

Original Article

Mangsuk as Indigenous Knowledge Heritage in Yamphu Community: An Estranged Transformative Learning Space

Indra Mani Rai*

Tribhuvan University, Central Department of Education, Kirtipur, Nepal

Email: indrayamphuny@gmail.com

and

Prabin Rai

Email: yamphu83@gmail.com

 [0000-0002-0848-3735](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0848-3735), and  [0000-0001-8946-7579](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8946-7579)

Abstract

Based on a critical ethnographic research tradition, this paper explores how Mangsuk as an indigenous institution represents a space for cultural-self and relational knowing in the Yamphu indigenous community of Ambote village of Ilam district of eastern Nepal. The paper explores the beliefs, worldviews, and practices of Mangsuk that pass on to adults and children in the community. The paper argues that Mangsuk, as a cultural institution, shapes the emotions, sense of self, particular beliefs, and behaviors among the community people. It further highlights the Mundhum (an oral tradition) associated with the Mangsuk ritual to transfer Yamphu indigenous knowledge, communal values, beliefs, emotionality, spirituality, and worldviews among the kins in the community. Furthermore, the paper portrays how modern education has been sidelining the indigenous ways of transformative learning (cultural self-knowing and relational knowing), resulting in the relegation of indigenous knowledge heritage.

Keywords: *Mangsuk. Mundhum. Transformative Learning. Cultural self-Knowing. Relational Knowing. Beliefs and Worldviews.*

*Corresponding Author.

ISSN: 2717-5081 (Print); 2738-9529 (Online)

Journal Webpages:

1. <http://www.kusoed.edu.np/journal/index.php/jtp>

2. <https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/jrtp/>



© The Authors, 2021.

Introduction

Indigenous knowledge represents a body of local values, beliefs, ideas, worldviews, and lived/experiences generated through the primitive contact with the life-worlds of indigenous people. It keeps on passing from generation to generation. It is believed to be contextual, holistic, collective, and diachronic (Toledo, 1999). It is embedded in the local culture. It includes spiritual beliefs with natural resources such as flora and fauna, species of animals and birds, water, and other non-living elements in the environment. However, this body of knowledge is under subjugation in the modern education system due to the dominance of imported knowledge. Particularly in Nepal, the post-1951 educational development heralded the new modern education giving preference to the imported knowledge and pedagogies which were guided by ‘powerful Western modern worldview,’ sprouted with the foundational ideas of Rene Descartes and Sir Isaac Newton and then enlightenment or age of reason, of material reality, universality, uniformity, objectivity, and value-neutral facts’ (Luitel & Taylor, 2019, pp. 4-5). The rigid and structured modern education in Nepal has recognized less the indigenous spirituality, emotionality, values, and, in a broader sense, the material and non-material culture representing indigenous knowledge. The modern education that embodies the notion of modernism has been devaluing, ignoring, and marginalizing the body of indigenous knowledge (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999).

The uniform and homogeneous nature of education, with an emphasis on equipping students with specific knowledge and skills that fulfill the bureaucratic and modern developmental needs, contributes to vanquishing the traditional knowledge of diversified indigenous groups¹ in Nepal. Yamphu², as a sub-category of the Kirat indigenous group, is one of the indigenous/ethnic communities of eastern hills and mountain areas of Nepal (Rai, 2012), having its own culture, language, rituals, customs, cultural practices, and indigenous knowledge systems. Mangsuk that symbolizes *Mang* (God) is a significant ritual that falls in March and April and represents Yamphu's indigenous knowledge heritage. It, as a traditional institution, serves as a cultural learning space for the community members. The Yamphus believe in Mangsuk as a protector, provider, and preserver of prosperity, peace, happiness, health, wealth, good fortunes, wisdom, and knowledge. They worship Mangsuk communicating with the dead ancestors through the *Mundhum*³ by offering new crops, food items, and sacred plants. The knowledge, beliefs, and worldviews attached to Mangsuk facilitate shaping their way of life (Yamphu, 2018). Thus, Mangsuk has a transformative role in shaping the sense of self or perspective of being and behaving as Yamphu. The *Mangba*⁴, *Mangbuhang*⁵ and *Yadangba*⁶ (knowledgeable people) in the community pass on the

¹ There are 126 caste/ethnic groups speaking 123 different languages (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2012)

² Yamphu as Tibeto-Burman speaking groups practice a particular spiritual journey (Gaenszle, 2000). The census report shows that the total Yamphu population and Yamphu language speakers are 6933 and 9208 respectively (CBS, 2012). Further, Nepal Gadget (2017) has recorded Yamphu as a minority community in terms of a separate lingual group occupying only 0.03 % of the total population of the nation. Furthermore, Yamphu are migrating in many urban cities and foreign countries to seek a better life shifting their livelihood strategies which has compelled them to be disconnected with their culture and language (Rai, 2012).

