Linguistic Features of Limbu Mundhum[*]

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Abstract

This article attempts to look into the kind of language employed in the Mundhum corpus that puts the intricacy to the Limbu natives. To analyze the linguistic aspect of the Mundhum, the study has applied linguistic devices/tools based especially on phonic feature to syntactic structure or pattern. This study, thus, is qualitative in nature and the non-numerical data were collected from the books, journals, articles and religious scripture. The analysis has revealed that the Kirat Limbu Mundhum corpus is a complicated ancient form of poetry believed to be the sacred religious scripture. It has distinctly different language variety in terms of orthographic, phonological, sematic, syntactic and above all the stylistic feature. The linguistic deviation in the Mundhum has set itself off the ordinary language variety causing obscurity for a larger number of the Limbu native speakers. Obsolete and classical terminologies stand as a stumbling block and that have added more obscurity even to the most Limbu natives. The article can be beneficial for those researchers who have a desire to study the classical languages like the Kirat Limbu Mundhum.

Background

The Limbus are one of the dominant ethnic groups in Nepal. They "are one of the principal tribes of eastern Nepal" (Grierson 202). They inhabit in the hilly region popularly known as Pallo Kirat or far Kirat. But "they designate themselves by the name *Yak-thung-ba* and their language by the name *Yak-thung-ba pa:n"* (Das 31). According to van Driem, the term 'Limbu' is Nepali ethnonym and the homeland in eastern Nepal is known in Nepali 'Limbuwan' (xix). He expresses his suspect over Campbell's reference that the term Limbu to

be Gurkha corruption of the autonym 'Ekthoomba' (1). Weidert and Subba state: "Limbu must be considered the dominant and most important language of the Kirati group of the Tibeto-Burman languages in terms of numbers of speakers and in terms of the vastness of geographical distributions" (1). Regarding the Limbu language, Ebert maintains that it has a considerable number of speakers and a writing system of its own. The script is known as 'Sirijunga Lipi' and it has a number of books on various disciplines (11). It is an established langue of Nepal.

The Limbus original speaking area according to *Limbu-Nepali-English Dictionary* spreads from the Arun river in the west to the Tista river in the east that includes the districts of Sangkhuwa Sabha, Terhathum, Dhankuta, Sunsari and Morang in Koshi zone and Taplejung, Panchthar, Ilam and Jhapa in Mechi zone; and some adjoining states of India like Sikkim, West Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya. Govinda Bahadur Tumbahang in his PhD dissertation holds the view that in course of time the Limbus have migrated from their original abodes to different places. He adds that now they are found in Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur districts of mid-Nepal. Madhav Prasad Pokhrel states that Limbu language is basically spoken in the area between Koshi and Mechi zones. The CBS report of 2011 has mentioned that the total population of the Limbu is 387,300 which is 1.46% out of total population of the country. Of that number of Limbu, 343,603 are the native speakers that is, 1.29% out of total nation's population.

The average Limbu people are one of the followers of the Kirat religion which is believed to be one of the most ancient religions of the world. The other ethnic groups which follow the Kirat religion are the *Rais, Yakhas* and *Sunuwars*. The Limbus including other ethnic groups have a long tradition of Mundhum recitation. In this regard, Chaitanya Subba in his book *The Culture and Religion of Limbus* maintains the view that Mundhum is the source of inspiration, information and enlightenment for Limbus and the way of life, customs and rites-de-passage are guided by it (Preface). He further states that it also provides the insight into the inner complexity of the Limbu. Mundhum, according to Chemjong, is the power of great strength and the Kirat people take it to be true, holy and power of scripture (18). In order to clarify the Mundhum through its etymological interpretation, Limbu states that "[i]n Kirat Limbu' language *'mun'* motion > *'mumma'* (motional/ movable) is a verb root. Hence *'mun'* means motion, speed or movement. Activity refers to 'liveliness', similarly *'thum'* refers to strength (11). The dynamic power is therefore supernatural or divine force. Here, *'thuk'* (climb) > *'thumma'* (climb on the back) is the verb root. When the divine force mounts on the priest (*phedangba)* he recites the hymn as he receives in the form of electric current and in a greater agility. This hymnal form made out of words is Mundhum. The reasons of being divinity or spirituality, the Kirati people regard Mundhum as their religious scripture.

