

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/jodem.v16i1.85681>**Sakhewa Silli in Bantawa Rai: A Study of Indigenous Ecocriticism*****¹Man Kumar Rai**¹Asst. Professor, Mahendra Multiple Campus, Dharan, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
email: rai.mankum@gmail.com**Abstract**

This study examines the profound interconnection between the Sakhewa sillis (different steps of cultural dance of Bantawa Rai sub-group of Kirant Rai community) and nature, through the lens of indigenous ecocriticism. Sakhewa dance is not merely a medium of entertainment; its various sillis (dance movements) narrate the Kirant Rai community's deep relationship with nature, their worldview, and their civilization. Each sillis symbolizes a respectful engagement with the environment, reflecting themes such as agricultural cycles, migration of animals, and spiritual communication with nature and ancestral spirits. The Worldview of the indigenous Kirant Rai community towards nature is depicted through the Sakhewa sillis. However, the influence of globalization and pop culture, historical knowledge are being under shadowed. Many urban youths perceive Sakhewa merely as medium of entertainment. Indigenous ecocriticism has been used as a theoretical tool to reveal ecological consciousness and cultural identity. By highlighting different symbolic meanings of sillis, this paper emphasizes the urgent need to preserve such indigenous cultural expressions as vital forms of environmental and cultural awareness.

Keywords: Cultural awareness, indigenous ecocriticism, sakhewa

Introduction

The *Kirant* Rai community celebrates Sakhewa/ Sakenwa/ Sakela (different names are used according to linguistic sub-groups of the Kirant Rai community) as their biggest festival through dance in Ubhouli and Udhoulis worshipping nature. It is estimated that the Kirant Rai have been living in Nepal for twenty-five hundred years ("Kirant Rai Documentary" 00:1:20-1:30). Yalamber is the first king from the Kirant community who established a modern and powerful sovereign state. The Rai are an

* Article Received: 2025/03/08

Article Revised: 2025/07/09

Article Accepted: 2025/08/05

Published: 2025/11/07

Department of English, Mahendra Multiple Campus, Dharan, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

ethnolinguistic group belonging to the Tibeto-Burman linguistic ethnicity. They mainly reside in the eastern part of Nepal, the Indian state of Sikkim, Darjeeling and Kalimpong, and south-western Bhutan (Sapkota 18). They primarily inhabited the area between the Dudh Koshi and Tamar rivers in Nepal. However, due to increasing internal migration, they are now living in different parts of the country.

The Rai community has different languages which differ from paachha to paachha (sub-group to another sub-group). Linguist Tara Mani Rai reports that more than 25 languages are spoken within the Rai community (2). Despite this linguistic diversity, the community shares cultural similarities—particularly in the practice of the Sakela dance. Although different linguistic groups refer to the Sakhewa festival by various names, the essence of the celebration remains consistent across the Rai people. The Rai community celebrates this festival twice a year, known as Ubhouli and Udhoul (Kamaljung Rai 14). They dance in circle around the Sakela shrine.

Durga Maya Rai mentions that the Rai community has been dancing Sakhewa since Kirant dynasty established in Kathmandu. They worship nature through different sillis of Sakhewa dance. They narrate stories of the whole year through different sillis. Sakela dance is as a medium of communication for the Rai community. Sillis refer to different steps of dance which mimic the activities of animals, natural phenomena and depict the intricacies of human relationship with nature (Dhungel para. iii). Different sillis show how the Rai community learns their way of life from nature and considers nature as their family members.

Researcher Kamaljung Rai reported that King Buddhahang Rai initiated the Sakhewa dance in worship of Henkungbung, hoping to regain control over Kathmandu (16). There are different myths about when and how Kirant Rai started celebrating Sakhewa Dance. In the past, the Kirant Rai used to worship natural elements such as water, land, wind, stone, and the sun, while carrying bows and swords, when they began practicing agriculture. The myths of Kurle Dove, the tragic story of Tayama, Khiyama and Hechakuppa.