³ Oral tradition of knowledge, a corpus of sacred texts that encodes basic cultural themes, ancestral values, and overall philosophy/worldviews of Kirat community of Nepal (Yamphu, 2014). *Mundhum* Has many synonyms like *Mindum* or *Pellam* in Yamphu (Yamphu, 2014), *Riddumin* Kulung (Nicoletti 2006), *Muddumin* Mewahang (Gaenszle 2000), *Mundhum* in Limbu (Chemjong, 2003), *Mundum* or *Pe-lam* in Lohorung (Hardman, 2000), *Dilumain* Thulung (Allen, 2012), and *Mutumun* Yakkha (Russell, 1997). However, we prefer to use the term *Mundhum* in this paper as pronounced in the study area.

⁴ Ritual priest or Shaman associated with treatment and healing.

⁵ Ritual priest or Shaman associated with ritual or everyday cultural function.

⁶ Expert of *Mundhum* or guide for other Shaman or ritual priests of the community.

knowledge of the *Mundhum* (a tale of knowledge) to newer generations. This indigenous ontological tradition is alien in the modern education of Nepal; instead, the education detaches the students from such a native knowledge and ways of knowing.

The Yamphu *Mundhum* and Mangsuk ritual represent the indigenous epistemology and embeds the mega fiction of struggle between life and the universe that is being transferred from generation to generation. This represents the mega description of human life's voyage in the primitive era to set a human civilization (Smriti, 2018). However, this body of indigenous knowledge has not been reflected in the education system of Nepal. In this context, the purpose of this paper is to explore how Mangsuk as a ritual ceremony and a cultural institution serves as a transformative learning space for the Yamphu community. The article delves into the perspectives and practices of the Yamphu people on Mangsuk. It argues that the living and life patterns of the Yamphu community are shaped by the beliefs and worldviews constructed through communication with the powerful spirits of the ancestors through Mangsuk. Furthermore, the paper highlights that Mangsuk facilitates Yamphu people to conceptualize themselves, inculcating the sense of self, emotions, and beliefs shaping their practices in day-to-day life through cultural self-learning. They learn to be cohesive and harmonious community members adopting particular community values and culture through Mangsuk. In addition, the paper, in general, contends that modern education has become a means to hijack indigenous transformative learning space that is paramount for shaping their valuing, being, and doing.

Critical Ethnography

We used critical ethnography as a methodology for developing this paper, which allowed us to explore the suppressed voices of the Yamphu people concerning their indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing through the Mangsuk ritual. It helped us create an account of informal observation and the meaning that Yamphu participants constructed about the Mangsuk ritual. It also allowed us to raise the issues of subjugation of indigenous knowledge embedded in the Mangsuk cultural practices. We engaged in writing such injustices against them, amplifying their voices to raise emancipatory consciousness for them (Henn et al., 2010). In so doing, we attempted to make the research a vehicle for challenging the oppression of the indigenous beliefs, knowledge, and worldviews associated with Mangsuk and giving voice to the oppressed Yamphu. In this sense, we advocated for changing educational structures to give way for more equitable, fair, and inclusive educational practices (Taylor & Medina, 2011). The research was an attempt to unpack the Yamphu cultural subjugation and hegemony in learning created by the Western Modern Worldview.

In so doing, we engaged in the field, *Ambote*- a village of Ilam district in Eastern Nepal, a homogeneously settled Yamphu community as a culturally bounded context (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) for about six months. Around 80 Yamphu households with different lineage groups or subcategories of Yamphu, such as *Chankha*, *Seppa*, *Gessa*, *Bauu*, *Michereng*, and *Angburang*. We tried to understand how the indigenous knowledge, beliefs, and worldviews are associated with the traditional institution, Mangsuk, and cultural self-learning. We interacted with the participants through informal interviews in their natural contexts involving as careful listeners to explore their cultural experiences (Collins & Gallinat, 2010) of learning practices through Mangsuk institution. In so doing, we delved into the myths and ritual practices based on their memories as their cultural perspectives. Ethnographic engagement allowed us to sense how Mangsuk serves as a transformative learning space, thereby passing on the indigenous values to the newer generations. Besides, this specific form of research enabled us to learn in the Yamphu community how they learn *Mangsuk* and *Mundhum*, which shape the ways of living and lifestyles of the Yamphus.

