



Nepali Folklore Society

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नेपाली लोकवार्ता तथा संस्कृति समाज Nepali Folklore Society

The NFS Newsletter

Exploring the Gandharva Folklore and Folklife: At a Glance

Introduction

Under the Folklore and Folklife Study Project, we have completed the first 7 months of the first year. During this period, intensive research works have been conducted on two folk groups of Nepal: Gandharvas and Gopalis. In this connection, a brief report is presented here regarding the progress we have made as well as the achievements gained from the project in the attempt of exploring the folklore and folklife of the Gandharva community. The progress in the study of Gopalis will be disseminated in the next issue of Newsletter.

The topics that follow will highlight the progress and achievements of the study project.

Preparatory Works

The project office started the works right from the beginning of June 2005. In this month, the necessary preparatory works were completed including the purchase of tools and accessories (like memory cards, rewritable CDs, digital video cassettes, etc.), and the preparation of field sheets, questionnaires/schedules, etc.

Pre-Field Work

In the month of June itself, field researchers were appointed, and a preliminary survey of the field area was conducted. Prof. Dr. C.M. Bandhu had surveyed the Gandharva folk group residing in the villages adjacent to Pokhara sub-metropolitan city – like Batulechaur, Hemja, Badahare, and Tallo Gagan Gauda. From the survey, Prof. Bandhu found about 300 households of the folk group living in these villages; and he recommended that it would be feasible to conduct the field work in and around Batulechaur village, with a close cooperation of the members of Nepal Gandharva Community Development Centre (henceforward NGCDC) located in the village. He had mentioned the name of some important informants willing to help the field work at Batulechaur. He also suggested that the field researchers should try to find more knowledgeable, skilled and talented Gains (Gandharvas) from some other localities nearby.

In the first week of July 2005, the research group surveyed the necessary reference materials related to the Gandharvas and got the background information about this community. Besides, the project office conducted an orientation programme for the field researchers before their departure to the field area. In the orientation, they were provided with the necessary technical skills for handling the equipments (like digital camera, video camera and the sound recording device). They were also given the necessary guidelines regarding the data collection methods and procedures.

Field Work

The field researchers worked for data collection in and around Batulechaur village from the 2nd week of July to the 1st week of October 2005 (3 months altogether). The research team comprises 4 members: Prof. C.M. Bandhu (Team Coordinator, linguist), Mr. Kusumakar Neupane (folklorist), Ms. Meena Manandhar (sociologist), and Mr. Man Bahadur Sahu (anthropologist). Their work was divided into 4 main areas of folklore and folklife study, whereby Prof. Bandhu, Mr. Neupane, Ms. Manandhar and Mr. Sahu had collected the data in the areas of Folk Language and Folk Communication, Folk Literature and Performing Arts, Socio-Cultural Folklife and Folkways, and Material Folk Culture and Folk Heritage respectively.

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The field researchers used several tools for data collection including the digital tape recorder, digital photo camera, questionnaires, diaries, notebooks, etc. During the field work, they met Ganes (Gandharvas), talked with them, interviewed them, took the photos, and videoed the scenes related to the concerned areas of study. The researchers tried to be very close to the Gandharva community by participating in Gandharvas' daily life activities as far as possible. They tried their best to make the informants feel free in their presence. They participated together with the Gandharva people in singing, dancing, and even in their death ritual as *Malami* (the participant in the cremation procession). From such activities, they felt it easy to build up rapport with Gandharvas, which facilitated them a lot to collect the required information.



Hari Bahadur Gandharva, 44, making sarangi, Badahare

The project team leader Prof. Tulasi Diwasa and Cameraman Mr. Siddhartha K. Shakya had also visited the field area for monitoring and facilitating the works, and for video recording the relevant aspects of Gandharva folklore and folklife. Prof. Diwasa interviewed 10 key informants including a lady *Sarangi* player (the only woman playing this musical instrument found in the field area during research). On this occasion, he also inaugurated the *Karkha* (a form of traditional ballad found among Gandharvas) singing competition held on 24th September 2005. The field researchers had taken a lot of initiatives to make the event successful by encouraging the Gandharva people to organize that programme. It was the first event ever held in Nepal, which became a very important occasion for the researchers to collect several traditional *Karkha* ballad songs found among Gandharvas. The programme was organized in Pokhara by NGCDC in collaboration with Nepali Folklore Society. There were 21 individual and group participants in the competition altogether, who came not only from the different villages of Kaski but also from different places of Tanahun, Baglung, and Palpa districts. Mr. Lal Bahadur Gandharva and Govinda Gandharva were declared first prize winners in the competition, and Prof. Diwasa gave away prizes to the winners. On the occasion, 10 senior Gandharva singers were honoured for their contribution in the *Karkha* singing tradition.



Group Photograph on the occasion of Karkha competition



Mohan Bahadur Gandharva, 80, playing Arwajo, Arghaun

Problems during the Field Work

Despite the researchers' success in collecting the required information to a great extent, they have also faced some problems in the field work. In the beginning, some people of Gandharva community made a doubt in the researchers' activities. Some of them thought that there would be no point in helping the researchers, since there was no benefit for them in return. Some informants had even asked for money before giving assurance for helping the research team. However, this problem was overcome after appointing the Research Assistants from the local people on recommendation of NGCDC.

Although the local informants had expressed their commitment in helping the field work, the researchers could not get sufficient cooperation at Batulechaur due to the local people's busy work schedule. Moreover, probably due to their tendency to follow modernized life style and practices, many traditional forms of Gandharva life and culture were already disappeared from that village. Therefore, the researchers were compelled to go to the places like Hemja, Arghaun, Badahare, Lamachaur, and Gagan Gauda in order to collect the necessary information.

Post-Field Work

After completing the field work, the research team came back and submitted the detailed report to the project office. The project office has preserved all the information collected in the form of digital audio/video recordings and photographs. Now, the work of documenting the collected information is going on. The researchers are working to finalize the analysis and interpretation of data, which will be published later.

The researchers have also brought some representative items of Gandharva material culture and handed them over to the project office. These items include *Chakati* (small mat made of straw), *Sarangi* (a typical musical instrument like fiddle), *Arwajo* (a musical instrument having the strings played with fingers), *Perungo* (used for keeping chicken and small animals), *Sibring* (used to keep fish) *Tanglo* (a fishing rod), etc.

Collection and Achievements

The research team has audio recorded several oral texts from the field area with the total length of 29.36 hours. They have taken 469 photographs, and made video recording in altogether 12 cassettes (12 hours in length). Besides, the project office has also preserved the video recordings done by the project team leader Prof. Tulasi Diwasa and Siddhartha Shakya in 18 cassettes (18 hours in length).

Now, to be more specific, the project office has got the information related to the folklore and folklife of Gandharvas as described below. (The details are available in the project office.)

I. Folk Language and Folk Communication: Prof. Dr. C.M. Bandhu

Prof. Bandhu has taken altogether 44 photographs. He has audio recorded oral texts from different informants, with the total length of 6.16 hours. Besides this recording, he has spent about 330 hours with the informants in the field.



Lal Bahadur, 43, and Govinda Gandharva, 33, singing Karkha, Hemja

Prof. Bandhu conducted interviews with different informants, which cover a wide range of subject matter. It includes communication, oral history, riddles, poetry, folk tales, language, belief and practices, singing in the villages, curses and oaths, code language, local dialect, etc. From his collection, altogether 20 onomastics words, 3 prayers, 75 folk riddles, 75 proverbs and proverbial expressions, 200 special vocabulary items, 72 curses and taunts, 30 oaths, etc. have been collected.

II. Folk Literature and Performing Arts: Mr. Kusumakar Neupane

Mr. Neupane has taken altogether 140 photographs. He has also audio recorded different kinds of oral texts from the informants, with the total length of 18.46 hours. He has spent more than 345 hours with the informants in the field. The subject matter covered in his collection includes folksongs/ballads, religious songs, festival and ritual songs, personal memories, narratives, folk tales, etc. From his collection, altogether 3 interviews, 5 folk narratives, 5 myths, 3 folk tales, 5 personal memories, 4 personal biographies, 16 folk ballads, 47 folk songs, 14 religious songs, 14 seasonal/festival songs, 5 ritual songs, and 1 folk game have been collected. Besides, Mr. Neupane has also produced video recording of 9 hours in total.

III. Socio-Cultural Folklife and Folkways: Ms. Meena Manandhar

Ms. Manandhar has taken altogether 95 photographs; and she has audio recorded the oral text from different informants with the total length of 1.57 hours. Besides, she has spent more than 275 hours with the informants in the field. The coverage of subject matter in her collection includes several things related to the Gandharvas' social customs and manners. She has also collected numerical data from 48 households of different places. She has made altogether 8 participatory tours and observations, conducted 44 open and close interviews, and 2 group discussions. She has mainly collected the data related to food habits, women's participation in fishing, daily wages labour, schooling, women's speech, income source, rituals like marriage and death, gender issues, decision making procedures, family structure, religious beliefs, etc.

IV. Material Folk Culture and Folk Heritage: Mr. Man Bahadur Sahu

Mr. Sahu has taken altogether 190 photographs. He has audio recorded different kinds of oral texts from the informants, with the total length of 2.37 hours. He spent more than 420 hours with the informants in the field, making several participatory observations and interviewing the key informants. He collected the information in a wide range of subject matter including folk rituals, folk food, folk art and crafts, folk god and goddesses, folk medicines, folk

feasts and festivals, folk furniture, folk weapons, folk architecture, kinship system, agricultural practices and livestock management, life history, historical information of the study area, employment opportunities, etc. From his collection, altogether 23 names of folk foods, 44 folk medicines, more than 17 folk gods/goddesses, more than 12 folk weapons, about 13 folk furniture items, and about 15 types of traditional technology and wisdom have been recorded. He has also made a video record of 2 hours.



