

The Limbu Song Palam: A Powerful Means of Inculcating Pragmatic Values

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Abstract

This article, as the statement of the problem, raises the question of whether the Limbu traditional song *Palam* cultivates and instils useful knowledge and skills in practical life. In order to acquire the answer, this article has set the objective to find out the pragmatic values that the *Palam* song has in the Limbu ethnic community. The article, being descriptive in design, has readily made use of description as its pattern of development. It has used the qualitative research technique which is based on unstructured, non-numerical data drawn from related books, journals, research theses, or Online resources. The song *Palam* is concerned with ethnic as well as cultural issues, and for this reason, the article has chosen the ethnocultural theory which deals with ethnic identity-based cultural practices, traditional customs, and social behaviour. The theory also refers to a group of people who have a belief that they are ethnically and culturally divergent from other groups or communities. The analysis has revealed that the folk-song *Palam* has long been tacitly inculcating very significant as well as useful knowledge and skills to the community even though certain native individuals find it of no use at all. From this article, it is fairly expected that interested individuals and anthropologists can acquire specific insights from the Limbu culture and traditional song *Palam*.

Keywords: ethnic community, folk song, Limbu *Palam*, tradition, *Ya-Lang*

Introduction

Background

The Limbu is one of the dominant ethnic communities of Nepal. The Limbu ethnic community's traditional residence lies in the eastern part of Nepal. Referring to the abodes of the Limbu ethnic people, Grierson (1909) states, "The Limbus are one of the principal tribes of eastern Nepal" (p. 283). The Limbu people hold the opinion that the term 'Limbu' is an ethnonym given to this ethnic community by other castes i.e. the Aryan people. In this regard, Das (1896) claims, "They (Limbu people) designate themselves by the name *Yakthung-ba* and their language by the name *Yakthung-ba Pa:n*" (p. 31). Specifying the term 'Limbu' van Driem (1987) maintains the view as "Limbu is Nepali ethnonym and the homeland in eastern Nepal is known as Nepali *Limbuwan*" (p. xix). He doubts Campbell's (1840, p. 595) reference that the term 'Limbu' is *Gurkha* corruption of the autonym 'Ekthoomba'. He means that the term

'*Yakthungba*' is not 'Gurkha' (i.e. the Aryan people or the people speaking *Gurkha*/Nepali language) degradation or alteration. According to Nepal Population Census Report (2011), the total population of Limbu is 387,300 which is 1.46% of the total population of the country. The Limbu, being the ethnic community, possesses its own language (i.e. the Limbu language) and the writing script that is natively termed *Sirijanga Sak*. The Limbu language is one of the offshoots of the Tibeto-Burman Himalayan languages of the Sino-Tibet language family.

The Limbu ethnic community is exclusively identified through certain culture-specific matters. Among such practices, the Limbu song *Palam* is a unique feature which has linked the community to a special ethnic identity. In other words, the *Palam* has played a crucial role to retain the special identity of the Limbu ethnic community. Referring to the traditional song *Palam*, Mabuhang (2005) states, "*Palam* literally denotes the way of speaking (i.e. *Pa?ma* = 'speak'; *La:m* = 'way' thus, *Pa?ma* + *La:m* = *Palam*)" (p. 279). The traditional song *Palam* is not merely limited to singing alone but it is almost always sung along with the traditional dance natively termed as *Yarakma* (Panthare dialect) and *Cha-lakma* (Chhathare dialect), and the equivalent Nepali and English terms of *Yarakma/Cha-lakma* are 'Dhan Nach' and 'Paddy Dance' respectively. *Ya/Cha* literally means 'paddy' and *Lakma/Rakma* means 'trample' and this tradition of paddy trampling activity has now developed as dance. Regarding the 'Paddy Dance', the Limbu historian and culture specialist Chemjong (2003) holds the view as:

The agricultural dance in Limbuwan is called *Ya-Rakma*, or Paddy Dance, or Dhan Nach in the Nepali language. *Ya* means 'Paddy', and *Rakma* means to 'trample'. So *Ya-Rakma* means to 'trample paddy' with a view to separate the grains or paddy from its ears or seed pod. (p. 73)

Here, Chemjong's statement implies that the Limbu dance tradition of *Ya-Rakma* must have originated with the group's activity in order to separate the ears of rice by treading the rice-stalk. But gradually over the period of time, the act of trampling the rice-stalk (hay) has changed into graceful dancing or a pure means of entertainment for the Limbu young hearts.