According to Kirant myth, Hechakuppa killed a Dove and cut it into different pieces for food. He threw mazes and rice found inside the stomach of a bird onto the ground. After a few months, these grains sprouted and grew into

abundant crops of maize and rice. Nalungba argued that they were edible, whereas Hechakuppa said that they were poisonous. Nalungba claimed that they were not poisonous because they had already eaten dove's meat. If they were poisonous, they would be affected by the meat of the Dove. They eventually ate the rice and maize that had grown from the land, but they became sick. Despite this, the crops continued to grow the following year. Before consuming the new harvest, they performed rituals through the Sakhewa dancing, worshiping the land, water, and wind. (Origin of Sakela 0:44-5:00)

The *Kirant* Rai community's *Sakhewa* dance is believed to have originated with the beginning of agriculture. Moreover, during Sakhewa festival, they seek permission from their ancestors before consuming newly harvested food.

The Rai community believes that every part of nature is a source of power. The Rai people worship nature in order to seek their protection over human beings and their agricultural activities. Similarly, they honor their ancestors by performing ritual performances twice a year. They seek permission from the three stones before performing the Sakhewa dance.

Different sub-tribes of Rai have different names for Samkhalung i.e. three stones; two stones stand for male and female and the last one represents the ancestor. The Rai community worship chula with the help of Bijuwa/Maangpa. The Maangpa is believed to possess special magical power that allows him to communicate with their ancestors and nature. Before starting the Sakhewa dance, the Maangpa performs a ritual activity which is called Hutlung Khutkawnu, in which they seek permission from the Chula/three stones of the oven. Although ritual performances of the Rai community have a strong connection with nature, such relationships are overlooked by the syllabus of schools, universities and high-level policy makers. Different performances of sillis show ecological awareness in the Rai community's cultural performances. The Sakhewa sillis are as a medium of communication that show the belief system. The Rai community individual shares their tradition through different sillis. Moreover, they deliver messages through different sillis. However, such a deep level of understandings is being overlooked by the young generation. The questions of the researcher are: what environmental values and significance are represented in the Sakhewa sillis, why the young generation have a low level of understanding about the relationship of human and nature and how Sakhewa dance makes people aware of the importance of the

environment in human civilization. The objectives of this study are as such: to study the significance and values of nature in Sakhewa silli, examine the low level of understanding about relationship between human beings and nature and analyze the role of Sakhewa sillis in bringing awareness to young Kiranti youths.

Literature Review

The Kirant Rai community performs Sakhewa dance twice a year to honor ancestors and worship nature. The dance symbolizes cyclical nature of life. Moreover, Sakhewa sillis have become a powerful medium of resistance against state domination (Susma Rai 200). Despite linguistic diversity within the Rai community, Sakhewa dance brings some level of uniformity among the Rai community. The majority of the Rai community follow the same style of dance and they can understand messages delivered through different forms of sillis.

The Kirat Rai Yayokkha, Kirat Yakthung Chumlung, Kirat Yakhha Chumma, Sunuwar Sewa Samaj and others, collectively celebrated the Sakhewa festival, demonstrating protest against the naming of province no. 1, and had urged the state and the federal government to endorse the common name based on their collective identity as Kirant Province' near the National Assembly building, New Baneshwor. (Susma Rai 211)

The Rai community protested against the naming of Province No. 1, as the chosen name did not reflect their ethnic identity. *Sakhewa Silli* became a platform for voicing their concerns and a medium of pressuring the government to reconsider the decision.

Sillis narrate different activities and lifestyles of the Kirant Rai community. They are beautified with the sound of drum and cymbals. The leaders of the dance Sillihangpa and Sillihanma show direction to other dancers. All the dancers have to follow the steps performed by Sillihangpa and Sillihangma.

However, modern technologies are decreasing the values and aura of cultural dances. Dik Bahadur Rai studies different impacts of modern technologies in the sillis of the Rai community. Youths are dancing in their own style by adopting western cultures in order to draw the attention of audiences in YouTube channels or Facebook reel (D. B. Rai 13). Every step of dance and sillis have connotative and denotative meanings. Dik Bahadur Rai writes:

Department of English, Mahendra Multiple Campus, Dharan, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

The meaning of its rituals lies in its performance, which is visible and whose actions create more meanings than words. For example; while performing the Sakhewa Silli dance at once it brings lots of meanings, which we cannot always describe with words. Most of the time, its meaning lies in how it is expressed, or how it is symbolized. It is done at a particular time or during ritualistic periods. It could be certain prayers, mantras and songs. It is done together by acting, or by symbolic objects. For example, in mourning rituals spreading water, oil or animals' blood may be part of the purification. (15)

The young dancers are not well familiar with the ritual values of the dance. The majority of the young dancers see videos and learn different steps of dance. Moreover, dancers also want to be popular performing different new steps which may not have a connection with the Kirant myths and philosophy.

