumang. The author brings reference of propitiation or prayer to be bestowed upon Tagera Ningwaphumang usually at the beginning of singing *palam*. For example, we can see such benedictory reverence towards Supreme power as given below:

Eh...! Tagera mang-e sewaro.
Tagera Ningwaphu mangmaye ha, ha, ha
phunjiri kara phung hangma-e ha, ha, ha
Iksading khambek ga?thokhang ha, ha, ha
ke-mikki phunga-ga? pokhang ha, ha, ha
Imi:t lung kara lung himmo-aa ha, ha, ha
mikki ne phunle li:mimha?-aa ha, ha, ha
Tagera mang-e kewane-ro ha, ha, ha
hukphakki mang-e sewa ne:ro ha, ha, ha (30-31)

'Oh! Greetings to the Tagera Ningwaphumang, You are the queen of flower like life. I am the flower-love of your own. Thus, you will kindly drop the creation of all four types of loves and origin of flower like life to be incarnated in the pistil of blossoming flower. We'll go on singing and engaging in recreation. Oh, Tagera Ningwaphumang, humbly I pray to you.' The above lines are recited in the form of prayer for blessing of Supreme power which the writer considers as prelude or benedictory verse(s).

Sambahamphe, in *Char Maya Palam*, categorises *palam* songs in accordance with the intents and objectives of singing. According to him, the male and the female youths participating in *ya?lang* agree on the kind of love they want to set up and enjoy singing the song, accordingly. The following is an example of *palam* taken from the text:

Fungloti yemsing fung-ma-o-aa / lungma-den mi:mmin lungma-o-aa
Li:singnang pha:ga thungsu-ne-ro / lungma-o mi:mmin yungsu-ne-ro
Naphembi chwatin sa:pma phal-la / thak-mi:mmin anchhi wa:pma phal-la

I:ksading khambek thokhepel-le / sesebhung we:ré pokhepel-le

Fungpona nuna wanchhing-ga-aa / nanu-ma mi:mme anchhi-ga-aa

Samyang-fung amleng nammet-ti-aa / fung mi:mmin mimme sam-met-ti-aa (55)

'We shall keep talking sweetly to each other the first worldly/common love, for we have a short life. Then, we will put the second heart love in our hearts. And, as I have already got married with the other one and having the third physical love, I want to propose you for the fourth type of love, that is, the flower love.' (Thematic translation)

This way, the participants' needs and interests become the determining factor for choosing the kind of singing *palam* love song. We see here how the author presents them creatively, contextually and intellectually.

The common or worldly love song *palam*, as the author maintains, is just for sweet words of love, expressed through lips of mouth and thus mostly a flippant and superficial one. This is the first type of *palam*. It is not taken seriously being it of a very common type. Due to its nature of customary and light-heartedness, this is usually an easier kind of love song. Beyond lust and attraction, every healthy relationship has an element of closeness and friendship. This category of *palam* includes songs that pour out appreciation for a partner, or express closeness and empathy. Here is an example of *palam* a male lover sings:

You my love completed your turn
 How nice and so much heart rending!
 Singing and dancing is our culture
 Started right from our forefathers
 So you sang heart touching song
 Now, I will try to answer your queries
 Though I do not know them very well.... (173)

The second type of *palam* includes songs of flower love. It is a pure love symbolizing the sacred and beautiful flower like love and pure mind. In essence, this represents the pure song of selfless love. Such pure flower love relates to the inner soul with possibility of reunion free of luxury and carnal desire. For an instance, the *palam* goes like this:

Lotus flower for my flower love
 Of flower, take singing up above
 As rainbow has kept surrounded
 May not go the flower ponds dry
 May the flowers live in lines fresh.... (66)

The third type of *palam* song the author presents is about physical love. Although this song seems to be a self-centred, transient and fleeting kind of love song stimulated by corporal desire, it is not overtly like that. But the continued singing of such *palam* and dancing *ya?lang* enhances them to be a close partner falling deeply in love. Love between the partners usually end happily. This type of *palam* presents a joyful and sensuous love song culminating the state of having two bodies and one soul. Here, we look at how the female says in this kind of *palam*:

Flower love! If you are a bachelor lad
 And you are unmarried as I am
 We may think about the life flower
 And go singing song of physical love
 So, my flower love thinking properly
 You will tell me truly what we are to do (110-111)

The fourth type of *palam* that the author depicts is about heart love. This represents a tragic love and the song of pain, suffering and separation. However, this kind of love is also compared with spiritual love as it is believed to have connection with the soul. The heart love which provides us with spiritual joy remains eternal forever. It remains intact in the memory. The partners take it as their fate and compulsion to live in pangs of separation in this life. However, the heart lovers who believe to meet in another life are connected with hearts and souls. A few lines of such *palam* are presented here:

We couldn't meet for long time
 As I was in my job far away
 Remembering you, my heart love
 Day- night I cried shedding tears
 I used to see you in middle of tears
 Collected inside open-cupped-palms
 So, heart-love my heart ached again
 In your absence, my heart did pound (142-143)

Likewise, when one of them asks in which flower shall we meet if we get incarnated in the flower. The next answers it saying if we are to incarnate in the flower, we'll meet in the garden of Muringla-kharingla.

This way, the author categorizes the *palam* songs into four types such as common love, flower love (pure/symbolic love), physical love (sensuous/worldly love), and heart (spiritual/soul) love, and provides the readers with their distinctive features. The author

describes heart love *palam* as the love song of tragedy consisting of a song of pain and separation. We can take it as an ideal love. It is very devastating to love with the heart and soul.

Usually, a love song is a song about romantic love, falling in love, heartbreak after a breakup, and the feelings that these experiences bring. Love songs have been around for centuries and can be found in the histories and cultures of most societies, though their ubiquity is a modern phenomenon.

Assessment of Knowledge and Intellect

There would not be any apparent opponent as such in participants' *palam*, but both or all amicably collaborate in joining or piecing together so as to disseminate knowledge and ideas among one another and preserve such knowledge of memory through *palam*. It manifests "a means of communicating and sharing of feelings between acquainted and unacquainted young man and woman and enhancing understanding and cordiality" (Subba 54). Some of the retellings of Yumaism (philosophical reading of the *Mundhum*) are also included in Limbu traditional songs with social stories, dreams, and everyday life. There has been a rich tradition of Limbus singing their folksongs.

The author, Ambika Kumar Sambahamphe, presents many examples of sharing knowledge and inquiring issues on various topics like the *Mundhum* narratives, past incidents, day to day affairs, future prospects, and among others. Below is an example of heart love in which the female youth (heroine) raises some inquiries to the male youth and she wants to evaluate both of his intellect and inner intentions:

In which flower shall we meet if we get incarnated in the flower? Where shall we meet if we go to the life of birds? In which life of stone shall we meet if we go to the life of stone? In which life of tree shall we meet if we get to go into life of tree? In which life of animal shall we meet if we have the animal's life? (Sambahamphe 151-161)

At the time of departure, the male (hero) also attempts to answer the questions of female (heroine):

If we are to incarnate in the flower, we shall meet in the garden of Muringla-kharingla where paired love flowers of eternity blossoms. Should we go to the life of birds, we shall meet in the life of ruddy shelduck (*chakhewa-chakhewi*). Should we go to the life of stone, we shall meet at the Penbenlung of Phaktanglung (Kumbhakarna). Should we get to go into life of tree, we shall meet on pair of banyan and sacred fig trees grown at stone platforms. Should we have the animal's life, we shall meet being a yellow-throated Marten. (Sambahamphe 164-166)

Folksong is "product of a collective oral tradition, existing in many variants, conveys the identity of a nation and reflects its mentality" (Mukhitdenova 3204). One of the features of folksongs is the reproduction and reflection of the senses, feelings and sentiments, moral standards and values of the people of communities in its content. They represent as a living performing art and culture. Functioning on the modern stage they can be transmitted to the descendants as a heritage.