The *Palam* is essentially the cultural heritage of the Limbu ethnic community. The Limbu people are known to the other rest communities through such cultural features including the traditional song *Palam* and dance *Ya-lang*. As *Palam* is made, the dance *Ya-Lang* comes automatically because they must often co-occur. These two activities (i.e. singing *Palam* and dancing *Ya-Lang*) are not separate items performed by separate persons or groups. Their relationship is just like the nail and the flesh. In this sense, the *Palam* song has a distinct feature from other types of singing and dancing because in other kinds of singing and dancing the persons or the groups are usually separate that is, one group or party performs the singing while the other performs dancing. This unique cultural feature of the *Palam* song and *Ya-lang* dance should be the concern not only of the Limbu ethnic community but it should also be the concern of humanity at large.

Problems, Objectives and Methodology

About this traditional song *Palam*, certain non-native Limbu people are heard commenting on it as useless or good for nothing. I have thought of their comments as the result of ignorance about the essence of the cultural song. When people are unknown of the issue, they can say anything or can pass shallow as well as subjective interpretations of the matter. But an even more serious matter about the issue is that a certain number of native Limbu are found to be indifferent towards it. The Limbu natives, who do not consider the *Palam* and *Ya-Lang* positively, often argue that these things are never helpful for progress and prosperity in the present context. They are rather wasting time and misleading our youths. Now, this article has to seek the answer whether the *Palam* tradition is like the one as certain native as well as non-native Limbu people have blamed it! Does the *Palam* not have any significance in the present-day world?

To address the above questions, this article aims at discussing the Limbu ethnic cultural song *Palam*. While discussing the particular issue *Palam*, the article attempts to describe and analyze as to how this *Palam* song is an invaluable cultural heritage in the Limbu community and what practical usages it has for the Limbu ethnic people. Its pragmatic values are interpreted from different dimensions i.e. cultural, linguistic, sociolinguistic, anthropological or literary aspects. One thing that I must admit is that it is merely an article, being it so, it can present brief sketch of the raised issues regarding the *Palam* and its unavoidable part *Ya-Lang*. Although this article is essentially brief and sketchy as well, it is fairly expected that it can display the Limbu *Palam* plus *Ya-Lang* in a mini-scale orthographic picture. Hence, the interested individuals can perceive the unique cultural items i.e. the *Palam* song and *Ya-Lang* dance which belong to a small ethnic Limbu community dwelling in the eastern part of Nepal.

Review of Literature

Regarding the song *Palam*, considerable numbers of Limbu native writers have written books on it, and they have discussed its different aspects. Kandangwa (1963) has written a book entitled *Nepali Jana Sahitya* [Nepali Folk Literature]. In this book, he has referred to the Limbu traditional song *Palam*. He introduced the *Palam*, and discussed the technique used while singing it. Likewise, he has stated the ways of dancing the *Ya-Lang* (paddy dance). After one year of his book's publication, Khamdak and Subba (1964) wrote a book about the *Palam* titled *Yuma Sam nu Palam* [*Palam* with *Yuma* Goddess]. This book has directly presented the *Palam* in which *Yuma* goddess is thought of as another singing partner. *Yuma* is praised and adored using the most polite form of language. Unlike the book *Yuma Sam nu Palam*, Chemjong's (1967/2003) book entitled *History and Culture of Kirat People* has referred to the kind of *Ya-Lang* while singing the *Palam*, and specified the basic rules for dancing the *Ya-Lang*. Similarly, Chongbang (1993) has written the book *Yalak Palam* in which he referred to the different kinds of *Palam* sung in different situations. The content and style of singing *Palam* differ according

to occasions (i.e. matrimonial ceremony vs. cleansing ritual) and singing partners (familiar vs. newer ones). Subba (1995) has written an exemplary book *Culture and Religion of Limbus* in which he has mentioned the characteristic features of the *Palam* and *Ya-Lang*.