Gandharva women dancing on the occasion of Teej, Batulechaur

Concluding Remarks

To conclude, despite some problems mentioned earlier, the project has been a very significant step towards documenting the information related to several aspects of Gandharvas, one of the scheduled castes in Nepalese society. After the achievements of the research works conducted in this folk group, Nepali Folklore Society is highly inspired towards more intensive ethnographic and folkloristic research, and working in similar sorts of studies among other ethnic communities under the Folklore and Folklife Study Project. The achievements of the further works conducted under the project will be disseminated in the days to come.



Tika Maya Gandharva, 39, the one and only sarangi playing Gandharva lady

Folklore for Identity and Understanding

The First International Folklore Congress,
Kathmandu 2001¹



Inauguration of the special session on Indo-Nepal Folklore Studies

Preview

Metaphorically, Nepal is often referred to as a flower orchard of various languages and cultures. Thus, it has been a great repository of folklore varieties, and naturally of the opportunities for folklore studies. The establishment of Nepali Folklore Society in 1995 was a natural development of this background context. Since its inception, this Society has established a mode of folklore research, disseminated the Nepali concepts of folklore studies, and established wider contacts with the folklore societies and scholars in different parts of the world. In the meantime, the Society decided to hold an international congress in Kathmandu to discuss various issues of folklore studies in Nepal and the South Asian countries. Accordingly, the Congress was held in Kathmandu for the first time in its history on May 5-7, 2001. The main theme of the congress was "Folklore for Identity and Understanding", and papers on various sub-themes under it were presented in the Congress.

Supports

The Society requested various national organizations for supporting the congress. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism became the pivot for this congress. Other institutions

¹ Since we are reporting the event of 2001; the official positions of the distinguished personalities mentioned in the report refer to their respective positions then.

such as the Royal Nepal Academy, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu Metropolitan City, and Nepal-India B.P. Koirala Foundation were the sponsors. Similarly, Nepal Rastra Bank, Nepal Chamber of Commerce, National Committee for Development of Nationalities, Hotel Association of Nepal, Nepal Association of Travel Agents, and the Association of National Booksellers and Publishers of Nepal supported the event. Nepal Tourism Board took the role of a promoter of this unique event and the hall of the board was the venue of this 3-day event.

The Participants

There were 22 registered participants from 7 foreign countries (France, Finland, Netherlands, Germany, USA, Bangladesh, and India) and 57 from Nepal. Besides, there were invitees on the special sessions, and some other interested persons. About 9 student volunteers were present during the sessions to help the participants. Thus, more than 100 persons had participated in the congress.

The Sessions

Inaugural Ceremony

The congress started with the inaugural ceremony at 9.00 A.M. on May 5, 2001. Mr. Mohan Koirala, Vice-Chancellor of Royal Nepal Academy, chaired the session. The Chief Guest was Hon'ble Minister of Culture and Tourism Mr. Omkar Prasad Shrestha.

After a brief welcome speech by Prof. Dr. C.M. Bandhu, General Secretary of Nepali Folklore Society, the Chief Guest inaugurated the congress by lighting a lamp and delivered the inaugural address. In his address, Mr. Shrestha highlighted the role of folklore in expressing national identity and understanding in a multicultural country like Nepal. He hoped that the congress would come up with fruitful suggestions for preserving national traditions. Mr. Barun P. Shrestha, Secretary, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, said that the congress was



Participants in the Nepali Folklore Session

organized in right time to help promote cultural tourism in the country. He hoped that the congress would also help to specify the national goal of cultural promotion. Prof. Tulasi Diwasa, President of the Society, delivering his presidential address, emphasized that folklore should be used for national development and therefore it should be studied, preserved and promoted for future generations. He hoped that this unique event in the history of Nepalese folklore would encourage the native scholars to study its various aspects. Finally, Prof. Dr. Abhi Subedi expressed Vote of Thanks on behalf of the Society to the attendants as well as the contributors for making the event a success. The inaugural session ended with the remarks of the chairman Mr. Mohan Koirala, who wished the success of the unique event and emphasized the need for a systematic study of national cultures for national identity.



Foreign and native participants in the congress

Congress Sessions

The congress sessions presented a unique example of an international seminar ever held in Nepal. In three days a total of 50 papers were presented and discussed by scholars from South Asia, America and Europe.

There were 8 academic sessions including one special session on Indo-Nepal Folklore Studies. The themes of the sessions were: (1) Identity, ethnicity and folklore, (2) Folklore, tourism and development issues, (3) Folklore, literature and performing arts, (4) Folklore, folklife and folk practices, (5) Folklore, gender and power, (6) Folklore and folk literature, (7) Nepali folklore, and (8) Indo-Nepal folklore studies.

The first session was chaired by Dr. Mazharul Islam, a prominent folklorist from Bangladesh. In this session, Dr. Lee Haring from USA, Dr. Anwarul Karim from Bangladesh, Prof. Dr. Abhi Subedi from Nepal, and Dr. P. Subbachary from India presented their papers on "Identity, Difference and Mixing in Folklore Studies", "The Ojha Shamans, Mystics of Bangladesh", "Folk in Urban Space: A Study of Newari Theatre", and "Folk Arts and the Issue of Displacement" respectively.

In the second session, which was chaired by Dr. Dulal Chaudhari from India, Dr. Makbul Islam from India, Dr. Ramesh Kunwar from Nepal, Mr. Prakash A. Raj from Nepal, Mr. Bihari Krishna Shrestha from Nepal, and Ms. Sonja Servoma from Finland made their presentations entitled "Folklore as a Source of Promoting Tourism", "Anthropology of Tourism: A Case Study of Chitwan Sauraha", "The Folklore and Tourism in Nepal", "Some Insights into the Dynamics of Folklore in Nepal," and "Folklore and Development Issues" respectively. Finally, Dr. Jyotirmoy Ghosh from India spoke on the relation between Folklore and Literature; and Mr. Pravin Khadka from Nepal Tourism Board explained the various activities of the Board for promoting cultural tourism and other related programmes in Nepal.

The third session was chaired by Dr. Kamal Prakash Malla. In this session, Dr. Mazharul Islam (Bangladesh), Dr. B.K. Chakravorty (India), and Mariana Kropf (Germany) spoke on "The Study of Folklore: Aesthetic and Literary Theory", "Folklore and Literature", and "Folklore as a Form of Cultural Survival" respectively. The Nepali scholars presenting papers in this session were Mr. Nagendra Bhattarai (entitled "Use of Folk Expressions in Politics: A Study in the Discourse of Power"), Mr. Kishor Gurung (entitled "Ethnomusical Study of *Ghaatu*"), Mr. Jagadish Shumsher Rana (entitled "Kathmandu - A Valley that Resounds with Folklore") and Mr. Prabodh Devkota (entitled "Nepali Troubadours, the *Gaines*: a Living Heritage").

On May 6th, the fourth session started at 9.00 A.M., which was chaired by Dr. Lee Haring. In this session, Dr. Bert van den Hoek (Netherlands), Dr. Mohammad Abdul Jalil (Bangladesh), Dr. Giribala Mohanty (India), and Dr. Kailash Pattanaik (India) delivered their presentations on "Serpent Sacrifice in Nepal: Vedic Lore, Tantric Lore or Folklore?", "Efficacy of Chants and Plans in the Treatment of Snakebites in the Northern Part of Bangladesh", "The Girl Games of Orissa", and "Story Telling in Orissa" respectively. Dr. Tirtha Bahadur Shrestha, and Prof. Ram Kumar Pandey spoke on "Practices of Folk Medicine in Nepal" and "Folklore behind Yeti Tales" respectively.

Dr. Sonja Servoma (Finland) chaired the fifth session. In this session, Dr. Jawaharlal Handoo (India) and Dr. Ranjeet Singh Bajwa (India) presented their papers on "Folklore: Male Bias and Discourse of Power" and "Anthropology of Power: Violence and Honour in Panjabi Legend – *Noor Khan*" respectively. Dr. Guy Poitevin from France spoke on "Popular Traditions: Strategic Assets", while Dr. Geeta Khadka and Ananda Sharma presented the papers entitled "Mythmaking about Women's Predicaments: Study of *Badi* and *Devaki* Women of Western Nepal" and "Treatment of Time and Space in Folklore: A Study of Black Elk's Vision" respectively.

The sixth session was chaired by Dr. Jawaharlal Handoo, in which Prof. Dr. Kamal Prakash Malla spoke on the "Oral Poetry as a Source of Oral History", while Mr. Yogesh Raj spoke on "The Earliest and Unique Script of a Newari Dramatic Form JHAALECHA". Both the presentations were from Nepal, while Dr. Dulal Chaudhari's "Charya Gaan..." was from India.