Sakhewa dance is not only a means of entertainment, it is a festival of unity, harmony and art. Moreover, Sakhewa dance is a medium of worshipping nature and an offering for healthy crops (Dhungel para. iv). The *Silis* mimic animals' movements, natural phenomena, and depict the intricacies of human relationships with nature. The dancers carry crops and *jhyamtas* (cymbals). They even carry a yak-tail whisk known as *Chamara*, which is an ancient royal insignia. They sing songs while dancing that deliver the intended messages of the dance or various sillis of Sakhewa dance. During the Sakhewa festival, the Kirant Rai community honours their ancestors and nature through dance. The Rai people share their experiences through the symbolic meanings of sillis. Sakhewa is an artistic performance that symbolizes Rai's history, culture, civilization, identity, and philosophy of life. They imitate their ancestors' activities through different sillis and show different activities of animals and worship land, water, wind, and sky.

Sara Moncada points out the intrinsic role of dance in indigenous culture as it relates to spiritual expression and cultural identity within Native peoples (7). Within Native worldviews, dance becomes an avenue through which they explore their concepts of story, history, and the natural world. The dance work carries a substantial role within the living tradition as an exploration of our essence, expanding and contracting. The indigenous people believe that dance connects them back to traditional practices that are vital expressions of identity and spirituality (Monda 15). Like Native people of

America, the Sakhewa dance has become a medium of transmitting tradition from generation to generation.

Arinze states that dance is a language that expresses the geographical locations, biological temperament, religious beliefs, political and historical experiences of the people who own it (qtd. in Chielotam 60). Indigenous knowledge can be broadly defined as the knowledge that an indigenous community accumulates over generations of living in a particular environment. A number of terms are used interchangeably to refer to the concept of indigenous knowledge like traditional knowledge, technical knowledge and local knowledge. The concept of Indigenous knowledge has been overemphasized in some contexts, while in others it has been misrepresented as inferior and not to be reckoned with, thereby making indigenous knowledge a downgraded form of knowledge.

Scholars have studied different aspects of Sakhewa dance and the symbolic meanings of sillis. The previous studies examine different dances of the indigenous people of America. This paper examines presented deep relationship between nature and ritual performances of the Rai community of Nepal regarding the Sakhewa sillis.

Methodology

The objective of this paper is to study ecological awareness in the ritual performance of the Kirant Rai community. The article examines messages delivered by the various Sakhewa sillis. It as qualitative research employing online semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative information (Cohen et al., 368). As suggested by Denzin and Lincoln, Sakhewa dances were observed purposively in different parts of Sakhewa sillis mainly in different parts of Sunsari district. Indigenous Ecocriticism has been used as a theoretical tool in order to analyze the relationship of Bantawa Rai's Sakhewa sillis and the cycle of nature. Ecology is a movement that has questioned the anthropocentric point of view. Ecologists point out the need for awareness regarding nature as family members in order to save the environment. Ecology-oriented literatures try to plead for a better understanding of nature in its wider significant. Lawrence Buell defines ecocriticism "as a study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalists' praxis"(430). The objective of this study is to develop the value of nature in literature.

Shallow and deep ecology are two ways of understanding nature. Shallow ecology is essentially anthropocentric, which believes that the whole purpose of nature is to serve mankind and humans are the masters of nature; man being the only literary creature thinks himself superior over the others. It also advocates systematic usage of natural resources like coal, gas, forests, oil, etc., for a sustainable future. But deep ecology challenges this conservation mode and advocates preservation of nature to keep it in its original form without any interference of man, as nature has its own right to survive.

All organisms on this earth have their own intrinsic values and no one is the master of anybody. This realization will give equal rights to every organism maintaining a balance in the ecosystem.