Mabuhang (2005) published an article "Limbu sanskritima gayanko mahatwa" [The significance of singing in Limbu culture] in *Swarna Mahotsab Smarika [Golden Jubilee Commemorative Volume]* in which he stated the importance of singing in Limbu culture. He further states that the Limbu songs are very significant in terms of various ritualistic performances such as wedding ceremonies, housewarming parties, and the last death rites. The next article "*Ya-Lang: An intangible Limbu cultural heritage*" by Ramesh Kumar Limbu was published in the Journal of Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS) *Contribution to Nepalese Studies* in January 2011. In the process of discussing the *Ya-lang*, Limbu (2011) describes and analyses the *Palam* - an indispensable element of the dance *Ya-Lang*. His analysis of the *Palam* is mainly based on the structural make-up of the song *Palam*. His next article "Majesty of Limbu love songs: The Case of Sangbahangphe's *Char Maya Palam* (2021)" states how the *Palam* exquisitely characterizes various aspects of sense in terms of priority and decorum. Yakso's (2015) Master's thesis entitled *Prosodic Features in Limbu Folk-Song Palam* has discussed the musical aspect of the *Palam*. Sangbahangphe (2016) is another book writer on *Palam*. His book entitled *Char Maya Palam [Palam of Four-Love-Type]* has divided four types of love on the basis of the contents of the *Palam* and the purposes of love. Concerning the *Palam* song, Tumbahang (2020) has published an article on "Limbus' traditional song *Palam*: Desperately Longing for Rejuvenation" in the Journal *Gyanjyoti: A Multidisciplinary Journal [Cognitive Illumination: A Multidisciplinary Journal]* which has shown his deep concern over the declining position of the *Palam* song. Although the *Palam* has been suffering from the decadent condition, it is flowing continuously due to its poetic nature as well as the politeness principle. This argument is forwarded by Tumbahang (2021) in his next article "Continual Flow of Limbu *Palam* Song: A Politeness Principle Perspective" published in the Journal *JODEM*.

A closer review of the aforementioned books and journal articles related to the Limbu *Palam* song, it reveals that no one has referred to the 'pragmatic value of the *Palam* singing tradition.' In this regard, the article is expected to deal with a newer aspect of the Limbu cultural song *Palam*.

As has already been mentioned that this very article attempts to address the question such as what are the rationales of the Limbu folk-song *Palam* in the practical life. And to attain the answer to the question, it has set the objective to analyze the pragmatic values of the song *Palam*. While analyzing the issues, it has made use of descriptive design and has opted to avail the qualitative technique which is based on unstructured and non-numerical data. The necessary data have been drawn through related books, articles, journals, research documents or Online resources. In the process of developing the pattern of description, it has followed the

framework of the ethnocultural theory that refers to an ethnic identity upheld by cultural practice, tradition and society. Furthermore, the ethnocultural theory also specifies a group of people who believe they are ethnically and culturally different from other ethnic communities. The principal aim of this approach is to arrive at the discourse nature of the folk-song *Palam* and its significance and usage in practical life. It is claimed because ethnocultural theorists such as Nagata, Kohn-Wood and Suzuki (2012) hold the opinion that culture has become one of the most constructs in contemporary psychology. They seem to convey the message that culture plays a dominant role to shape a person's ideas and behaviour.