The seventh session, which was chaired by Mr. Satya Mohan Joshi, was held at the conference hall of the Royal Nepal Academy. All the papers in this session were in Nepali on various aspects of Nepali folklore. In the session, a welcome address was delivered by Dr. Tulsi Prasad Bhattarai, Member-Secretary of the Academy. Dr. Motilal Parajuli, Mr. Bairagi Kanhila, Dr. Hari Raj Bhattarai, Mr. Madhusudan Giri, Mr. Kusumakar Neupane, Mr. Shiva Prasad Poudyal, Mr. Jaya Raj Pant, Mr. Jibendra Dev Giri, and Mr. Drona Upadhyaya spoke on "Nepali Balans", "The Birds in Limbu Myths and Legends", "Folklore and Written Literature", "Reflections of Folk Life in the *Nyaula* Songs of Karnali Region", "Nature in Nepali Folk Songs", "The Social Structure Described in the Nepalese Proverbs", "A Comparison of Dotyali and Kuamauni Folk Songs," "Women in the Nepali Folktales, and "The *Sabais* (narrative poems) of Nepali Language" respectively.



Cheerful participants in the congress

Special Session on Indo-Nepal Folklore Studies

A special session on Indo-Nepali Folklore was held on May 7, 2001, in which various issues related to the folklore studies in Nepal, India and other SAARC countries were addressed. Prof. Naveen Prakash Jung Shah, Vice-Chancellor of Tribhuvan University, chaired the session. Dr. Tirtha Prasad Mishra, Director of the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies of Tribhuvan University, welcomed the participants attending the session. Dr. Jawaharlal Handoo (India), Prof. Dr. Abhi Subedi (Nepal), Dr. Manzarul Islam (Bangladesh), and Prof. Dr. C.M. Bandhu (Nepal) spoke on "Folklore Studies in India", "South Asian Studies in Nepal in the Context of Folklore", "Folklore Studies in South Asia", and "Folklore Studies in Nepal" respectively. On this occasion, Mr. Manoj Bharti, Cultural Counsellor of the

Indian Embassy, presented his remarks and emphasized that such workshops with Nepalese and Indian scholars were highly useful. Prof. Tulasi Diwasa, President of Nepali Folklore Society, expressed his heartfelt thanks to the participants of the session and hoped that a fruitful collaboration between the countries of South Asia would be started in future to promote the studies of folklore of the region. Finally, Mr. Shah ended the session with his remarks from the chair, emphasizing the need for promoting folklore studies. He also assured that folklore studies would be promoted in Tribhuvan University in the days to come.

The Valedictory Session

The valedictory session was held under the chairmanship of Prof. Tulasi Diwasa, President of Nepali Folklore Society. The special guest was Mr. Satya Mohan Joshi, an eminent Nepali folk culture expert. Dr. Lee Haring (USA), Dr. Manzharul Islam (Bangladesh), Dr. Sonja Servoma (Finland), Dr. Ranjeet Singh Bajwa (India), Dr. Barun K. Chakravorty (India) and Mr. Jagadish Shumsher Rana (Nepal) expressed their impressions on the grand success of the congress. The congress also passed a resolution on the opening of the Department of Folklore, establishing a SAARC level folklore studies centre, and on the priorities to be given to the study of dying traditions. Finally, delivering Vote of Thanks, Prof. Dr. Abhi Subedi expressed the Society's gratefulness to the sponsors, supporters and promoters. He specially mentioned the contributions of Nepal Tourism Board for providing the venue and other facilities to make the event successful. The president of Nepali Folklore Society made an announcement of the Honorary Membership of NFS to the eminent folklorists Mr. Satya Mohan Joshi (Nepal), Dr. Lee Haring (USA), Dr. Mazharul Islam (Bangladesh) and Dr. Jawaharlal Handoo (India). The congress ended with the remark of the chairman, expressing heartfelt thanks to all who contributed to the grand success of the event and those who spared their valuable time participating in the congress.



The participants exchanging views during lunch break

Folksongs/Dance Performances and Visits

On this occasion, Royal Nepal Academy and Sanskritik Samsthan had made arrangements to perform some selected items of Nepali folk dances and songs. Visits of temples and important places were also arranged for the foreign guest participants.



A scene of Sorathi dance performance

Achievements

The congress was not only unique in itself but also a highly successful event. The congress was able to invite some eminent scholars from India, Bangladesh, Finland, Netherlands, Germany, France and USA. Moreover, as Prof. Diwasa has said, it created awareness among Nepalese scholars by encouraging them to work in the field of folklore; and it was able to show and explain Nepal's rich cultural heritage to the international participants. It provided opportunities for Nepalese scholars to have a direct discourse with eminent international scholars in the area of folklore. It also opened the possibilities of collaboration between the Nepalese and foreign scholars. It encouraged to enhance folklore studies at the national, regional and international levels.



Some key participants during the tea break

Comments and Observations

Several observers have expressed the opinion that the congress was a remarkable event. As Mr. Shiva Rijal ("International Folklore Congress, Kathmandu 2001" *Across* 5:1; May 2001) has put it, the event was "the first of its kind to have been organized in Kathmandu", in which "...the participation of people of the different backgrounds was very remarkable..." He has also noted that the proposal of some foreign participants to set up a SAARC folklore organization making Nepal the centre of it was a great enthusiasm at the congress.

For the foreign participants, the congress became a wonderful opportunity to be acquainted with the Nepali folklife and folk culture. Prof. Lee Haring, in his letter addressed to the President and General Secretary of Nepali Folklore Society (dated May 18, 2001), has thanked the Society for giving him a good opportunity to broaden his acquaintance with the folklorists working far away from him. He has congratulated the Society for its success in “attracting scholars from outside Nepal” and “making the event truly international”.

Similarly, Dr. Makbul Islam, in his response after participating in the Congress (“Folklore for Identity and Understanding: International Folklore Congress Kathmandu – 2001, Nepal” *Folklore Research Journal* no. 6, Research Institute of Folk Culture, West Bengal, India), has admired the academic character of

the event saying that “each and every session was remarkably stimulating” for academic interaction. Dr. Islam has called the congress a historical event, which has “paved the edifice of systematic and organized studies in folklore research”. Moreover, he has also appreciated Nepali Folklore Society for playing a very important role to show the openness that an academic institution deserves. He has said, “To deal with the issues of folklore of Nepal as well as of other South Asian countries, the Society could elevate itself above the narrowness of so-called notion of ‘Political Boundary’”. Technically speaking, the society has rightly pointed out that, for the sake of academic interest ‘We’ all should learn to overcome the barrier of political delineation, like – India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka etc.”

Nepali Folklore Society (NFS): An Introduction

Every nation exists on its own identity, which is reflected in the typicality of its folklore and folk culture. The different groups of people living in Nepal have maintained their identities in terms of their own values and norms, beliefs, knowledge and experience, language and literature, arts etc. Despite this fact, we can also notice the changes taking place in the traditional folk life and folk culture along with the influences of modernization process. In this connection, after realizing the need for an academic institution at the national level with the goal of studying, preserving and promoting the folklore and folk culture in the country, Nepali Folklore Society (NFS) was established as a non-political and non-profit making organization, which is registered in the District Administrative Office, Kathmandu.

NFS is guided by one of the directive principles of the state, which emphasizes the ideal of national unity by maintaining the diversities in society through the promotion of language, literature, script, art and culture of all sections of the nation. NFS, with the goal of preserving and promoting the folklore and folk culture of the country, has been carrying out various activities to achieve the goal.

To be more specific, this Society was established to carry out the following activities in order to achieve its goal just mentioned.

- Collecting, documenting and analyzing the specimens of folk art and literature from various folk groups
- Organizing workshops, talk programmes etc. on folklore at a certain time interval
- Mobilizing folklore experts to carry out a systematic research on folklore
- Celebrating folklore festivals by organizing special

programmes at national level

- Organizing national and international conferences on folklore
- Demonstrating/disseminating various aspects of Nepalese folklore
- Organizing programmes to honour those personalities who have made a significant contribution for the preservation and promotion of Nepalese folklore
- Publishing newsletters and journals, dealing with the various issues related to folklore
- Translating the research-based writings on the folklore, folk culture and literature
- Working in collaboration with other national and international institutions interested in the study and promotion of folklore/folk culture
- Creating awareness among the people on their rich cultural heritage, traditional technology and indigenous wisdom



Khim Bahadur Gandarva, 68, playing Sarangi, Batulechaur

Some Important NFS Activities in Brief

1. The first International Folklore Congress was organized in Kathmandu on May 5-7, 2001.
2. A CD release programme was organized on August 26, 2001, in which the folk songs of Miss Komal Oli, a famous Nepali singer, are collected.
3. *Sarangi Diwas* (The *Sarangi* Day) was organized in collaboration with Gandharva Art and Culture Organization on February 6, 2003.
4. The second International Folklore Congress was organized in Kathmandu from May 30 to June 1, 2003.
5. Various talk programmes were organized, inviting the folklorists from different countries (America, Japan, Bangladesh, and Finland).
6. Poetry recitation programmes were organized on different occasions, in which poets in the country as well as from abroad were invited to recite their poems.
7. A special poetry symposium was organized on February 24, 2004.
8. Representatives were sent on behalf of the Society to participate in the international folklore congresses and seminars held in India and Bangladesh.
9. *Karkha* (a traditional form of Gandharva song) singing competition was organized at Pokhara, in collaboration with Gandharva Community Development Centre, Batulechaur, on 24th September 2005.
10. Now, the Nepali Folklore and Folklife Study Project is running (2005-2008).