It was easier for us to maintain relationships, trust, rapport, and meaningful interactions with the research participants as we were the insider researchers-members from the same community, Yamphu (Rai, 2020). In the process, we interviewed *Mangbuhang*, *Mangba*, *Yadangba*, or *Pellamdangba* (Shamans), and other household members. The main research participants were Badum, Chandra, and Dummi, as they were well-known knowledgeable community members. Similarly, Prakash and Sagar were other research participants as they had experiences of being the priest's assistants. Besides, we interviewed many other Yamphu members as per our curiosity and their time availability. Moreover, we deeply observed their beliefs, values, socially constructed behaviors, and the meaning they attached (Forsey, 2010) to the Mangsuk ritual. We focused on generating a detailed description of communal cultural learning practices through Mangsuk.

We maintained field notes and developed memos of the field interviews and observations, descriptive, reflective, and analytic (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). Also, we maintained recordings and photographs of the field engagement activities, which supported us in recalling our memories while writing the paper. We read and re-read the memos and listened to the recordings repeatedly to make a more profound and holistic understanding of the Mangsuk ritual. Further, we displayed the data in the form of transcription, frequently visiting the recordings, and detailed the observational account recalling our memories from photographs and recordings. We crafted and recrafted the ethnographic account, maintaining the patterns of narratives, textual coherence, and sequences of meaningful utterances (Blommaert & Jie, 2010).

In addition, even being insider researchers, the insider or outsider positioning appeared emergently contextual as we were members of the community going to research from the university (Rai, 2020). The positionalities enabled us to unpack our critical reflective views, which supported enriching the analysis of the phenomena of Mangsuk. It was an emergent process as the ethnographic data and meaning guided us to explore the further meaning of the Mangsuk culture (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This was because we continuously became reflexive on our Mangsuk cultural practices visualizing from the perspective of transformative learning. We "reflected consciously and critically upon our false consciousness" (Luitel, 2009, p. 53). In so doing, we expressed our critical awareness by looking through personal reflexive views.

Transformation via Mythology of Mangsuk

The days were of October 2018; we were in the field, Ambote village. The Yamphu members looked busy in their household chores. Many youths were not at home as they had gone overseas for employment. We mostly came across only the children moving towards home and school nearby the village. We often had informal conversations with those children and parents at home. We tried to visit elderly members who were information-rich concerning the Mangsuk ritual. One day, Prakash, a community school teacher, took us to Badum's home. Badum (aged 82) had a long experience of engaging in the Mangsuk ritual as *Figuhang*⁷. We visited him to explore the understanding of Mangsuk and its practices. When we asked him to explain the myths of Mangsuk, he initially frowned and took a deep breath and then briefed that "Mangsuk is the story of very early ages of human civilization." He believed that it started with hunting and gathering culture. He paused speaking, and Sagar immediately added briefly, "A Yamphu ancestor started Mangsuk." Then, again, Badum elaborated his beliefs about how it came into practice in the Yamphu community.

⁷ Assistant of *Mangbuhang* (Yamphu priest), a ritual priest.

Once upon a time, there was a perfect hunter and traveler who used to travel along mountains and Himalayas seeking animals, birds, yams, and other edible flora and fauna. Once he was returning, carrying a hunted deer on his back and passing many rivers, hills, and mountains. Despite those beautiful places, he was not happy, bird songs, flying colorful butterflies, and blooming wildflowers. The reason for his sadness was nothing but his loneliness. And he thought to test whether he was alone or somebody else was also there in the world. So he lay down on the main route (road) carrying a deer's leg/thigh. And he acted like the dead. After a few days, a bad smell came from the decayed leg of the deer. However, people nearby guessed that he was dead. So, they did not dare to go. He had a sister who was very far from him, separated for a long time in their childhood. After a couple of days, his sister heard that her brother was found dead. So, after traveling a long way, she reached there. She was in agony. With tearful eyes, she started going around the body, spreading holy wine/water from Ringma⁸. However, she did not notice that he was just mocking and testing whether he was alone or not. So, suddenly, he woke up and bowed before his sister. His sister was shocked, and they became very happy to be together after a long time. Then, they promised to be together forever. Mangsuk symbolizes these brothers and sisters as ancestors.

The brother and sister could continue the generation as they decided to be together like the loved ones. Was it that era after the kinship and blood relationship started? Possibly, human civilization began with the physical intercourse between the brother and sister of the same blood relations (Angles, 1986, as cited in Chamling, 2015). Nevertheless, this myth sheds light on the evolution of the Mangsuk ritual with initial settings, circumstances, and evidence of the life struggle of the Yamphu ancestors from the period of hunting and gathering. The mythology of Mangsuk has supported the construction of particular beliefs of respecting ancestors and elders in the community. Further, it has helped in transmitting the kinship values of love, dedication, respect, sympathy, responsiveness, patience, and bonding between brother and sister.