Lawrence Buell identifies two waves of ecocriticism; the first wave of ecocriticism focused on nature writing, nature poetry, and wilderness fiction, whereas the second wave criticizes the cruel behavior of human beings against nature (138). This wave of ecocriticism is also known as revisionist ecocriticism. It seeks to locate the vestiges of nature in cities and exposes crimes of eco-injustice against society's marginal section.

In this regard, William Howarth says at the beginning of his essay 'Some Principles of Ecocriticism':

Eco and critic both derive from Greek, *oikos* and *kritis* and in tandem they mean "house judge," which may surprise many lovers of green, outdoor writing. A long-winded gloss on ecocritical might run as follows: "a person who judges the merits and faults of writings that depict the effects of culture upon nature, with a view toward celebrating nature's berating its despoilers, and reversing their harm through political action." So, the *oikos* is nature, a place Edward Hoagland calls *Our widest home*, and the *kritikos* is an arbiter of taste who wants the house kept in good order, no boots or dishes strewn about to ruin the original decor. (69)

From this discussion on the etymological origin of the word ecocriticism, we get the idea that it is an approach to literature that studies human and nature relationship.

Eco-critics argue that the relationship between human beings and nature are interrelated. However, human beings' activities often create problems in the relationship between man and nature. Barry Commoner says that everything is connected to everything else (qtd. in Nuri 253). Ecocriticism specially studies those

literary texts that give special focus on the portrayal of the reality of the relationship between humankind and the world; it inhabits and shares with other beings.

Ecocriticism does not confine itself to the imaginative literatures, but also likes to include writings from non-literary disciplines such as ecology, anthropology, natural sciences, psychology, philosophy, history, etc., in order to show a more realistic picture of the relationship between humankind and the world it inhabits and shares with other beings (Nuri 256). Literatures deal with the issue of humans' deep relation with the phenomena of nature.

Indigenous Eco-critic, Joni Adamson states that the myths, oral tradition and ritual performances of indigenous people show the bonding of nature and their day-to-day activities (15). The indigenous ecocriticism values oral traditions, myths, and ritual performances as ecological texts. The indigenous eco-critics raise environmental justice issues in their literary texts. Ecocriticism and Indigenous Studies' focus on cosmovision's (Monani and Adamson 4). Dance is a medium of transmitting information through the movement of different parts of the body. The dancers communicate messages through different postures and gestures. Sakhewa dance of the Rai community is a Ritual performance that has been described as a performance of complex sequence of symbolic acts (Hall 165). The ritual performance narrates philosophy of life through different steps along with the songs. Ritualistic-performative includes enacting, performing, imitating, singing, making, touching, wearing, giving, and sharing (Grimes 27). These different ritual activities shape the concept of the young generation. Different ritual performances share tradition that becomes a source of knowledge for the coming generation.

Activities before Sakela Dance

The *Kirant* Rai community takes permission with three stones of the oven which are known as the ultimate source of power. They call three stones as Suptulung that hold spiritual and cultural meanings to the community (Tara M. Rai 139). According to their belief, the Suptulung as one of the main shrines of the household is the sacred place, from where the development and enhancement of knowledge emanates. All rituals and rites from birth to death are conducted herein oral form. They don not play drums and cymbals before taking permission with Suptulung which is called Hutlung Khutmaa. No ritual activities is allowed without taking permission from

three stones of the oven in the Rai community. The Rai people believe that the souls of ancestor dwell in Suptulung. Therefore, they worship them in Ubhouli and Udhouli (Kamaljung Rai 57). Nakchhong, a person who has spiritual power, worship three stones with the help of main person of the family.

The *Kirant* Rai are communal in their actions; they gather, discuss and work in team. They collect the information of the source places of water and clean these areas before worshipping Sakhewa shrine in Thaan (the place where the Sakhewa shrine is found). Worshipping and cleaning the sources of water have become a culture of the Rai community during the Sakhewa festivals (Kamaljung Rai 52). Worshipping water sources develop a close relationship between human beings and nature. A deep relationship between them helps to protect natural resources. Worshipping nature shows how the Rai people as an Indigenous group have ecocritical awareness in them. The Sakhewa sillis promote the “importance of environment and community’s involvement in environmental restoration” (Setiawan, Ikwan et al. 154). Sakhewa silli involves various human activities, among which worshipping nature is one. Cleaning and worshipping water sources twice a year helps keep the environment clean. This practice shows how the Rai community considers water as sacred to God. It reflects environmental consciousness and spiritual reverence for nature within the Rai community. Linda Hogan claims that human beings are a part of nature (12). He argues that people, animals, land and wind are living neighbors. Human beings need to be good neighbour by respecting nature and accepting their existence as human beings.