Executive Committee of NFS

1. President: Prof. Tulasi Diwasa
2. Vice-President: Prof. Dr. Abhi Subedi
3. General Secretary: Prof. Dr. Chudamani Bandhu
4. Secretary: Mr. Jaya Raj Panta
5. Treasurer: Mr. Tej Prakash Shrestha
6. Member: Dr. Ananda Sharma
7. „ : Mr. Kusumakar Neupane
8. „ : Dr. Shiva Rijal
9. „ : Mr. Hiranya Bhojpure
10. „ : Prof. Dr. Govinda Raj Bhattarai
11. „ : Dr. Sangita Rayamajhi

Folklore Galore¹

•Abhi Subedi

Folklore galore is precisely the expression that can explain the plurality of interpretations the Nepali scholars gave to the concept of Nepali folklore at the annual general body meeting of the Nepali Folklore Society on 23 January 2003 at Padmakanya Campus hall. People who have some notions about the folklore, folklife and folkforms bandy about it but finally develop a very heuristically viable method of explaining the rather diffused forms of folklore. But the points of discussions raised by participants at the meeting struck me as something very important, earnest and sincerely felt alarms about the dangers of loosing many cultural and folkloristic practices that have flourished in this country for millennia.

Nothing would be more preposterous than to attempt to discuss the forms and features of folklore/folklife in this essay. But I want to briefly allude to the very important cultural discourses with a focus on the folklore studies.

Folklore has a symbiosis with living a natural life. Individual lives with the community by sharing everything. He/she shares dreams, fears, visions and anger. People's existence becomes easier when they share everything that has metaphysical and visionary dimensions. A microcosm, a space is something that the folklorists want to create. To assuage the pain of existence one needs to make everything – trees, birds, water, ferocious animals, human beings, stars and rivers, as friends. We in Nepal have lived in different difficult geographical terrains. Our existence has not been very easy. We have lived in inner valleys; we have inhabited in hot malarial plains; we have eked out our existence in the high altitudes as high as sixteen thousands feet above the sea level; we have lived in barren cold mountains; we have settled down near the rivers that have drained the surrounding hills and valleys and occasionally washed our homes. All these intimate and intense encounters with nature and her ways have taught us how to live with her by creating *jouissance* or the games to make it easier for us. This is the story of space, of our movements over the geological expanse. But the

¹ Taken from: **Space Time Today**, January 26, 2003.

compromise was not limited to the space only, it was also related to the cultural movements. The most mobile features were the folk narratives and practices. So our folkloristic dynamism is a movement over the geo-cultural space. Our sagas of hope and sadness, joys and pain, lyricism and pragmatism are preserved in the oral traditions and folk practices – performances, rituals and mores, and folk arts and crafts.

So, Nepali folklore is the story of our existence. We have created multivalent forms of our folklife because we need them all. But the folk culture and the folkloristic movements over the geo-cultural space have come under threat of extinction today. The participants at the meeting brought many problematics to the fore. One point that a folklorist from far western Nepal said is that diverse Nepali folklore forms are under the threat of extinction. Folklore has begun to be looked upon the residue of the old feudalistic culture; it deserves to be clarified. That means Nepali folklore practices and various antique forms are getting lost. When conditions make people divert their sojourns of life, folkloristic practices die out.

Certain Nepali cultural forms have travelled from the Indic regions over the northern plains and mountains of Nepal. The performance aspect of folklore can be seen in the folk theaters. Tulasi Diwasa, a pioneer in modern Nepali folklore studies, early on studied these cross-currents. His study of the Dhimal people's folk drama in *Pradarshankari Dhimal Lok Sanskriti* (2035 B.S.) is a case in point. Chudamani Bandhu in his comprehensive book *Nepali Loksahitya* (2058 B.S.) or Nepali folk literature has introduced diverse folk forms and compiled a comprehensive bibliography of Nepali folklore studies done both modestly and with sophistication. Whatever has been done so far must be taken as achievements.

In today's discussions at the meeting discussants brought out the 5 different modes of folklore studies. Ballabh Mani Dahal considered them as the most needed forms of cultural studies that need to be incorporated into the university curricula; Economist Parthiweswor Timilsina saw great prospects in the folklore studies; Ram Kumar Pandey laid down methodological schemes for folklore study to develop heuristic devices to bring order to the otherwise plethora of forms; Kavitaran Shrestha giving his experience of 15 years with children literary annual meets saw in folklore studies a challenge of plurality and creative potentials for those who want to look into the nuances as he has done in a book of essays published recently; Gajabkumari Timilsina saw in Nepali folklore a ground for very significant indigenous works of literary relevance; Madhav Pokhrel suggested that since each language evokes various folk and ethno-cultural forms

that are inextricably related to each other, every folklore study should be linked to linguistic studies; Jivendradev Giri saw the incorporation of folklore into the graduate studies curricula as the best way of promoting folklore studies in Nepal; Haribansa Kirat and Hiranya Bhojpure stressed on the need to identify and preserve the folk forms; Urmila Shrestha said that people who at individual levels too have been doing works need help. Others voiced concerns about the threats that the folklore/ folklife is facing in Nepal today. Many other discussions that were made at the meeting showed one common concern of the folklorists, i.e. there are too many folk forms. We can get inundated into these multiple forms of folklore. The only way out is to be selective. They all stressed that forms should be identified, prioritized and preserved.

The answer to the question – what can be the best heuristic device in the study of such diverse forms of folklore/ folklife, is methodological. Tulasi Diwasa said that various forms of folklore/ folklife can be studied by developing certain heuristic devices. I think the study of the diversity of forms need not be an impossible task for scholars. Nepali folklore should be theorized, which should be made on the basis of the geo-cultural movements of the folklore forms. The confluence of the indigenous and Indic forms can be seen in many Nepali lores. Nepali folklore studies therefore can be theorized, historicized and classified on that basis. The second method will be to take up interdisciplinary methods for the study of the diverse forms of folklore by using methods that folklorists have used in other parts of the world.

Politicisation and marketisation of folklore studies has become a new development in folklore studies. In the context of discovering one's historical past, people in South Asia have been exploring the performance oriented dimensions of folklore. In theatre, for example, the study of the native forms has become a new methodology and a new passion. It is pursued with all earnestness in the post-colonial contexts. The post-colonial logic is that the colonizers in South Asia did not consider the folk forms as worthy of attention. They considered them as the most crude and unsophisticated forms for culture. But the reality is little paradoxical. The folklore studies made by western scholars have highlighted what they saw as the important cultural features of the countries of South Asia.

In Nepal the lines separating the folk and sacramental forms are very fuzzy. At the first International Folklore Congress organized by Nepali Folklore Society on 6-7 May, 2001, one eminent folklorist of Bangladesh commenting on a senior Nepali scholar's paper missed the same point. As a folklorist he rightly thought that religious chanting or poetry sung on different occasions in Kathmandu was a domain of literature, not of folklore. I drew his attention to the unique role of poetry as performance force in Nepal Mandala. Performance is part of the folklore that in Nepal has been seen developed in a unique and indigenous manner. The scholar agreed.

Performance oriented dimensions of Nepali folklore can be seen as synthesis of the folk and the Indic forms, a feature that becomes manifest in the literary and artistic traditions of this country. In modern Nepali poetry, interestingly enough, use of folklore is made to create the juxtaposition of different sensibilities. Poets have used the folk images, symbols and most importantly, metaphors and arts to create the texture of modern sensibility in their poetry. The cultural studies can therefore incorporate the folk forms into the domains of the study of the creative dimension of culture. It can be seen only in relation to the study of the folklore and modern poetry – its contents and forms.

How do we see the continuity of the folk forms and modern literary sensibility? It can be seen in both

Introducing the Folklore and Folklife (FOFO) Study Project¹

Preliminary

Nepali Folklore Society (NFS) is running a project entitled “Folklore and Folklife Study Project: A Study of Living Cultural Heritage of Nepal”. The project has 3 years’ duration, which began in the month of June 2005 and will continue up to May 2008. The project office is located at Bhatbhateni, Kathmandu. A brief introduction to the project is given here.

Rationale

So far, despite the several studies on Nepalese culture and living heritage, no extensive research has been done on ethnic communities of the country from the folkloristic point of view; and a scientific way of conserving the living cultural heritage of people is still lacking. NFS has initiated this project with the strong conviction that culture is not only one of the dimensions of public life and a matter of self-identity of the people, but also the basis of sustainable development. So, promotion of cultural heritage should be the part of a nation’s development efforts. We should know that developmental interventions cannot be sustainable, if they are made without properly understanding the local socio-cultural realities. Since the study of folklore covers a wide range of socio-cultural dimensions of the people’s life but still there is the lack of focus on this sort of study in Nepal, its research and systematic documentation was felt essential. Therefore, the project was designed and works have been initiated accordingly.

Folk Groups Being Studied

The project aims to study 7 folk groups of Nepal residing in different parts of the country. Among them, 3 groups have already been selected: Gandharvas (*Gaines*) of Batulechaur and adjacent areas of Kaski district,

the oral and written forms. But the question comes: can one create modernist oral poetry? The answer is no, but the oral forms that are used in the post modernist contexts are first written, disseminated, advertised, popularized, vulgarized, valorized and marketised. So the orality of such forms of poetry may not have modernist but post-modernist attributes.

Nepali folk songs for one thing are very widely and extensively collected, exported and marketised. But in today’s meeting one information had deeply dismayed me: many Nepali folk forms are facing extinction today due not to any reason but political. I hope all those concerned will share our dismay. Let us save our happy union with nature, our real texture of life called folklore and folklife.