Yamphu members believe in this common ancestry, which has contributed to binding the members together with a sense of togetherness and belonging, promoting harmony and cohesion in the community. The myth (as above) on the origination of the Mangsuk ritual informs that worshipping Mangsuk is not just getting blessed from the spirits of ancestors and recalling the relationships of the Yamphu ancestors with the animals and other natural beings. The beliefs on ancestral spirits are also in other categories of Kirat groups. For example, Nicoletti (2006) deals with an important periodic ritual in the domestic world of Kulunge Rai called *Dedam Mayam* ceremony (honoring the clan's founding father deities). According to him, it represents the memory of primordial hunting culture developed by the ancestors. In Yamphu community, the *Mangbuhang*, *Mangba*, *Yadangbaor* *Pellamdangba* (priests) communicate between the living Yamphu and the ancestors' spirits by worshipping Mangsuk, which helps them to think, remember and organize their cultural practices with the natural elements.

Practices of Mangsuk and Learning

The days were in September 2018. We observed the learning of the community members through the practices of Mangsuk. As per divine guidance in his dream, Chandra, aged 69, claimed himself as a self-emerged priest (BhuiphuttaYadangba), and invited us in the evening

⁸ Bottle gourd, *Chindo* in Nepali: Uses in ritual and cultural practices of Yamphus and other Kirat communities.

to his regular Mangsuk ceremony of the year. Chandra himself was going to worship Mangsuk. There were many invitees such as close relatives of the same clan group, including Rudranimba as *Budhauri*⁹. Chandra had one assistant, *Figuhang*, for preparing the Mangsuk shrine. Chandra and Rudranimba, as knowledgeable elders, discussed and instructed *Figuhang* to construct the Mangsuk shrine. *Figuhang* constructed a triangular-shaped Mangsukshrine at one of the inside corners of the home decorating with sacred plants and feathers



of cock and hen. This was essentially instructed learning where *Figuhang* was, probably, internalizing the instruction through self-regulating the functions (Tomasello et al., 1993). The Yamphu ancestors began to sacrifice a cock and hen on that particular day of Mangsuk in the name of an ancient brother and sister, respectively. The cock symbolized brother hunter, and the hen signified his sister. Most notably, the cock was tied on the right side and the hen on the left side of the Mangsuk shrine before sacrificing in the name of those ancestors.

Figuhang installed eight *Chirikmuk*¹⁰ and put *Ringma*¹¹ and *Chengthaa*¹² on the banana leaves. He put a little uncooked rice and a few pieces of ginger in eight *Duna*¹³ and placed near each *Chirikmuk* installed. There was a set of *Thukla/Sigi*¹⁴. *Figuhang* discussed with Chandra and continued his tasks of preparing Mangsuk. Other members were carefully observing and listening to the conversation between Chandra and *Figuhang*. *Figuhang* decorated the Mangsuk shrine with other sacred plants such as *Nufabu-faawa*¹⁵, *Waimuk*¹⁶, *Surubhak*¹⁷, and *Chanakfapwaa*¹⁸. Through these informal discussions, interactions, and observation, the clan group members were learning the practices of Mangsuk. Possibly, the un/intentional and informal learning facilitated them to transform themselves to look at their being and acting as Yamphu.

We observed that the main hearth at the center was full of firewood burning with pungent smoke smells. The family members were busy greeting the invitees and making homemade liquor. They frequently asked Rudranimba and Chandra to clarify the rules and values confusing to them. This was how the indigenous knowledge, beliefs, and worldviews were passed on to other community members. Chandra, initially, joined his hands before the Mangsuk shrine and started chanting the *Mundhum*. He greeted Rudranimba as, a *Budhauri* (a

⁹ Knowledgeable person, *Mundhum* expert of the community.

¹⁰ *Bilaune* (in Nepali), a sacred plant

¹¹ Bottle gourd.

¹² *Tongba* (in Nepali), small cylindrical vessel filled with *Jaad* (fermented millet for local beer)

¹³ Small plates made by knitting banana leaves

¹⁴ Arrow and bow

¹⁵ Leaves of a typical bamboo species, considered as sacred plants for Yamphu

¹⁶ *Syauli* (in Nepali)- a sacred tree leaves

¹⁷ Broom grass

¹⁸ Wild banana leaves

respectful elder), and all other elders there. This was the way of seeking permission to start Mangsuk worshipping from the respected elders of the clan group. We tried to understand the recitation of the Mundhum pronounced by Chandra, but it was difficult to understand. We recorded what he chanted in the whole process and transcribed it. We drew a synopsis of what he chanted as follows.