Results and Discussion

The *Palam* is an improvised song or in other words, it is created, invented or extemporized kind of song which is created then and there along with the dance *Ya-Lang*. The acts of both singing and dancing go together, and unlike other types of singing and dancing, the singers and dancers are the same persons in this cultural item. It is sung in specific tonal accent and glide, melodic cadence, rhythmical flow, pitch levels, tempo, juncture or in certain intonation. Hence, the *Palam*, being essentially a song, embraces specific musical and melodic features which are realized as the language of the world for music and melody are not confined to a narrow range of community or national boundaries. It is often said that music is the terrible magic which can make a person do everything as the emotions expressed by the music and song. In the early dawn of *Palam* and *Ya-lang* tradition, the primary purpose was supposed to thrash the paddy ears from the pod and to entertain the participants (the then workers) through the *Palam*. The agro-based act of singing and dancing has altered in a pure form of recreation or entertainment for the youths. In the subsequent writing, the article deals with the issues of how the *Palam* song contributes to the practical life of the Limbu ethnic community.

Signposting the Ethnic Identity

The foremost thing that the Limbu folk song *Palam* serves is the ethnic identity of the Limbu community. Ethnic identity is obviously concerned with the tradition or cultural practice that differentiates a particular community from other communities. Furthermore, it also suggests that the people belonging to the specific ethnic group hold the belief that they are ethnically or culturally distinct from others. Hence, to talk about the major role of the *Palam* in the Limbu community is that it has played a crucial role in creating distinct identity for this community. Whenever the reference to the *Palam* and *Ya-Lang* (Nep. *Dhan Nach*; Eng. Paddy Dance) comes up, the concept of the ethnic Limbu (Yakthungba) flickers itself in one's mind. In other words, these co-occurring activities i.e. *Palam* and *Ya-Lang* have devised a unique cultural identity, and they have remarkably distinguished the Limbu people from the rest of the communities. The social studies subject of school level curriculum in Nepal has introduced the Limbu *Palam* and *Ya-Lang* (*Dhan Nach*) as the cultural song and dance of the Limbu

community. In the same way, the quiz question "To which ethnic community do the *Palam* song and *Dhan Nach* (*Ya-Lang*) dance belong?" is mostly asked to test the general knowledge of the students during the quiz-contest program held in the schools. Therefore, this can be strong evidence to support the prominent role that the *Palam* and *Ya-Lang* (*Dhan Natch*) are playing as the determinant role of Limbu's ethnic identity.

Enriching the Linguistic Competency

The *Palam* is a duet in which two young Limbu boys (lad) and girls (lass) sing turn by turn. During the signing period, the couple performs a slow-motioned dance which is natively known as *Ya-Lang* (*Dhan Nach*). One of the singers sings the *Palam* verse and the next partner follows and thus, it sounds like the chorus song because initially the verse is sung alone by one of the singers, then both singers repeat the same verse the second time. The *Palam*, being a cultural phenomenon, has a very close relationship with the Limbu language. It means that the *Palam* has to do with linguistic prosperity and enhancement. It is not the matter of exaggeration to say that the Limbu language can live by means of this cultural song, and it can provide the Limbu natives with authentic sources of linguistic items such as vocabulary of various aspects or fields, meanings of literal or figurative levels, and syntactic pattern basically poetic form on the one hand and the paralinguistic features such as rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance, pitch, melody, tempo or intonation on the other.

The *Palam* proves to be the best means of communication through which the singer conveys his/her emotion and aspiration, love and hatred, pleasure and pain, hope and despair, fear and confidence, boon and bane, feeling and experience or virtue and vice. In order to express these kinds of feelings, the singer needs to have mastery over specific aspects of language. The song is held in the dialogue form in which one partner expresses his/her ideas for from 10 to 60 minutes. This singing period taken by one singer is natively termed as *Charan* or equivalent meaning in English can be as 'phase/turn'. In dialogic exchanges, the subject matter can include very common notions to very complicated philosophical riddles. The partners can exchange witty questions and answers. The *Palam*, being an oral poetry or one of the dominant literary genres "expands the language awareness and encourages talking about the opinion and feelings" (Lazar, 1993, p. 15). The process of *Palam* singing is held in an extremely motivating environment because there are young hearts singing and dancing with much enthusiasm. And when there is a strong motivation, it is natural that the learning becomes faster and better.