Gopalis of Kunchhal and adjacent areas of Makawanpur district, and Ath Pahariya Rais of Dadagaun and adjacent areas of Dhankuta district. Among these groups, the works of data collection among the Gandharvas and Gopalis has been over, while the project office is ready to send researchers to the field to collect data from Athparahiya Rais. The remaining 4 ethnic communities will be selected out of the ones recommended by experts, which include: Danuwar, Rajbanshi, Hudke, Lapche, Dum, Pahari, Hayu, Raji, Tamang, Darai, Chepang, Tharu, Thakali, Chantyal, Sunuwar, Raute, Jhagad, Meche, and Hyolmo. The final selection of the group for the study will be based on the local situation in the ethnic community’s residential area and the feasibility shown by the preliminary survey.

Goals

The goal of the project is to study and disseminate the current situation of the folk life and folklore among people in the selected folk groups. After surveying and documenting the living cultural heritage and traditions of the selected folk groups, the project will develop the archive of folklore materials, which will have both the written and audio-visual documentation. By exploring the selected groups’ folklore and folk life, the project also aims to rediscover the work that has been done in this field by individuals and institutions, and to identify the gaps/limitations and the areas in which works need to be initiated or further intensified.

Study Matters

The project covers a wide range of study matters related to the ethnic communities’ folklore and folk life, which can be categorized under 4 important areas of study: 1) Folk language and folk communication, 2) Folk literature and performing arts, 3) Material folk culture and folk heritage, and 4) Socio-cultural folk life and folkways. These study matters are applicable to all the selected folk groups to be studied under the project.

¹ with Finish assistance under Local Cooperation

Activities

Within the project, Nepali Folklore Society is going to collect, document, analyze and disseminate the folklore and folk life of the selected folk groups. Data collection is being done through the field work, in which highly qualified experts in different aspects of folklore study are involved. The information collected from each folk group will be worked into a report form, which will be thoroughly edited and published as a book in Nepali. Besides, its summary will also be published in English. Similarly, a video documentary will be prepared after thoroughly editing the video recorded materials brought to the project office from the field. The collected information will be preserved and stored so that the interested persons can consult it for their use.

The project mainly consists of the three-stage research activities – 1) Pre- field work, 2) Field work, and 3) Post- field work. The first stage involves the activities like: preliminary survey of the field area, orientation for the field researchers, survey of the reference materials/ literature related to the folk group, etc. While the second stage works are carried out by researchers in the respective field areas where the selected groups of people reside, the third stage involves the works of documentation, analysis of data and writing the report, which are to be done in the project office, Kathmandu. The three-stage works are applicable for all the selected folk groups; and a research team spends for six and half months on a folk group to complete the works from the pre- to post-field work stage. Some other activities in the project, which are auxiliary to the three stages just mentioned, include: workshop on folklore and folk life, seminars on the study findings, publication, exhibitions, folklore performance (dance, theatre play, song, etc.) etc.

At the end of the project, a large scale exhibition of project results will be organized, whereby both the printed and audio-visual products resulted from the project will be disseminated. On this occasion, one or some of the studied folk groups will be invited to demonstrate their performances of folklore: dances, theatre plays, songs etc. This will mark the end of the project.

Data Collection and Documentation Process

During the field study, the main ways followed by researchers for data collection include questionnaires, interviews, observation, participant observation, note-taking, use of some modern equipments of technology (like photography, audio and video recording, mapping, measurements) etc. The field researchers are collecting the information by observing and participating in the folk groups' daily life and activities as closely as possible.

Individual members of the research team are responsible for collecting the information, observing the events and actions in the ethnic community, filling in the questionnaires, verifying their authenticity, taking

photographs, video and audio recording the relevant events and texts, transcribing the oral texts, etc.

In a team of field researchers, one person becomes the coordinator who is responsible for coordinating the activities of the research team, finding the local assistants and informants, and reporting the progress of the field work to the project office.

Within a week of the researchers' arrival from the field to the project office, they give a report of their field work and hand all the collected materials over to the project office.

After the phase of data collection, all the collected folklore materials, the photographs and audio/video cassettes are processed; and then they are indexed to ensure systematic documentation. The project office is working to ensure a systematic preservation of the materials and information by computerizing them. This will be developed in the form of a folklore archive.

Expected Outcomes

The project was initiated with a view to establish a system of scientific documentation of information related to folklore so that it will be helpful for the people to access the information in the future.

This project is the first one of its kind in the history of folk life and folk culture studies in the country. It is expected that the project not only will document the information on folk life and folk culture, but also can help a lot in the process of overall planning for national development by providing the concerned bodies/experts with the necessary information on the local situation in terms of the folk life and folk culture found in the ethnic communities.

The direct beneficiaries of the project will be the researchers, scholars and other people seeking information on the culture of different folk groups. The findings and documentation will be made available to many institutions at international, national and local levels, thus facilitating their access to the information on Nepali culture. On the other hand, people in the ethnic communities will also benefit from the project by becoming more conscious of their uniqueness, which will create awareness among them regarding the importance of their traditional culture, raise their self-esteem and thus offer a better ground for development efforts.

The project will not only seek the folk groups' help for getting information on their life and culture; but the ethnic communities will also be benefited towards the promotion of their living heritage. By means of the project activities, local communities will be encouraged to further elaborate their cultural manifestations (e.g. dances, festivals, rituals, ceremonies, etc.) so as to promote the local folk life. Thus, the project is expected to encourage the process of cultural empowerment in the ethnic communities. After the dissemination of information related to the folk groups, it helps to promote cultural tourism as well, which will eventually contribute towards improving the economic life of the local communities.

Nepali Troubadours, the *Gaines*: A Living Heritage

• Prabodh Devkota

Each society has its own conventions, traditions, myths, norms and values. These are the living forces of society, which give strength to each individual to understand the society and to live along with its norms and values, and provide a strong sense of identity. Each human being lives along with these beliefs and dies with these beliefs. Nothing is greater than the beliefs of the belief.

Most often, these myths and conventions are rooted on the oral traditions or what we call, in folk traditions. In the Nepalese context too, there are different kinds of myths and traditions that are living with the different sagas. They are preserved in the folk traditions, folk songs/folklore, and mostly in the songs of Gaines.

From the early historical periods, Gaines are preserving the culture and history in the form of folksongs based on their oral traditions. They wander one place to another place singing and playing *Sarangi* - a musical instrument like violin. They sing different kinds of songs, sometimes holy songs, sometimes love songs, sometimes the historical songs, and most of the times they sing the plights of the people. They tell death and suffering. The entire social carnival gets expression through the songs of Gaines. At the same time, their songs become the medium of articulating the suppressed voices.

The singing tradition of Gaines can be seen as a natural development in a culture that encouraged free expression of emotion through art, as Ortiz M Walton says,

...The accent culturally and aesthetically was on spontaneity. Spontaneity in turn means to express feelings as they occur; hence improvisation becomes instrumental towards the attainment of spontaneity. (170)

Such spontaneity pervades the songs of Gaines. When Gaine starts singing songs along with playing his *sarangi*, he creates a live performance; he creates a ritual through ragas where both the audience and Gaine purify themselves plunging into the extreme sense of emotions and feelings. In this sense, Gaine and his *sarangi* possess the organic values where each social norm finds an expression.

Gaine sings different kinds of songs. During the festival like Dashain¹ they sing sacred songs of Durga, the Goddess of power. They get up early in the morning and go house to house. They are supposed to be the callers of Durga in each house.

Traditionally, Gaine sing the songs that are based on the story of Ramayana and Mahabharata which are the religious and ideal base of Hinduism. In the traditional Nepali society, mass Nepali (still) do not have access into the mainstream education system, they can't read and write but they know the story of Ramayana and Mahabharata. These stories are shared from generation to generation through the oral traditions. These stories somehow try to shape the social structure, indeed they are the living forces for the believers, and Gaine plays the vital role of passing the stories to the people. So, the place of Gaine seems quite sacred in Hindu religion, though the contradiction is that their position is socially decreased as the untouchable group. Gaine is one of the families of Dalit community in Nepal. They are socially treated as untouchable group though constitution takes untouchability as an illegal practice. They are categorized as Dalits. They suffer from the illness of caste discrimination that has decreased the value of their art. As a consequence, they are also marginalised from the mainstream history, though they are preserving it in their own way.

Gaine sings different kinds of songs. Some of the songs are based on the historical wars like Nalapani². They, through the song, narrate the whole story about how the enemies attacked and how the Nepalese people fought against the enemy. Generation to generation, Gaines are transforming the national history in folk tone. Furthermore, Gaines contribute to evoke the nationalism among the people.

They sing the songs about the kings, their regime, their prosperity and also their death. In this context, I remember one incident when I was a small child. An old Gaine came to our village. He was lean and thin. He started singing his song; his tone was so melodious that many villagers came to listen to him. He was singing a song about the death of late King Mahendra. Gaine himself was in extreme emotion, while the audience was also extremely moved. I saw the rolling tears in the several eyes. Now I can realize the power of the vocal and the language of the body and expressions of emotions through eyes, probably it is the spontaneity of feelings and emotions. Indeed, in such cases, in one side, Gaine becomes the mediator/messenger; and he becomes a powerful source of strengthening the image of the King, in a Hindu society like our. On the other, through their songs, they are preserving the history of the nation. So, Gaine holds a kind of socio-political power too which is exercised in the form of cultural traditions.

Another popular song of Gaine can be heard, which is about the pain of a *lahure* (people who goes to earn money in foreign land) who is fighting a battle in a foreign land. The song tells a story that deals with the whole socio-political as well as the cultural realities of the country.