I am greeting you for pardoning us if any mistakes we have made. Today, I am welcoming you (Mangsuk) after gathering four Kutumba (people from different clan groups who can marry with the daughters and sisters of the group) and five Pancha (people who resolve the disputes and conflict in the community), and an old knowledgeable person. Please, release us from the deities that trouble us. I am worshiping, respecting, and dedicating to you from this Waimukkhim (synonym of Mangsuk). Dear Waimuk-King and Waimak-queen (ancestors-brother hunter and his sister), please, bless them who are absent here in this ceremony. This could be their compulsion, so please, be kind to them. Please, bless us so that we could be healthy, wealthy, and wise.

After that, the chanting of Mundhum starts explaining the Himalayas, from the origin of ancestors, ponds, rivers, sacred things, wines, and recounting edible and nonedible flora and fauna. Chandra invited all the ancestors at home and offered them all sacred things. We noticed that he recited the Mundhum for around half an hour. All the members invited and other family members were carefully listening to the Mundhum recitation by Chandra. It was buzzing all over the house, especially at the sacred corner of Mangsuk.

Furthermore, we observed that some invited guests arrived and Chandra's wife welcomed them with a big smile and then accepted their *Huksok*¹⁹. On the other side, other household members and youngsters were preparing food and drink items such as homemade brew, *Jaad*. In this way, the starting session of Mangsuk was completed. *Figuhang* was active at the intermission for sacrificing a cock and a hen. With the support of other members, he flamed those sacrificed hens and cocked in the holy hearth so we could smell fried feathers.

They kept those fired feathers for *Wachinak*²⁰. They chopped both hen and cock, keeping the whole part of the head, wings, and legs. After that, they boiled them in a big pot. After all, they put those cooked items on the banana leaves as per the instructions of Chandra and Rudranimba. They also kept some cooked rice, some holy wines, *Wachinak*, and some other meat pieces. It was the time for offering the cooked food and drink items to the ancestors. Chandra instructed *Figuhang* to put a few of the food and drink items separately for offering to other ghosts and devils. The intermission began with the recitation of the Mundhum for around half an hour. We transcribed and translated the main essence of that recitation as below.



¹⁹ Sacred gift, similar to *Koseli* in Nepali language.

²⁰ Kirat food items made by fired feathers, testiness, and other minor parts of hen or cock.

We are greeting you with boiled meat of a cock and a hen. We are worshipping you with new crops, holy wine, and sacred bottle gourd. Hey! Snake gods/goddesses, we started hunting from the Himalayas with our dogs (Sanglingkhima and Chaiknummaa). In doing so, we crossed many rivers, jungles, lands, hills, and plains, so many ups and downs, and finally, we made it. We are thankful for your support during hunting. Please, come and accept our offerings. Heading from the Lajiden (palace of heaven), you might have faced many obstacles. You might have faced troubles while crossing the rivers. So, we respect your way of coming. We offer you this water for your thirsty mouth, and please wash your hands and join us in this ceremony, and it is all yours. Please take them and make our ritual pure and meaningful.

It was about 10 pm, and the ritual was half done. Rudranimba, Chandra, and other elder members offered water, wine, and food items in the holy hearth. The hearth is another cultural institution of the Yamphu community. The three stones of the main heart are called *Khowalung*, *Makwalung*, and *Fiwalung*. *Khowalung* represents the space and place of Yamphu or Kirat evolution. *Makwalung* represents the Makalu Mountain, which is the place of death spirits and bad spirits. *Fiwalung* represents the daughters, sisters, and other female members who may or may not be at home (Yamphu, 2018). Gaenzle (2000) crafts an account of the ancestral migratory roots of Mewahang, similar to that of the Yamphu ancestors who migrated along the path of Arun river originating from *Khowalung*, plain South to North. Thulung Rai also has similar beliefs that they emerged from a primal lake represented by three hearthstones (Allen, 2012). It was around 10:30 pm, the concluding part of the ritual was going on. All food and drink items were already ready. Everybody looked satisfied and happy. However, there was still the last episode. Youngsters were interacting and collecting those sacred things and were asking elders if there was any confusion. As soon as they completed the setting of the previous session of Mangsuk, Chandra began humming the Mundhum. The central theme of that ending Mundhum was as below.



Dear all ancestors, today, from this home, we, all the members, are going to invoke your blessings. We offered all these things, please, listen to us, accept our greetings. Hey, home god and goddess, dear Arrow-King and Queen, please protect us from evil energies and guide us to be and do good. Please, release us from the trouble of ghosts. Bless us for a better future, wisdom, good health, abundance of wealth, and energy to work. Hey, all the great ones, please own all land, livestock, and bring productivity for us as we are your upbringing. We are proud of you as you have protected, taught, and nurtured us. We are delighted to see you all on this holy day. We are offering this holy wine, sacred things; please taste it, drink it, and bless us. Dear all great ones, please don't be sad if we make any faults or mistakes as we are just humans. So don't mind. Let's drink, eat, and depart by keeping the promise. Please, bless all of us. Greetings, greetings, and greetings.