The above discussion is concerned with the cognitive aspect of language acquisition. While talking about the aspect of language skills, the two skills i.e. listening and speaking (receptive vs. productive) out of four, are rigorously learnt in the *Palam* song. The listening skill is duly practised since there can be various singing pairs either in a circle or in a linear type of dance. In such a commotion, one has to develop a very keen interest in listening. If one fails to listen to the utterances carefully, it can result in incorrect replies later on. Any question

that is asked to be replied by the counterpart needs a very tactful answer. If the singer is found unable to reply properly, such a situation is thought to be a matter of losing one's face, or 'falling head down'. In this way, the *Palam* singers must attain the necessary listening as well as speaking skills of language to be smart at listening and speaking skills.

Building up Expressive Confidence

Most of the Limbu young people are found hesitant and nervous in the initial stages of *Palam* singing activities because they are not used to speaking or more specifically singing in public places such as market-fair (i.e. Bazaar), wedding ceremonies, last death rituals, or feasts and festivals. The beginners actually do not take part in the singing and dancing competition all of a sudden. Rather they always go to the spot where their seniors are performing the act of singing and dancing. They then sit nearby and attentively listen to the *Palam* singing, and watch the stepping pattern of the dance, *Ya-Lang*. By observing performed activities of their elders, the beginners gradually start gaining a certain confidence level. After a while, the juniors attempt to join the line or circle in order to follow the ways of how their seniors sing and dance. This practice stage can continue for some months or even years because singing *Palam* and dancing *Ya-Lang* are merely occasional happenings. In other words, the activities are not held in short interval. There are many market-fairs which take place once a year especially in the winter season since there is not much work load then. In the same way, there is not always marriage ceremony nor is there the death ritual. This means the interested young people have to wait patiently for the forthcoming occasions. However, *Palam* singing practice can also be done alone during cattle-herding, shoots and dry-leaves collecting, the farm working and the long trekking. But singing at home especially in front of the parents, grandparents, senior uncles and aunties is considered to be indecent manner.

Above all, the interested individuals come across the two major phases i.e. observation and practice, and thus, they can build up the confidence in their expression.

Transferring Tradition and Culture

The growing children in the Limbu society may not overtly realize that they are behaving according to the social values, norms, mores and laws. This means everything they are doing or behaving to be a decent social member falls under culture. In this regard, Brown and Hood (2005) state, "Culture is everything that we are socialized to do, think, use and make. Much of what humans think and do is learned from the **society** they live in," (pp. 29-30). The act of *Palam* singing and *Ya-Lang* (*Dhan Nach*) dancing is essentially the traditional form of the Limbu ethnic community because it originated from time immemorial passing from generation to generation and it is still in vogue. The *Ya-Lang* is said to have started with the activity of paddy harvesting in which a group of people would trample the piled up rice-stalks stepping five steps forth and five steps back. During the harvest time, flocks of birds would

come and eat up the harvested rice. So in order to drive the birds away, the group of harvesters might have uttered as *ha... ha... ha...* (utterance used for chasing fowls). The utterance *ha... ha... ha...* is believed to have originated as the *Palam* singing. Nowadays, the *Ya-Lang* (Paddy Dance) dancing and *Palam* singing are not held at paddy fields to thrash rice and to drive away the rice-eating birds, but these traditional things are still practised and performed on the stages, platforms, special gatherings (i.e. jamborees) and festivals. The singing *Palam* and dancing *Ya-Lang* are now developed as a part of Limbu culture. It is, therefore, the *Palam* and its inevitable dance *Ya-Lang* which are transferring the tradition and forming the culture.