Like Linda’s philosophy, different steps of Sakhewa sillis show Kirant Rai’s relation with nature and animals. Indigenous freedom fighters have reclaimed water, land, and indigenous bodies within a network of life (Yazzie and Baldy 1). They claim that nature and human beings are good relatives. They further say that human beings can be good relatives when they can protect water. They say indigenous peoples and their cultures are eco-friendly (16). The ritual performance of the Kirant Rai always puts nature at the center. The Sakhewa dance is one of the most celebrated cultures of the Kirant Rai community. The objective of the Sakhewa dance is to continue a good relationship between nature and human beings (“What is Sakela?” 00: 07:2-08:14). The dancers worship stones, trees, land, wind, and imitate the activities of animals through sillis.

Indigenous people's philosophy believes that human beings are a part of the ecosystem. Human beings cannot exist if problems occur in the ecosystem. The essayist, Gary Snyder says that human beings need to maintain etiquette in order to show Kincentric ecology pertains to the manner in which indigenous people view themselves as part of an extended ecological family that shares ancestry and origins. Another critic, Salman, says:

It is an awareness that life in any environment is viable only when humans view the life surrounding them as kin. The kin, or relatives, include all the natural elements of an ecosystem. A cultural model of Kincentric ecology is presented that illustrates indigenous relationships with the natural world. The cultural model of nature includes humans as one aspect of the complexity of life.
(Salmon 1332)

The reliable and close relative of human beings is nature. Indigenous people consider nature as their senior and respected family member. So, they often worship nature and communicate with nature. They ask for support with nature and share their sufferings with it.

Message of Sakhewa Dance and Its Role in Maintaining the Relationship between Human Beings and Nature

According to the Kirant Rai Mundhum, the year is divided into two main seasons: Ubhouli and Udhoul, based on the migration patterns of birds and animals. During Ubhouli, animals and birds migrate to the Himalayan regions in search of favorable weather, while in Udhoul, they descend to lower areas seeking warmth. The Kirant Rai community primarily conducts harvesting activities during Ubhouli and stores food during Udhoul. They worship elements of nature such as water, land, and forests, especially during Ubhouli in order to seek protection for their crops. In Udhoul, they express gratitude to nature for its blessings. The Rai community offers beef, along with the blood of hens and pigs, while worshiping at the Sakhewa shrine (Kamaljung Rai 25). They offer animal's blood as a form of worship to nature, with the belief that it will bring power, strength, and blessings from natural spirits.

The ritual performances of the Rai community, along with the materials used, reflect a profound connection between humans and nature. Nature is revered with the same

respect given to ancestors. The ritual leader, known as the Bijuwa or Nakchhong, communicates with nature like how one interacts with family members. All Kirant Rai people believe that nature is a source of power and consider it as a parental force that protects and supports them in times of need. In their worship at the Sakhewa shrine, they use symbolic offerings such as morcha (fermented grain), aarawa (local wine), and adhuwa (ginger) (Kamaljung Rai 41). They hold the same deep respect for nature as they do for their ancestors. Their daily activities and even patterns of migration are guided by natural cycles and the rhythms of the environment.

The Bantawa Rai mainly follow following silli forms such as: Faaklewa, Aaptarung, Chaasum, Sikki, Tayama Khiyama and Naarewa sillis. Sillis are performed on the basis hand's activities and footsteps. Faaklewa silli is a specific step in the Sakhewa dance that fosters unity among dancers. It is performed both before and after another silli step. According to belief, the ancestors of the Kirant Rai people used their footsteps to remove obstacles and clear the path ahead, symbolically preparing the way ahead (Kamaljung Rai 164). Moreover, dancing around the Sakhewa shrine shows the rotation of earth around the sun. Faaklewa silli shows a deep level of philosophy representing the early stage of human civilization. Symbolic meanings of sillis show how Kirant Rai's ancestors were scientific. Dancing in a huge group indicates the commune culture and lifestyle of the Rai community.