This was the end of the Mangsuk ceremony. The invitees were offered holy wine, local brews, boiled meat, and other food items. They were conversing with each other in their closest circle. As soon as collective eating and drinking were over, all guests returned to their homes. At the end, we realized that the Mangsuk supports the indoctrination of the Yamphu communal values, knowledge, beliefs, and worldviews among the community members. We understand

that the Mangsuk as indigenous knowledge heritage in the Yamphu community roots and emerges through ancestors' historical intactness with Nature. The Mundhum, through which the Yamphus communicate with ancestral souls like spiritual beings (unseen spiritual power), passes on a sense of self to other adults and children. They shape their ways of living and life based on the beliefs attached to their ancestors. They develop their emotions, social norms and values, ethics, actions/activities, and their social and cultural behavior as the beliefs they possess created by their ancestors. In this regard, Mangsuk and associated Mundhum connect spirituality, history, ecology, indigenous knowledge system, and so on. It gives moral education, ethics, ecological knowledge, and self-esteem practices, which are very useful for behavior and cognitive development (Chemjong, 2003). Mangsuk helps to learn the values of ecological elements, the life cycles of plants and seasons, thereby respecting primordial livelihoods depending on Nature and natural beings.

Mangsuk in the Yamphu community provides a sense of membership or affiliation in the group as it represents the interpretation of common ancestry. It represents the subjective construction of Yamphu as members of a primordial ancestor, having created a sense of ownership and sentiment of belonging in the group. Moreover, Mangsuk supports learning via communal collaboration and social harmony among a particular clan group members within Yamphu. The subjective perceptions of Yamphu members are shaped based on some objective characteristics such as physical living and non-living things, presumed ancestry, and culture. A traditional institution provides ethnic consciousness of one's own and other groups' attitudes or feelings about one's own and other groups (Guneratne, 2002). Further, Mangsuk gives the sense of the same cultural origin of Yamphu with continuing lineage and cultural ties. Thus, the Mangsuk ceremony was a learning platform where the members of the clan group reflect on and learn from each other's experiences.

Mangsuk as Alienated Transformative Learning Space

We learned that the Mangsuk is one particular ritual in Yamphu through which the spirits of powerful ancestors and living members are connected through the recitation of the Mundhum. Mangsuk serves as a transformative learning institution where the community members learn communal values, ethics, beliefs, and worldviews attached in the Mundhum. The Mundhum explains The history of unknown ages, their ancestors' origin and migratory routes, and represents their cultural roots embedded with the land territories, institutes, do's, and don'ts (Yamphu, 2014). These specific community laws and rules come from the Mundhumas, a root of indigenous beliefs that shape and guide the Yamphu community's lives. The worldviews that Yamphu members hold and pass on to newer generations are the products of over several centuries of experiences accumulated in their ancestors' everyday life. The beliefs shaped by the Mungsuk institution in the Yamphu community characterize their cultural lives in their living contexts. They have such an indigenous cosmos regulating their contextual activities/actions and developing a sense of seeing selves and others. The Mundhum in oral traditions as epistemology that pass on to the community members through Mangsuk practices represent their indigeneity and signify their cultural identity.

We realized that Mangsuk represents the ancestors as supernatural beings: the protector, source of wisdom, and guardian for fulfilling every need and wish in a Yamphu household. For example, Dummi, of age 72, was another participant, who shared his beliefs attached to Mangsuk, *'If Mangsuk does not take care of us, we may lose our wisdom, children may fall sick. Mangsuk protects us from being injured and fallen under sickness; that's why we have to recall it when we are in adversities. It gives us a way of life.'* Yamphu members believe that ancestors may control various aspects of the cosmos and explain causality, including accidents, sicknesses, death, and other incomprehensible phenomena. The beliefs pass on to new

generations. The Mungsuk representing the spirits of powerful ancestors facilitates shaping their beliefs, worldviews, and behavior (Hoggan, 2016a) in their indigenous context of living. The ritual inculcates the sense of self and articulations of emotions, illustrating the values and codes of social behavior. The social norms and values associated with their belief systems shape the life pattern and culture (Onosu, 2020).