Folksong refers to 'communal composition' and an aesthetic of 'dignity.' It is replaced by the term 'traditional' song, 'tradition' and 'oral transmission.' Folksong is the product of a musical tradition that has been evolved through the process of oral transmission. The concept embraces only song that evolved within a community uninfluenced by 'popular' and 'art' music.

Upholding Identity and Cultural Heritage

Palam song is one of the cultural symbols and, as ongoing process of meaning creation, a powerful and easily recognizable aspect of Limbu cultural identity. The people of Limbu nationality have their own folk and cultural/ritual songs such as *hakpare*, *khyali*, *palam*, *hamlakwa*, *tamkye*, etc. with which they are closely connected. Such folksongs tell their long-run histories and deep-seated cultural values. These songs root back to their ancient culture and they are their unique identity. The *palam* songs have a close relationship with Limbu community as they represent a particular community, place, culture, religion, and society. The significance of song and dance can only be understood in relation to specific cultural contexts. For E. B. Tylor, culture refers to "That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capacities or habits acquired by man as a member of society" (58). All these cultural contexts and folkloristic features help make the *palam* an esteemed love song of Limbu community, identifying them as members of the society.

Palam song includes a set of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through listening to seniors, learning accounts or tradition and that continually evolves, which contributes to Yakthung Limbu community's sense of identity and continuity.

Conclusion

Each and every folksong of a community possesses some kinds of values and attributes. Yakthung Limbu have their own unique folksongs as other communities of Nepal do. They have different folk and cultural traditions which bridge the gap between past and present resulting from cultural interactions between people of their community. Passed on from one generation to another, *ya?lang* and *palam* have sustained as a result of a long practice of Yakthung Limbu community and helped them give cultural identity. As custody of an intangible cultural heritage, *palam* holds a very important mark. In this context,

Sambahampe's *Char Maya Palam* is one of the authentic compilation and creation of such Limbu cultural possessions. This book is not just about a collection of *palam* songs but a creation out of the author's ingenuity and intellect. Thus, it is an invaluable cultural heritage of Yakthung Limbu.

Categorising the *palam* songs into four types, the author furnishes the same number of love affairs the Limbu youths go through. They manage to sing *palam* as per their contexts, intents and objectives. The *palam* resembles tongues of locality, sounds of nature -- chirpings of birds, hissing of rivers and breezes. Once in the past, the practice of *ya?lang* and *palam* was the cultural backbone of eastern part of Nepal. Singing *palam* and dancing *ya?lang* represent as living performing art and culture of Yakthung Limbu people. They are invaluable cultural heritages and function as a sense of propriety, decorum, and a source cordiality, joy and recreation. They are not only helpful to preserve *palam* and *ya?lang* but also invaluable culture, tradition, language and literature of Yakthung Limbu community.

The essence of folksongs and folkdances are found distorted and misused today due to lack of understanding of cultural norms and values, and the same thing is applicable even in *ya?lang* and *palam*. Nowadays, such folklores and folksongs including *palam* and *ya?lang* are sustaining under the challenges of loss of traditional values, foreign influences, change of culture, modernity, placelessness, environmental threats, lacking interest of the new generation as well as internal and external cultural and linguistic encroachments. Thus, compilation, creation and documentation of such folklores, folk literatures and folk cultures are essential.

Notes

¹ Male youth:

(You and I) do not yarn a thread ball
 We do not have blood relation at all
 As youth bloomed, thus so happened
 Logs load and stone load we do fetch
 Female and male youth we do match
 White flower so much, how's it thus
 Hembari muffler we do wear on
 The youths of our life matches to us
 Let's pray to the fading up gold flower
 Let's sing the song of new lover.

² Female youth

The Semukti stone, you loving dear
 The green weeds, one-to-one gossips
 The water in well, I want to pour
 On above the head top, I want to put
 (You and I) do not yarn a thread ball
 We do not have blood relation at all
 Whatever third-part, ensues now what
 Thatched Penbenlung, heart is rending
 Let's say a soil to the sky and earth
 Let's sing the song of new lover.

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