¹ A great Hindu festival that goes on during 15 days

² A historic war fought against British India

In the story, there is a *lahure* - a soldier who is fighting in a battle. He says: When my mother will ask about me, tell her that I am winning the battle. When brother will ask about me, then tell him that your property has increased. When brother's wife will ask, tell her to cut a goat and have meat. When elder sister will ask, tell her, you loosed a *choli* (women's cloth), when sister will ask, tell her, you loosed your *maiti*, (parent's home), when my son will ask, tell him to throw his cap. And when my wife will ask about me tell her to wash her head and wash the *simrik* (red- colour in the head used by the married women who symbolizes the life of her husband).

If we seriously analyze the structure of the whole song, it gives us an impression of Nepal with its socio-political and cultural colours. Historically, during Rana period many young Nepali were compelled to join the British India army. In order to please the British in India, Ranas had taken that step. Later, joining the foreign army became a kind of tradition among some ethnic groups like *Magar, Tamang, Gurung, Rai, Limbu* etc. Poverty was also one of the causes of joining the foreign army. Still today most of the Nepalis, either in the form of foreign army or as a labour (*lahure*), are compelled to go to the foreign land to earn money and get life. So, the song at the same time talks about the history and the economic condition of the country.

Other songs describe the social relationships in real situation. Generally, in Hindu philosophy the relationship of the brothers is regarded the ideal love as the love of Ram and Laxman, two mythical characters in Ramayana who are famous for strong fraternity. But the oral tradition of Gaine visualizes it in very practical sense; he sketches society in its real length. In the song, *lahure* says, if my brother will ask about me than tell him your property has increased. It shows the relationships in terms of economy, which is the social reality. When sister will ask then tell her that she has loosed *Choli* - a kind of women's cloth. In our society, sisters, after marriage, when they come to their parent's house they get something from the brother or parent. This is a kind of tradition. Likewise, "...when son will ask then tell him to throw his cap" leads further ahead to the religion. In Hindu society after father's death son should throw his cap and shave his head. During some days he should perform his religious duty as a son in order to free his father's soul. It is one of the compulsory and the strongest rituals of Hindu society. Similarly, in the song *lahure* says - "tell my wife to wash her hair and to wipe out her colour in the hair/forehead." In Hindu society, after the death of her husband, wife is prohibited to wear the red colour clothes and to have red colour in the forehead because red colour symbolizes that her husband is living.

So, this song not only contributes the politics and religion but it is also contributing to preserve the culture in

its own way. It ritualizes the Hindu ideals. The significance of this sort of song is vested on the live performance of Gaine. The different kinds of songs of Gaine are themselves the living texts based on the oral and folk traditions. They are living force of Nepali society.

³While observing the different historical periods, Gains have contributed a lot for the formation of modern Nepal. King Prithvi Narayan Shah who united the modern Nepal used to take suggestions from the Gains and Damai. Bishe Nagarchi and Mani Ram Gaine are the historical figures whose description we also find even in the written history though there is not so much description about them. Hira Devi Gaine is another historical figure who was popular in singing *Karkha*. She sang so many *karkhas* on different warriors, different kings and minister; and she was basically popular for singing *karkha* on Mathvar Singh Thapa. Bakhat Bahadur Budha Pirthi was another historical figure who for the first time in Nepal made National music. It is said that the role of Gaine was important during the Nalapani war - a historic war fought against the British India. They used to go village to village and sing the song to inspire the young generation to fight for the shake of the nation. But except a few of them, other's names are doomed in history. The irony is that Gaine became the preserver of the oral history of Nepal; directly or indirectly they also participated for the formation of national culture and history but they could get no place in the written history which was controlled by the power holders.

Nowadays Gains are in danger, their art of performance is in danger. Most of the Gains themselves have left singing. Even in the village there are no more Gains to arouse the village. *Sarangi* is suffering, its strings are loosed. Indeed a rich property of the oral text is in crisis.

Modern technological and media advancement has endangered the existence of Gaine. Nowadays we can listen the imitated songs of Gaine in different Nepalese media. The existing dominant musical pattern which are called modern songs and pop songs have dominated the songs of Gaine. They have transformed the original songs and music of Gaine in so-called modernized musical patterns through the new technical musical instruments. In a market oriented structure of society, the songs of Gaine have become the commodities but they are produced and consumed by those who are dominantly using, consuming and controlling the economic system of society.

In today's postmodern world, the relation of media transnationalism and multiculturalism are the central focus. The contemporary media shapes identity; indeed, many argue that they exist to the very core of the identity production. At the same time at certain level media is destroying the cultural identities of the people and specially those people who are far from the access into the mainstream education system and modern media. The constant flux of electronic media has

³ See: Dalits of Nepal, Issues and Challenges

created problem to the Gains, their songs and their identity.

The world is in the process of globalization; and each society is in the process of social transformation in terms of economy. Economy, being the central force of the society, is changing the entire social and cultural patterns. In this process of social transformation many traditional societies are threatened, and many tribal communities are suppressed by the dominant capitalistic ideology. Karl Marx was right in saying that the economic structure of the society determines the entire structure of society. The same economic pattern has affected the life structure of Gains. As a consequence of it, nowadays, many Gaine families are leaving their traditional profession and adopting new forms of profession to sustain their life.

Nowadays we can listen different remix songs form different media, many of them try to remix the tone of Gaine in modern songs and people enjoy them as the original songs of Gaine. Indeed, these remix songs are creating the false consciousness and dominating the public psychology. Original Gaine song can't be produced and reproduced because Gaine speaks in poetry; there is the spontaneous overflow of the powerful feeling. The best part of language is always derived from the intensity of experiences whether they are pain or pleasure; and one can see that they speak their emotions and feelings in simple and ordinary language. Gains do not only sing the songs, they also sing the environment, they sing the air, they sing soil and they sing the entire society where a live audience celebrate she live ritual created by Gaine. In this sense, the identity of Gaine can not be transformed by the modern media,

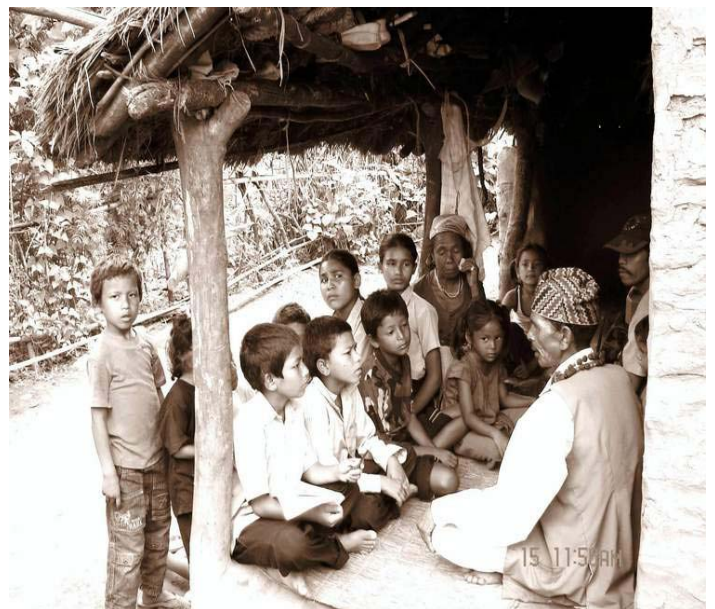
words can be transformed, music can be transformed but the live feelings and emotions can never be transformed. Gains and their songs possess this essence.

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Thulo Bain Bahadur Gandharva, 45, and Karna Bahadur Gandharva, 50, demonstrating sword dance, Batulechaur



Kale Gandharva, 62, narrating the story of Mahadev to the Gandharva Children, Gagangauda

Some Major NFS Activities

Folk Songs' CD Released

A folk songs' CD of Miss Komal Oli, a famous Nepali folk singer, was released by Nepali Folklore Society amidst a function on August 26, 2001. Former Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai was the Chief Guest in the programme. The products were Miss Oli's first compact disc of folk songs and the seventh cassette album bearing the title *Malmalkiri...* On the occasion, Mr. Bhattarai admired the contributions of Miss Oli in Nepali folk songs, and appealed Nepali singers to work towards uplifting the pride of the nation by utilizing their talents and devotion towards cultural promotion. Another guest in the function Mr. Bal Bahadur K.C, Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation, informed that the government was making the necessary preparations to establish a folk song museum.

The programme was chaired by Prof. Tulasi Diwasa, NFS President; and Prof. Chudamani Bandhu had delivered the welcome speech. Speaking from the chair, Prof. Diwasa pointed out the need for unity among the people of all ethnicity and communities for the preservation and promotion of Nepalese folk literature and culture. Mr. Santosh Sharma (Chairman, Music Nepal), Mr. Chetan Karki (lyricist and film director), Mr. Satya Mohan Joshi (eminent Nepali folk culture expert), Mr. Dharma Raj Thapa (prominent singer and poet) and others had also spoken on the occasion.

The First Sarangi Diwas

The first *Sarangi Diwas* (the *Sarangi* day) was organized by Nepali Folklore Society (NFS) in collaboration with Gandharva Culture and Art Organization in Kathmandu on February 6, 2003. It was the first event ever held in the country. There were 75 Gandharvas participating in the event from 10 districts of Nepal. The programme was organized in 3 sessions: the inaugural ceremony, symposium, and cultural show.

Mr. Ravi Bhakta Shrestha, Assistant Minister of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, was the Chief Guest in the inaugural ceremony chaired by Prof. Tulasi Diwasa, NFS President. Prof. Chudamani Bandhu had given the welcome speech, while Prof. Abhi Subedi had formally introduced Mr. Pranesh Maskey, a singer and song writer who came from America, and Mr. Jhalak Man Gandharva, a famous Nepali folk singer.