Problem, Objectives and Methodology

Mundhum is basically a verse form transmitted orally from generation to generation till the art of writing was introduced and thus was referred to as oral Mundhum (*Thuthur Veda*). It is a folk epic in verse recited by the learned *'Samba'* or poet. The Kirat priests are called as *'Sambas'* where *'Sam'* means song and *'ba'* means the one who knows the song. It is narrated or recited while performing certain rituals and observing ceremonies and sacrificial in their respective styles and manners. In a sense, the Mundhum is collective form of a legend, a folklore, prehistoric account, sermons, shamans, moral or philosophical exhortations in the poetic language. While considering the Mundhum language, some questions such as, 'which linguistic features make the Mundhum language difficult to understand for the average native speakers?, and what sort of language variety is it?' can be raised.

The objectives of this study are:

- To point out the features of the Mundhum language
- To appraise how the Mundhum language is distinctively different from the ordinary variety of communication.

The study is mainly based on qualitative research design in which the necessary primary data have been drawn from the Limbu religious scriptures especially from rites of wedding (*Mekkhim chokma thim*), rite of worshipping pregnancy for the protection of the would-be baby (*Sapok chomen*); and the rite of linking the ancestors and the present (*Tongsing*). The linguistic theory has been used to analyze the various utterances extracted as the primary data. For the theoretical background, linguistics and literary criticism of Traugott and Pratt, Widdowson, Jefferson and Robey, Leech, and Lazar have been taken into consideration. Likewise, for the textual analysis, the texts of *Kirat Mundhum* by Chemjong, *Sapok Chomen* (Rite of Pregnancy) and *Tongsing Tokma* Mundhum (Rite of Linking Ancestors and the Present) by Kainla have been consulted.

Linguistic Features of the Limbu Mundhum

In order to look into the linguistic features in the Limbu Mundhum, the articles like "Sewala Puja Bintila Puja: Notes on Thulung Ritual Language" by N. J. Allen, "Discourse Analysis" by Agnes Yeiyun He, "Pragmatics: Language and Communication" by Ruth Kempson, "Linguistics and Literature" by Nigel Fabb and the book entitled *The Classical Limbu Language, Grammar and Dictionary of a Kirat Mundhum* by Tejman Angdembe have been reviewed duly. These articles and the book focus on the feature of the literary language or more specifically the religious text which is considerably distinct from the ordinary practical discourse. The distinct features have been briefly discussed as below:

Language Deviation

Mundhum being a highly classical and poetic, the language it exploits is very obscure and obsolete. When it is employed to address and converse with the supernatural beings, the linguistic behavior is markedly different from the ordinary communicative speech. Very few or only the handful of the Limbu native speakers are destined to master over the Mundhum language . Such people are supposed to be the gifted people to deal with the Mundhum. During the time of the Mundhum recitation, the ordinary audiences or listeners are unable to make out the sense of those recitations. As the priests (*Sambas*) complete the ritual performance, they are requested to interpret the matters in the simple speech form that were supposed to be hinted at the time of dealings.

The question that this article intends to discuss is why the Mundhum language is vast difference with that of the ordinary day-to-day communication. The conclusion can be drawn by analyzing the linguistic features of both types of the versions i.e. day-to-day ordinary communicative version and the version of the Mundhum. The analysis of linguistic features implies the different levels of linguistic systems viz. phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax and discourse i.e. bottom up system. Poetical language is deviated from the ordinary speech form so as to achieve certain effect. Also the linguistic form is deliberately deviated from the usual standard of language in order to make the expression more expressive, vivid and cutting. The deviations can be found in the linguistic level: Orthographic or Phonological Level, Semantic Deviation on the Lexical Level, and Grammatical or Syntactic Deviation.

Orthographic or Phonological Deviation

The Mundhum is recited in diverse pitches, loudness, tempo and rhythm depending on the rituals, occasions and ceremonies or the subjects being addressed. The orthographic deviation occurs when the particular letters are dropped in order to maintain the number of syllables and stress-unstressed marks with the preceding and subsequent lines being recited. Following is the example of orthographic deviation.