Enhancing Courteous Manner

The *Palam* is essentially the verbal behavior exchanged between the pair of young Limbu boys and girls. The act of singing *Palam* is usually held between a boy and girl who are out of consanguineous or affinal relationships. Unlike certain communities, the Limbu has the importance of lineage in affinal relationships. Speaking candidly, the pairs taking part in the singing can marry each other. The exchanges in their dialogue turn by turn involve very thoughtfully constructed 'adjacency pairs' of carefully selected words so as to maintain courtesy and the most polite form of speech. Although the *Palam* singers do not have any idea of G. N. Leech's (1936-2014) theory i.e. 'Politeness Principle', and H. P. Grice's (1913-1988) theory of "Cooperative Principle" their verbal behavior seems to be closely following the "Principle of Politeness", and "Cooperative Principle". The singing partners are well aware of the fact that they are tacitly competing against each other but yet they are following a certain courteous manner. The obvious matter for conversation is that there is better communication as the participants duly regard the courtesies. During the duet or serenade, the singing pairs are very much conscious about maintaining good manners not only by their speech (i.e. *Palam* singing) but also through their actions (i.e. *Ya-Lang*/Paddy Dance). For instance, when anyone of the singing pairs mistakenly happens to touch or trample the foot of the other, the member of pair comes off the line and pays obeisance (Limbu - *Sya:mama*:/Eng - bow down for respect). In the same way, both of them are very sensitive to the notions like "equity in justice, empathy and treating others alike" (Smalzer, 2014, pp. 117-18). In the course of time, the participants can get the opportunity to exercise courteous behaviour in the real ground and context, and thus it promotes good manners in their speeches and deeds as well.

Developing Socialization

The *Palam* can serve as one of the best means of socialization for the Limbu ethnic group. This issue of 'socialization' is in some respect related to the earlier point 'Enhancing Courteous Manner' too because courteous manner refers to the processes of learning and adopting the socially or culturally accepted norms, values, codes, conducts or more specific behaviours. If one has the quality of good manners, s/he can adapt to the social milieu very easily. There is a popular quip about politeness and it refers to as *nobody has ever yet lost*

anything by politeness but many people have lost much by rudeness. Similarly, another quip also mentions thus, *politeness is sometimes called the oil of the social machines because it is necessary to the smooth and easy-working of the parts of social organization as oil to that of the various parts of the machine.* Regarding the *Palam* singing, the politeness is the foremost element for the smooth and natural conversation/dialogue. When one partner flouts expected manner of verbal communication, instantly the communication breaks up its continuity. The singers are obliged to learn and follow the socially accepted manners and behaviours in both speech and action. In the case of *Palam* singing, the process of socialization is not confined to the family members or neighbours; however, it is the socialization with the newer or sometimes with strangers too. Even if the participants are not newer or strangers, they can be the persons to be regarded as guests. Courtesy, empathy, politeness, good manner, equity in justice, or treating everyone alike are the essential ingredients of socialization which the individuals learn through *Palam* singing. Thus, the *Palam* facilitates the participants for easy socialization.

Providing Opportunity for Right Partner Selection

As a custom, the *Palam* singing co-occurs with the *Ya-Lang* dance. Unlike the other kinds of singing and dancing, the *Palam* singers and *Ya-Lang* dancers are the same people. In the standing position, the two heterogeneous sexes make the pair by firmly catching hands with each other. If the singers form the circle dance (i.e. the circle dance includes many pairs), they will not have to take a full turning in every short interval, but when they form a linear dancing pattern, they have to take the full turning. In this type of dancing pattern, they catch each other's left hand at one time and the right hand at another time. In the past, that hand-catching act had a special purpose, that is, the dancers used to determine the partner's hands by feeling them whether they were softer or harder. If the partner's hands (i.e., palms in the form of a handshake) were felt to be harder, they would assume that the partner must have been a hard-working one. On the contrary, when the hands were softer, it would imply that the person could not be the hard-working one, or most presumably s/he could be either lazy or s/he could be living a high-standard life (luxurious one). That was how the *Palam* singers in the past made decisions about their life partners. But nowadays, singers make decisions about their life partner not by feeling the singing/dancing partner's hands but by exchanging each other's ideas, attitudes, feelings and aspirations. They can avail of the singing/dancing period as today's dating period. The *Palam* singing period offers the pairs to understand each other's emotions and intentions. Good communication results in better friendship and they begin to confide in each other, sharing intimate aspects of their personal lives and feelings. Consequently, it nurtures feelings of warmth, belief, love and affection in the participants. Naturally, their intimacy, love and fondness reach the climax of matrimonial ties. There are considerable numbers of cases in which the singing/dancing partners have converted themselves into life partners.