Source: <https://images.search.yahoo.com/search/images?p=picture+of>

(The picture above shows the step of Faakelewa silli)

Department of English, Mahendra Multiple Campus, Dharan, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

Aaptarung silli illustrates Kirant Rai's hunting civilization. This silli demonstrates the act of making weapons, the process of taking permission from ancestors and the skill of hunters. Aaptarung silli shows the struggle of Kirant Rai to survive before agricultural age. Similarly, Chasum sillis demonstrate different activities done by them in the farm. Another Siki sillis show entering into agricultural age. This silli makes audiences know how ancestors of Kirant Rai started to knit clothes themselves at their home. Tayama Khiyama silli narrates the tragic story of two sisters who had to separate forever. Lastly, Naarewa sillis show activities of Karayang Kurung birds which play different roles to be saved from the attack of Hawks.

The various silli (steps) of the Sakhewa dance imitate the activities of both humans and animals throughout the year. Through these steps, combined with facial expressions and traditional songs, dancers share their emotions, experiences, and stories. In this way, Sakhewa serves as a form of therapy, promoting both physical strength and mental well-being. It offers an outlet for expressing personal struggles, pain, and hardships, helping individuals release emotional burdens accumulated over the year. Moreover, Sakhewa dance plays a significant role in fostering ecological awareness among Kirant Rai youth. As they participate in rituals that honor nature, they gradually develop a culture of environmental respect, which stands in contrast to the growing global trend of exploiting natural resources for profit. Sakhewa reminds them that nature is not a commodity, but a sacred and life-sustaining force.

Sakhewa also acts as a unifying force among the Rai people, who come from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Despite differences in language, the dance brings them together, as most groups share similar dance patterns and symbolic meanings embedded in the silli. Through this shared tradition, the Rai community strengthens both cultural identities. Dancing around the Sakhewa shrine symbolizes earth's rotation around the sun (Kamaljung Rai 221). Similarly, the researcher Prakash Rai explains the symbolic messages of dancing around the Sakhewa shrine:

A huge mass participation forming in a circle in dance moves as the earth's shape and daily move 'axis' and yearly move 'orbit'. Led by Silihangpa and Silihangma, performers form a circle like earth movement and begin dancing with the musical melody of Dhol, a drum, Jyamta, a cymbal and typical songs. Sakkhewalung⁴, an idol of a deity made out of stone, situated in the midst of the altar, is considered to be a symbol of the sun in the movement of dance. (175)

He claims that the Sakhewa shrine, positioned in the middle of dancing circle, represents the sun. It is worshiped through various steps of Sakhewa sillis. Waalaam silli imitate the actions and activities of birds. The dancers perform as if they are flying in the sky like a bird, dancing picking up one foot and making the shape of wings through their hands (Kamaljung Rai 202).

Instead of understanding deep philosophical messages of the Sakhewa sillis, the young generation is dancing the Sakhewa dance in disco style. Abhi Subedi responded, "Sakhewa's performance is one of the indicators of spontaneous embedding of dominant pop culture into the native one. Indigenous folklores are deviating from their form and content the original" (qtd. in Lungeli 12). They enjoy experimenting the new types of sillis which may not have connection with the meanings of the Kirant Mundhum. The researcher, Dik Bahadur Rai, claims that modernization and globalization have a negative impact on Sakhewa dance (70). In the name of making Sakhewa dance attractive for the young generation, the dances are losing connection with mythical themes.

Conclusion

This study examines the deep connection between Bantawa Rai's Sakhewa sillis and nature. The Sakhewa sillis have become a medium of making the young generations aware of their culture, history and the importance of nature in their life. The Sakhewa sillis systematically narrate the history of the Rai community and their civilization. Although there are different myths regarding the beginning of the Sakhewa dance, it shows uniformity that they have good etiquette with nature. The sillis

encapsulate the value of the environment, spiritual communication with ancestral spirits, agricultural activities and migration of birds and animals.