On the occasion, Mr. Gandharva was offered a special honour with a letter of appreciation on behalf of NFS for his long contribution in Nepali folk music. Besides, the Chief Guest gave away a cash prize of Rs.25, 000 from his pocket to Mr. Gandharva in

appreciation of his contribution in folk songs. An audio cassette and CD by Mr. Pranesh Maskey was also released on the same occasion. The honoured personality, Mr. Gandharva, had also delivered his speech and presented his famous folk song *Amale sodhlin ni...*

Prof. Diwasa had chaired the symposium session also. The symposium was entitled "Gandharva and *Sarangi*: Development and Changes". Prof. Chudamani Bandhu, Mr. Kusumakar Neupane, Miss Imai Phumiko, and Mr. Raj Kumar Gandharva had presented their papers on "Gandharvas' *Karkha*", "Folk Songs of Gandharvas in Pokhara", "Socio-economic Life of Gandharvas", and "Gandharva Culture and Tradition" respectively. Besides, discussion was also held among the participants on the papers.

After the symposium, a cultural programme was organized by the Gandharvas. Along with the music of *Sarangi*, singers and dancers from Gandharva community had presented several performances, including the traditional *Jhyauresongs*, historical songs, Gandharvas' marriage songs, *Mangals*, *Asare Git*, as well as *Tarawar Nach* (dance performance with the warrior's swords). Some of the titles of the songs included in their performance were: *Resham phiriri*, *Basanta Ayo*, *Aja malai lina ae*, etc. Finally, certificates were distributed to the participants; thus the programme was successfully completed.

Folklore and Folklife Field Study Workshop

Nepali Folklore Society (NFS), for the first time in the history of Nepal, organized a 10-day workshop on folklore and folklife study from 16th to 25th April 2005. The event was organized to discuss the recent theories and methodologies of folklore and folklife studies, with two important aims: making the members of NFS well-acquainted with the modern trends of studying folklore; and training the field researchers in collecting and preserving the information on folklore and folk life.

There were 20 participants in the workshop, and about 25 resource persons had provided them with the necessary exposure on different aspects of folklore and folklife study, including the introduction to folklore and folk life, folklore theories and methodologies, folklore and folk life studies in Nepal, Finish method of studying tale types, folklore collection and archiving, literary theories and folklore, ethnographic folklore, folklore fieldwork, anthropological methodology, functionalism and folklore, language and folklore, folklore and folk psychology, rituals, festivals and performance, folklore, context and performance, myths, legends and religion, manners, beliefs and practices, songs and ethnomusicology, folk dances and dramatic performances, music and musical instruments, folk arts and crafts, interpretation of cultures, collection and transcribing of oral texts, translation of oral texts, oral communication, gender and folk life study, survey and use of questionnaire, photography, analysis and presentation of data, tape recording and video recording, use of field notes, data sheets, illustrations and the structure of fieldwork report, etc.

The resource persons involved in the workshop were Prof. Tulasi Diwasa, Prof. Dr. Abhi Subedi, Prof. Dr. C.M. Bandhu, Dr. Motilal Parajuli, Prof. Dr. M.P. Pokharel, Dr. Sudarshan Tiwari, Dr. Krishna B. Bhattachan, Prof. Ram Kumar Pandey, Prof. Dr. Prem Khatri, Prof. Dr. Murari Pd. Regmi, Mr. Bairagi Kaila, Mr. Hiranya Bhojpure, Prof. Dr. Ramesh Kuwar, Dr. R.B. Chhetri, Prof. Dr. Govinda R. Bhattarai, Dr. Ananda P. Sharma, Prof. Dr. P.P. Timilsina, Dr. Tirth B. Shrestha, Mr. Satya Mohan Joshi, Prof. D.R. Dahal, Prof. Dr. Tirtha Mishra, Mr. Bijaya Udaya Palpali, Dr. Om Gurung, Dr. Sangita Rayamajhi, Mr. Purushottam Ghimire, and others.

The participants selected for the workshop were the members of Nepali Folklore Society interested in field-based folklore and folk life studies and scholars from Tribhuvan University and other academic institutions, having the minimum qualification of Master's Degree in Humanities and Social Sciences.

Overall, the workshop became a good opportunity for the participants in enriching and updating their knowledge on folklore studies, as well as in acquiring the necessary skills needed to carry out field research on folklore and folk life. In the ongoing Folklore and Folklife Study Project, most of the field researchers have been selected out of these participants.

Karkha Singing Competition at Pokhara

Karkha singing competition was held in Nepal for the first time at Pokhara on 24th September, 2005. The programme was organized jointly by Nepal Gandharva Community Development Centre and Nepali Folklore Society (NFS). The Chief Guest Prof. Tulasi Diwasa, NFS President, had inaugurated the function, while Mr. Bhim Bahadur Gayak had chaired it.

In the competition, the group of Lal Bahadur Gandharva and Govinda Gandharva was declared the first prize winner. Krishna Bahadur Gandharva won the second and Kale Gandharva won the third position, while Padam Bahadur Gandharva, Hari Bahadur Gandharva and Harka



Hari Bahadur Gayak, 55, performing on the occasion of Karkha competition.

Bahadur Gandharva got the consolation prize. The Chief Guest Prof. Diwasa gave away prizes to the winners.

In the programme, 21 individual and group singers had presented the traditional *Karkha* ballads on various themes, including the songs which highlighted the heroic acts of the historically famous national figures like Prithvi Narayan Shah, Bhakti Thapa, Chandra Shumser, Bam Bahadur Thapa, Birendra Bir Bikram Shah, Tenjing Sherpa etc.; devotional songs based on the religious stories/descriptions like *Swasthani*; songs describing the painful lives of women in society like *Sarumai Rani*, *Manakoila Rani* etc.; songs narrating the folk legends like *Krishna Gandaki*, etc.

On this occasion, 10 senior-most Gandharva singers were offered special honour for their contribution in *Karkha* singing tradition. Those receiving the honour were: Gyan Bahadur Gayak, Khim Bahadur Gayak, Kale Gandharva, Mohan Bahadur Gandharva, Tika Maya Gandharva, Hari Bahadur Gandharva, Tul Bahadur Gandharva, Top Bahadur Gandharva, Krishna Bahadur Gandharva, and Padam Bahadur Gandharva.

Appreciating the efforts of the participants and field researchers working in the Folklore and Folklife Study Project in making the event a success, Chief Guest Prof. Diwasa stressed the need for organizing such programmes, since such efforts will help us a lot in preserving our folk tradition from disappearing.

Talk Programmes

Talk programme on Change and Diversity in Nepali Society

Nepali Folklore Society and Royal Nepal Academy jointly organized a talk programme entitled 'Change and Diversity in the Nepali Society' by Dr. Hisroshi Ishii, Professor at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, on November 29, 1996. The lecture was based on Prof. Ishii's research on the changing patterns in various ethnic groups of Nepalese society.

Presenting a comparative study of some selected societies of Nepal, he pointed out that Newar society was found most receptive to changes, while Maithili society was still found old-fashioned. In his presentation, Prof. Ishii said, "If certain measures are not taken about monitoring the changes it could bring about negative impact on society."

The participants attending the function were university teachers, anthropologists, historians and writers on Nepali society and culture. Discussion followed after the presentation, when the participants had raised questions and queries on the content of the presentation. Prof. Gopal Singh Nepali, Dr. Pratyoush Onta, Dr. Krishna Bhattachan, Dr. Drona Rajouria and others had taken part in the discussion.

The programme was chaired by Mr. Madan Mani Dixit, Vice-Chancellor of the Academy. Prof. Tulasi Diwasa, President of Nepali Folklore Society, and Prof. Abhi Subedi

had introduced Prof. Ishii's works and experiences. Dhuswan Sayami, a member of Royal Nepal Academy, had delivered Vote of Thanks to the participants.

Talk Programme on Tamang Shamanism

Nepali Folklore Society, in collaboration with Royal Nepal Academy, organized a talk programme entitled 'Spiritual Healing among Tamang Shamans' by Prof. Dr. Larry G. Peters (America) on December 3, 1996, at the Academy Hall. In his lecture based on research findings, Dr. Peters described the shamanistic practices among Tamangs of Nepal from anthropological, social, and general human psychological perspectives. He also described the significance of symbols on shamanistic *pooja*, the healing practices and communication. He remarked, "The role of the shaman is to establish rapport between the patient's experiences and the spirits." Further, Dr. Peters said since American studies have lost force due to their scientificity, he had come to Nepal in order to study the older culture that is still practising shamanism in Nepal.

After the lecture, Dhuswan Sayami, Dr. David Gellner, Prof. D.P. Bhandari, Dr. Abhi Subedi, Mr. Jainendra Jivan and other participants had taken part in discussion. They discussed on the modality of studies, assimilation of the Hindu, Buddhist and animistic practices, language and broader pragmatic aspects of shamanism.

Before the lecture, Prof. Tulasi Diwasa, NFS President, had introduced Dr. Peters' works, while poet Bairagi Kaila had given the welcome speech to the participants and Prof. Chudamani Bandhu had delivered Vote of Thanks in the end. The programme was chaired by Madan Mani Dixit, Vice-Chancellor of the Academy.