Possibly, the engagement in Mangsuk activities of clan group members, family members, and children of the Yamphu community triggers transformative learning. They develop interpretation and meaning of experience due to a shift in perspective (Mezirow, 2000). They can be involved in a transformative learning process that leads them to change in ways of thinking and acting (Damianakis et al., 2019). The Mangsuk ritual enables them to change assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations. It helped them to experience a shift in their sense of self. These changes include self-relation, identity, and self-knowledge (Hoggan, 2016b). This is the way of knowing Yamphu members' worlds, shifting their views to look at who they are and how they become Yamphu. The Mangsuk enables them to construct the meaning of the indigeneity, assessing themselves as the members of a particular ancestor. It shapes their mental, emotional, and physical existence in the world. They develop a behavior of acting with Nature in relation to Mangsuk. They learn appropriate behavior of developing social actions, actions that are consistent with the perspectives developed by the Mangsuk beliefs. Mangsuk shapes their ways of seeing, interpreting, and acting in the world. The spirituality that is attached to Mangsuk shapes their cognitive development and consciousness of being Yamphu.

Besides, Mangsuk supports participatory and experiential learning of social values of maintaining cohesion and harmony among the community members. The learners enhance their knowledge, skills, and abilities through an interactive and experiential basis involving themselves in the indigenous learning processes. This is 'relational knowing' as a transformative learning practice in the process of celebrating Mangsuk that enables adults and children to connect with their local community and the natural world (Taylor, 2015). These are crucial learning practices in the Yamphu community that empower them to realize their indigenous knowledge, beliefs, and worldviews. They reflect on their worldviews and experiences gained through their day-to-day engagement in their socio-cultural worlds. They connect the shared ideas of their families and communities.

Mangsuk enables them to develop their perspectives or views with the help of beliefs, values, and assumptions acquired from life experiences (Mezirow, 2000). The Mangsuk activities are culturally specific social practices that mediate making meaning of the experiences and learning. Thus, the Mangsuk practices in the Yamphu community serve as a transformative learning practice through which the community people realize their own beliefs and worldviews. This 'cultural self-knowing' helps them understand their culturally situated selves and worldviews that shape their behaviors, especially how and why they make (habituated) sense of their socio-cultural worlds (Taylor, 2015). However, modern education unused and devalued this body of indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999).

Nepal's education system has alienated the indigenous contextual knowledge and ways of knowing embedded in the Mangsukritual practices. This is possibly due to the rigid and structured curricula of modern schools and universities that focus on producing human resources to fulfil the bureaucratic and modern development needs. The centrally designed curricula based on a few experts' ideas could not value the indigenous knowledge heritage of Mangsuk. The indigenous knowledge is subjugated due to standard curricular practices guided by the imported ideas from the West (Rai, 2018). The teacher-centered pedagogies could not value these native ways of learning communal values, empathy, aesthetics, and spirituality embedded with the Nature and spirits of ancestors. Rather, modern education has promoted

ways of learning by transmitting the bookish content, mainly the Western knowledge guided by modern Western worldviews of objectivity, universality, and material reality (Luitel & Taylor, 2019). Modern educational institutions promote decontextualized teaching-learning activities, thereby compelling students to learn meaningless abstract concepts and ideas through rote memorization and passive listening (Luitel, 2009). In particular, the Yamphu community students might be experiencing similar phenomena as the schools have detached them from their Mangsuk cultural knowledge, beliefs, and worldviews. They might have been exposed less in their indigenous contexts, such as in Mangsuk practices, so that they could learn their own culture and worldviews.

Concluding Remarks

The traditional indigenous institution that serves as a transformative learning space is alienated by the standard modern education system. Knowing the cosmovision that represents indigenous knowledge, beliefs, and worldviews promotes knowing the self, thereby furthering the learning of other ideas. The marginalization and subjugation of indigenous knowledge by modern education have side-lined the cultural self-knowing or the knowledge of culturally situated selves. The devaluation of the learning of the self's emotionality shared values, spirituality, beliefs, and ideals hinder the promotion of the self's transformation. In addition, unlike that of mainstreaming modern education, traditional indigenous institutions stress encouraging relational knowing. These are indigenous ways of transformative learning to develop connectivity of the self and other community members and the natural worlds. Modern education has estranged these practices of transformation in indigenous worlds with the relegation of indigenous knowledge heritage. Thus, it is crucial to adopt indigenous contextual knowledge and ways of knowing to promote meaningful learning. The natives' cultural ways of learning endorse justice to the indigenous peoples.

Funding

We have not received any funding for doing this research.