Cultural integrity and philosophical depth of Sakhewa are under threat due to the forces of modernization, globalization and the rise of pop cultures. Many young dancers particularly, from urban areas have little knowledge about the philosophical messages of the different sillis. They just consider the Sakhewa dance as a means of entertainment. However, the Sakhewa dance engages the young generations in their ancestors' ritual activities. Involvement in ritual performances makes youths aware of the philosophical depth of the Sakhewa dance later on. The Sakhewa sillis show the worldview of the Kirant Rai community. Through participation, youths gradually develop an appreciation of the dance's deeper spiritual and cultural significance.

Works Cited

- Adamson, Joni. *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism*. The University of Arizona Press, 2001.
- Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture*. Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Chielotam, N. A. "Expressing indigenous knowledge through dance." *African Journal of History and Culture*, vol. 4, no. 5, 2012, pp. 69-73.
- Cohen, Louis, et al. *Research Methods in Education*. Routledge, 2007.
- Coupe, Laurence, ed. *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*. Routledge, 2000.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage, 2018.
- Dhungel, Mimamsha. The Dances Enriching Nepal Culture. *The Kathmandu Post*, 12 Mar. 2023. <https://kathmandupost.com/art-culture/2023/03/12/the-folk-dances-enriching-nepali-culture>
- Grimes, Ronald L. "Religion, Ritual, and Performance." Routledge, 2012, pp. 27-41.

- Heith, Anne. *Indigeneity, Ecocriticism, and Critical Literacy*. Umea University Press, 2022.
- Hogan, Linda. "Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World." Simon and Schuster, 1996.
- Hull, Kathleen L. "Ritual as performance in small-scale societies." *Routledge*, vol. 46, no. 2, 2014, pp. 164-177.
<http://www.tandfonline.com/action/showCitFormats?doi=10.1080/00438243.2013.879044>
- Mishra, Sandip Kumar. "Ecocriticism: A study of environmental issues in literature." *BRICS Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 4 2016, pp. 168-70.
- Moncada, Sara. *The We In Me: Exploring the Interconnection of Indigenous Dance, Identity and Spirituality*. Dominican University of California, 2016, Senior thesis.
- Monani, Salma and Joni Adamson. *Ecocriticism and Indigenous Studies*. Routledge, 2017.
- Rai, Dik Bahadur. *The impacts of Modernization on the traditional Sakawa Sili festival in the Rai Kirat community of Nepal: A case study of the Rai community*. 2012, Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education Norway, dissertation.
- Rai, Durga Maya. "The Biggest Festival of Kirats." *The Kathmandu Post*, 16 Dec. 2016. <https://kathmandupost.com/opinion/2016/12/13/the-biggest-festival-of-kirats>
- Rai, Kamaljung. *Sakhhewa Silli: Aek Aadhyan. [Sakhhewa Silli: A Study]*. Classic printing Service, 2079.
- Rai, Prakash. "Socio-Cultural Values and Ecological Awareness in Sakela Silli in Kirant Rai in Nepal." *Nepal Journal Online*, vol. 34, 2021, pp. 164-176.
- Rai, Susma. "Identity politics in light of celebrating sakela Festival among the Rai-Kirats in Kathmandu valley." *Nepal Academy's Journal*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2024, pp. 200-214.

- Rai, Tara Mani. "A Sociolinguistic Survey of Chamling: A Tibeto-Burman language." *Unpublished Research Report*. *Linguistic Survey of Nepal (LinSuN)*, Central Department of Linguistics, TU, 2017.
- Salmón, Enrique. "Kincentric Ecology: Indigenous Perceptions of the Human–Nature Relationship." *Ecological Applications*, vol. 10, no. 5, 2000, pp. 1327-1332.
- Sapkota, Khila Nath. "Rai Community and Shifting Cultivation Practices in Eastern Nepal: A Study of Balakhu, Okhaldhunga." *Patan Prospective Journal*, vol. 3, no.1, 2023, pp. 16-22.
- Setiawan, Ikwan, et al. "Performances and Rituals for Environmental Campaigns: Structures, Discourses, and Postcolonial Ecocriticism." *Journal of Social and Islamic Culture*, vol.32, no.1, 2023, pp. 152-81.
- "What is Sakela?" YouTube, Kirawa, 20 Mar. 2024.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxigrAN5wMA>
- Yazzie, Melaine K., and Cutcha Risling Baldy. "Introduction: Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Water." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*, vol. 7, no.1, 2018, pp. 1-18.