Reception and Talk Programme in Honour of Finnish Government's Mission

A talk programme was organized by Nepali Folklore Society on May 24th, 1998, on the occasion of the visit of a Finnish government's Mission to Nepal. It was the mission from the Department of International Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland. The mission was in Kathmandu for a cultural exchange programme.

As the Chief Guest in the function, Mr. Esa Hurtig, Finnish Charge d' Affairs to Nepal, said that the mission would play a vital role in promoting Nepali culture in Finland.

Dr. Sonja Servoma from Helsinki University, Dr. Maria Leena Magnusson of Lapland University, and Mr. Esa Peltonen, the cultural secretary of Rovaniemi (a northern Finnish town) had delivered their speech in the programme. Dr. Servomma also read out her poems on the occasion.

About 70 people from different fields related to culture had attended the event. After delivering their presentations, the members of the mission and NFS members presented their views and proposals for the promotion of cultural exchange between the two countries. They also

answered the queries raised by the audience in the discussion. After the discussion, the programme concluded with a proposal for translating poetry in the languages of both the countries.

On the occasion, Nepali Musician Kishor Gurung stressed the need for documenting folk music and offering courses on music through university education. Prof. Tulasi Diwasa, the local consultant of the mission and NFS President, said that it was for the first time the Finnish Government had agreed to assist Nepal for cultural promotion.

Poem Recitation/ Symposium Nepal-Japan Joint Poetry Recitation

(commemorating the 40th anniversary of the establishment of Nepal-Japan relation)

Nepali Folklore Society organized a Nepalese-Japanese joint poetry recitation programme to mark the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relation between Nepal and Japan, in collaboration with Royal Nepal Academy and the Japanese Embassy on 13th December, 1996 at the Academy Hall, Kamaladi Kathmandu. In the programme, two renowned Japanese poets Tanikawa Suntaro and Sasaki Mikiro had recited poems in their native language, while ten Nepali poets including Kedar Man Byathit, Madhav Prasad Ghimire, Bairagi Kaila, Tulasi Diwasa, Ishwor Ballav, Banira Giri, Manjul and others had recited poems in Nepali.

In the programme, the translated versions of the poems recited by Nepali poets were presented in English as well, while the translated versions of those recited by Japanese poets were also presented in Nepali.

Earlier, the vice-chancellor of Royal Nepal Academy Madan Mani Dixit, member Bairagi Kaila and president of the Society Tulasi Diwasa expressed the view that the programme would help further strengthen the relations existing between the two countries.

Counsellor at the Japanese embassy Hojan Kikuchi, stating that the programme had added more vigour to the old relationship existing between the two countries, disclosed that the famous Nepali creations had been translated to make them accessible for the Japanese readers.

Poem Recitation by Dutch-Spanish Poet

Nepali Folklore Society and Royal Nepal Academy organized a poem recitation programme in honour of Germain Droogenbroodt, a famous Dutch-Spanish poet, on January 23, 1998. In the function, the guest poet recited a few poems in Dutch, Spanish, German and English; and the translated versions of

those poems were also presented in Nepali. On the occasion, presenting a paper entitled 'Elements of Nature in Modern Poetry', Poet Droogenbroodt stressed that nature has been constantly present in poetry all over the globe; but nowadays, due to the tendency of the majority of poets to live in the 'skycrapers', poetry is facing the challenge of lacking the reflection of nature upon it.

In the programme, about 30 Nepali poets had recited their poems on various themes. Welcoming the guest and other participants, Prof. Tulasi Diwasa had formally introduced Droogenbroodt as a poet and translator of international reputation. The function was chaired by Poet Madhav Prasad Ghimire, former Vice-Chancellor of Royal Nepal Academy. Academician Bairagi Kaila had delivered Vote of Thanks to the participants.

During his stay in Nepal, Poet Droogenbroodt had informed about his plan for internationalizing the poetry by collecting the poems from different languages of the world, translating them into English, Spanish, Dutch and other languages, and then disseminating the poems through his internet poetry project, by maintaining a special website for the poetry. He had expressed his ambition to promote Nepali poetry abroad through his project by translating Nepali poems into Spanish, Dutch and other languages.

Poetry Symposium

Nepali Folklore Society and Royal Nepal Academy jointly organized a special poetry symposium on February 24, 2004, in honour of two famous poets from Bangladesh: Phajal Shahbuddhin and Amirul Rahman. On the occasion, the two guest poets said that their visit to Nepal was highly cordial and fruitful, among their visits to several other countries.

Nepali poets Madhav Ghimire and Mohan Koirala had recited their poems on the occasion, as the 'Chief Guest' and 'Special Guest' respectively.

The programme was chaired by NFS President Prof. Tulasi Diwasa; and Prof. Abhi Subedi had introduced the foreign poets. On this occasion, about 35 different Nepali poets had recited their poems on various themes.

Finish Maestros Cast a Spell

Traditions of Folk Music in Finland and Nepal

(Taken from *The Rising Nepal*, December 9, 1999)

BY ARHAN STHAPIT

As the audience's long applause at the Buddhist philosophy-influenced Siddharth Hall at Hotel Bluestar here Thursday evening simmered in anticipation, the Finnish and Nepali artists started playing the great folk music of their respective cultures. At the seminar-cum-music performance programme jointly organised by the Embassy of Finland and the Nepali Folklore Society, the Finnish artistes Jouko Paakkonen and Miss Mona-Liisa

Malvelehto dished out the music of harmony so inherent in the Finns' folk music while Nepali groups Sringara, Nepal Express, Karma and Natashwori Sangeet Samuha performed in style at the colourful evening.

This is the first ever joint music performance of Finnish and Nepali music artistes in Nepal. "Importantly, it has been a programme organised as a part of the celebration of the 82nd Independence Day of Finland and to mark the important year of assuming of EU-presidency," Finnish Ambassador to Nepal Esa Hurtig told this reporter.

The Finnish performers cast a magical spell over the audience while their fingers moved deftly on the accordeon to produce the fantastic folk melody with soothing harmony. Jouko Paakkonen, Professor of Accordeon class in Music College of Lappaland at University of Rovaniemi, Finland, was well supported by a sixteen-years-old Finnish lass Mona-Lissa Malvelehto, the winner of renowned Golden Accordeon Competition this year in Finland. With about half a dozen of musical pieces, the Finnish artistes-duo regaled the discerning audience.

Nepali group Sringara presented a number of items that included folk music (*Resham Firiri*) and Newari traditional tune on Tabla, Madal, Sitar and Sarangi.

The vibrant band Nepal Express's repertoire for the evening included ethnic music performances that represented three different geographic regions, namely, mountainous, hill/Kathmandu valley, and Terai. The ensemble of the Kishore Gurung led band included Sarangi, Tungna, flute, small cymbals and typical reedpipe (usually played by Mahayana Buddhist monks). They played a tune from Helambu of the northern Nepal, Rajamati of Newars and a sprightly tune from Terai where they also tried deminiendo and allegro thereby driving the anticipating audience on entertainment spree.

Another group Karma made an apparent attempt to yield a blend of folk music and classical/traditional music of Nepal. Their five-item performance ended with the culmination of tempo and scale of flute, bamboo-flute, Sitar and Tabla. They played Newari, Sherpa and Parbate Folksongs.

It was however legendry Nhuchhe Dangol-led *Natashori Sangeet Samuha* that presented probably the most spectacular show of the evening. With 22 different types of Nepali drums that included *Dapakhin*, *Madals*, *Dhime* (big two-headed drums), *Dholak* and a number of other

Khins (Newari drums) on the orchestra, one single percussionist could have a marvelous performance.

The hall heard an incessant applause when the performer Sanuraj Maharjan moved his hands in the 22 drums which was something simply incredible to believe. His colleagues in harmonium, ponga (Newari pipe), flute and cymbals supported his performance.

Earlier at the first session of the function, a seminar on 'Traditions of Folk Music in Finland and Nepal' was held. Prof. Junko Paakkonen of University of Rovaniemi (Finland) shed light on the basic elements and attributes of Finnish folk music traditions. Dividing his country's folk songs in 3 categories, namely northern, eastern and western Finland based on alien culture influences on the music there of, he elucidated and illustrated their basic musical characteristics.

In his paper Panorama of Nepali Traditional Music, ethnomusicologist Kishor Gurung delved into different musical ensembles popular in different ethnic groups of Nepal. He illustrated attributes of ensembles that comprised *Naumati baza* of Gurung, Magar and Dura communities of western Nepal, Newari instruments and *Mani-rimdu* of Khumbu region's *Mahayana* sect of Buddhism.

Speaking on the tradition of Nepali folk music, life member of the Royal Nepal Academy and President of Nepali Folklore Society Prof. Tulasi Diwasa delineated Nepali folk music in light of the influences of classical and traditional music of Nepal.

"Our research efforts now should be focused on musical features rather than text or lyrics when it comes to folk songs," he said.

Expressing concern on emergence of 'pseudo folk songs' in the name of folk songs in Nepal, Prof. Diwasa said, "Attempts should be made to explore market for Nepali folk music in the global market place, which is a must for promotion of overall Nepali music."

Finnish envoy Esa Hurtig delivered a welcome speech at the function where Vice-Chancellor of the Royal Nepal Academy Mohan Koirala, folklore specialist and litterateur Satya Mohan Joshi and a score of academia, researchers, senior artists and pressmen were present. The master of ceremony of the evening was Dr. Abhi Subedi.



Santa Bahadur Gayak, 48, weaving Sibring, Batulechaur



Harka Bahadur Gandharva, 50, cutting woods in front of his hut, Badahare

About The NFS Newsletter

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

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