Promoting Creative as well as Imaginative Faculties

A *Palam* singer very often intends to sing and dance with the person whom s/he loves much. But it is not always possible to meet loved ones on various occasions and in different situations. Sometimes, new guests come to the village and in the same way; the person becomes a guest in a newer village. In such a situation, the singer must sing *Palam* and dance *Ya-Lang* every night (customarily, *Palam* singing and *Ya-Lang* dancing occur at night) with the newer person so long as she/he stays in that new place. It is because singing *Palam* and dancing *Ya-Lang* are cultural activities so a young Limbu boy (*Thangben*) and a young Limbu girl (*Menchhya*) do not have any option except singing and dancing. This implies that the act of singing *Palam* becomes extemporized singing that is, the *Palam* singer should create a suitable kind of content, context and discourse right then and there. If the singer is participating from the host side, as a rule, he or she is expected to initiate the *Palam* singing activity. On the contrary of it, when the singer is participating from the guest's side, he or she has to reply to the address made by the host. Both participants are unknown about what issues will be raised by the counterpart. In other words, there is neither a ready-made question nor is there an answer to the question. This kind of situation arises due to familiarity vs. unfamiliarity with the participant, expertise, location, occasion, or the kind of program the singers have participated in. Hence, creative power is a must on the part of singers.

The *Palam* singer can take up any kind of issue for discussion such as mythical reference narrating the creation of various objects and phenomena, historical events, social customs, moral and philosophical attitude, or life and the world. However, the central theme of their dealing rests on love and affection. While dealing with the human emotion 'love', the singers have to consider other related emotions to 'love' such as hope and despair; pleasure and pain; joy and sorrow; fantasy and fact; success and failure; happiness and agony; life and death, and so forth. The emotions which have just been mentioned are essentially abstract notions or intangible entities. Such abstract ideas are seized through imagination, not by other things or objects. How much the imagination is an urgent thing can be shown in the following question and its reply:

Lady Singer (Limbu term *Menchhya*) asks the question We could not get married in this life which we are living now. In our rebirth, if we happen to be born as a flower, which flower shall we choose to be, and where shall we meet then?

Gentleman (Limbu term *Thangben*) replies to the question as In our rebirth, we shall be born in the form of an immortal kind of a couple of love flowers in the heavenly garden of *Muringla-Khiringla* land. (Sangbangphe, 2016, pp. 152-53)

Now, as one considers the above-given question and its reply, she or he can find that these questions and answers are created by means of imagination. The mentioned issues such as

'rebirth', 'love flower', or 'Muringla-Khiringla' garden do not have real existence, and these notions cannot be proved by logic or evidence. They are there out of the creation through imagination.

To sum up, the *Palam* singing readily promotes creativity and imaginative power in the singers.

Conclusion

The Limbu is one of the dominant groups in the ethnic communities of Nepal. The Limbu ethnic people are the inhabitants of the eastern hilly region popularly known as *Limbuwan* - the land of the Limbus. This ethnic community has its own cultural practices which distinguish it from other ethnic communities. Out of many cultural practices, the *Palam* song is the traditional song - a part of the Limbu culture. This folk song is an improvised song which is very popular among the different ethnic groups and considered as culture-specific song associated with the ethnic identity of the Limbus. A significant number of people including Limbu as well as non-Limbu natives do not find any importance of following the *Palam* singing tradition. However, a closer reading on the *Palam* singing and associated dance *Ya-Lang* reveals that there are specific practical usages of the *Palam* folk song. The first pragmatic value of the *Palam* is that it serves as an ethnic identity of the Limbu community. Enhancing linguistic competence is another practical achievement of the folk song. When the singer gains language competency, it builds up confidence in expression. The *Palam* song functions as a means of transferring traditional ideas and culture. It fosters courteous manners in the singers and thus, they can live a happier life. Courteous behaviour facilitates the process of socialization. Likewise, the *Palam* singing and *Ya-Lang* dancing provide the participants with excellent opportunities for making the right choice of the life partner. It also readily promotes creative as well as imaginative faculties in the singers.

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