List of References

- Allen, N. J. (2012). *Miyapma: Traditional narratives of Thulung Rai*. Vajra Publication.
- Blommaert, J., & Jie, D. (2010). *Ethnographic fieldwork: A beginner's guide*. Multilingual Matters.
- Central Bureau of Statistics. (2012). *National population and housing census 2011: National report*. CBS.
- Chamling, B. (2015). *Mundum: The myth or origin*. Kirat Rai Chamling Khambatim.
- Chemjong, I. S. (2003). *History and culture of Kirat people*. Kirat Yakthum Chumlung.
- Collins, P., & Gallinat, A. (2010). The ethnographic self as resource: An introduction. In P. Collins & A. Gallinat (Eds.), *The ethnographic self as resource: Writing memory and experience into ethnography* (pp.1-24). Berghahn Books.
- Damianakis, T., Barrett, B., Archer-Kuhn, B., Samson, P., Martin, S., & Ahern, C. (2019). Teaching for transformation: Master of social work students identify teaching approaches that made a difference. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344619865948>
- Forsey, M. G. (2010). Ethnography as participant listening. *Ethnography*, 11(4), 558 - 572.
- Gaenszle, M. (2000). *Origins and migrations: Kinship, mythology and ethnic identity among Mewahang Rai of East Nepal*. Mandala Book Point and The Mountain Institute.

- Guneratne, A. (2002). *Many tongues, one people: The making of Tharu identity in Nepal*. Cornell University Press.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Hardman, C. E. (2000). *Other worlds: Notions of self and emotion among the Lohorung Rai*. Berg Publishers.
- Henn, M., Weinstein, M., & Foard, N. (2010). *A critical introduction to social research* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Hoggan, C. D. (2016a). Transformative learning as a metatheory: Definition, criteria, and typology. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 66, 57–75.
- Hoggan, C. D. (2016b). A typology of transformation: Reviewing the transformative learning literature. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 48, 65–82.
- Luitel B. C., & Taylor, P. C. (2019). Introduction: Research as transformative learning for sustainable future. In P. C. Taylor & B. C. Luitel (Eds.), *Research as transformative learning for sustainable futures: Global voices and visions* (pp. 1-16). Brill Sense.
- Luitel, B. C. (2009). *Culture, worldview, and transformative philosophy of mathematics education in Nepal: A cultural philosophical inquiry* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Curtin.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an adult. In J. Mezirow & Associates (Eds.), *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (pp. 3-33). Jossey-Bass.
- Nicoletti, M. (2006). *The ancestral forest: Memory, space and ritual among the Kulunge Rai of Eastern Nepal*. Vajra Publications and Ev-K2-CNR Publications.
- Onosu, O. G. (2020). Cultural immersion: A trigger for transformative learning. *Social Sciences*, 9(20), 1-12.
- Rai, I. M. (2012). *Changing livelihood of Yamphus with shifting identity* [Unpublished M Phil dissertation]. Kathmandu University.
- Rai, I. M. (2018). *Identity paradoxes of Kirat migrants in urban context: An auto/ethnographic inquiry* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Kathmandu University.
- Rai, I. M. (2020). Emergent positioning in insider ethnographic field: Deconstructing the ideological frame of insider or outsider or both. *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 14, 46-52.
- Russell, A. (1997). Identity management and cultural change: The Yakkha of east Nepal. In D. N. Gellner, J. Pfaff-Czarnecka, & J. Whelpton (Eds.), *Nationalism and ethnicity in Hindu Kingdom: The politics of culture in contemporary Nepal* (pp. 325-350). Harwood Academic Publishers.
- Semali, S. M., & Kincheloe, J. L. (1999). Introduction: What is indigenous knowledge and why should we study it? In L. M. Semali & J. L. Kincheloe (Eds.), *What is indigenous knowledge? Voices from the academy* (pp. 3-58). Falmer Press.
- Smriti, S. (2018). Mundhummanthan [Brainstorming Mundhum]. *Annapurna Post*. <http://annapurnapost.com/news/98978>
- Taylor, P. C. (2015). Transformative science education. In R. Gunstone (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of science education* (pp. 1079-1082). Springer.
- Taylor, P. C., & Medina, M. (2011). Educational research paradigms: From positivism to pluralism. *College Research Journal*, 1(1), 1-16.
- Toledo, V. M. (1999). Indigenous peoples and biodiversity. In S. Levin (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of biodiversity* (pp. 1-23). Academic Press.
- Tomasella, M., Kruger, A. C., & Ratner, H. H. (1993). Cultural learning. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 16, 495-552.

- Yamphu, H. P. (2014). *Mindum: Account of Yamphu origin and indigeneity* [Unpublished MPhil dissertation]. Tribhuvan University.
- Yamphu, H. P. (2018). *Thaaarung: Yamphu chulo* [The Yamphuhearth]. In T. M. Rai & B. R. Chamling (Eds.), *Kiratrasuptulung* [Kirat and hearth] (pp. 92-96). National foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities- NFDIN.

Suggested Citation:

Rai, I. M., & Rai, P. (2021). Mangsuk as Indigenous Knowledge heritage in Yamphu community: An estranged transformative learning space. *Journal of Transformative Praxis*, 2(1), 19-31. <https://doi.org/10.51474/jrtp.v2i1.521>