> *Ye-- tho-- Tagera yase; Nigwaphu yase*
> *Porokmi yase; Yomphami yase*
> *Musunne yase; Khesunne yase*
> *Alla-- tho-- Mudhangkha yase; Khesunne yase* (Kainla)

On the above Mundhum (*Tongsing Tokma*) lines, the term 'yase' has been repeated twice in each line. In ordinary writing, the term 'yase' cannot be meaningful. Actually this term is 'yebase' (pl.) which means "the experts in Mundhum or a class of Limbu priests" (Kainla). In the same example we also notice the phonological deviation in the term 'yase' instead of yebase. Here the sound /e/ has undergone change into /a/ e.g. 'yebase'>'yase'. "Phonological deviation

commonly involves the elision of syllables: initially (aphesis), medially (syncope) and finally (Apocope)" (Wales 121). Generally supra-segmental rules of phonemes, stress, and intonation, are not strictly applied in poetic form. In metrical patterns succeeding lines have stressed and unstressed words similar to the first line. Stress is put even on the unstressed syllables and stress is removed even from the stressed syllables.

Semantic Deviation on the Lexical Level

Generally lexical semantics refers to the word meaning or dictionary meaning. It is the primary meaning of word which shows the relationship between words and objects in the world of experiences. For example, a 'rose' in its primary meaning, denotes a kind of flower. But when it associates with the meaning of a beautiful lady, love and prime youth; this is not the primary (literal) meaning, rather it is secondary (figurative) meaning. In the figurative meaning, we move beyond and above the literal meaning when a word leaves its primary meaning and rises up to call for various associations, this is semantic deviation. Thus the ordinary meaning is deviated and it suggests something else. The Limbu Mundhum has also freely exploited the rhetorical expressions as it is supposed to address not to the common human beings but to the deities, spirits (especially dead ones) and other supernatural figures. When it is dealing with supernatural figures, the rhetoric becomes its common and usual vehicle for the easy transportation (communication). Let us consider the example of figures of speech used in the following verse lines:

> *hekkelle-- tumbungding kuming warak taru; mikki phungwa taru,*
>
> *ningwaphuma suna ingsum i:sikle tumbung warak taru. mikki phungwa kede ro. Tum-bungding simbo warak. laikum phembo warak tumbung warak kame. mikki warak kame. om tagera ningwaphuma i:sik lo.* [She (bride) brought the ocean of love and youth. As the divine will, she fetched the love and affection. You both bride and groom should start a joint journey till the ocean of love dries away. Oh! Almighty, conjoin these two people's ocean of love in one.] (Chemjong 62)

This extract is sung by the Lumbu priest, *Phedangba* (Limbu Priest) during the time of '*Mekam'* or nuptial tie between the bride and the bridegroom.

These few remarks (sermons) embody some figures of speech like hyperbole (overstatement) and personification. The bride is supposed to bring 'ocean of love', their life journey resumes henceforth. Holy Spirit is addressed assuming that He is human being in front of the *'Phedangba'.* Both the bride and the groom have the 'ocean of love' within themselves. Now, they have to flow their ocean(s) jointly and together. Their life's journey continues until the ocean dries away. When we consider these remarks, they are nonsensical and absurd from the point of view of ordinary speech. They are meaningless from the literal aspect so they not

meant to be taken literally. But they are associated with some other senses they are really high sounding and grave. Life is like a flowing ocean which is very deep but making no noise. Life is not like hilly brook rushing steep down destroying numerous things along it. The running brook makes a lot of noise but its life is not long lasting. On the contrary, the ocean is deep and grave yet makes no noise as the brook. Rather it constantly forms precious gems into its bosom, however it never boasts. So the Mundhum maintains the implication that life is an ocean moving ahead creating precious things incessantly. This and this kind might be the figurative meaning of the Mundhum's lines as presented above.

Grammatical or Syntactic Deviation

Semantic deviation in the sentence level is very common or usual happening in the poetic expression. This kind of distortion is pervasive because the poets are said to have the poetic license that is, they are held at certain liberty to distort/ break the established norms of grammar. M. H. Abrams forwards Dryden's definition as the liberty which poets have assumed to themselves in all ages of speaking things in verse which are beyond the severity of prose (230). By availing the poetic license, poets reorganize syntax, invent its own vocabulary, freely mix register and create its own pronunciation. "Poetry draws creative on a full range of archaisms and dialects and generates vivid new metaphors" (Lazar 98). Leech holds the opinion that this is the reason poetry has been characterized deviating from the norms of language. Regarding this violation of rules, Widdowson argues that poetry frequently breaks the rules of language but by so doing it communicates with us a fresh, original way. The violation of the established linguistic rules does not necessarily mean that it creates obstacle in the communication rather its meaning is surcharged by a new way. A single innocent looking line is laden with multiplicity of meaning. In other words, an expression is resounding and echoing diverse meanings. The expression becomes more vivid and graphic as well.

Syntactic deviation implies the breaking rules of the word order in a sentence. For instance, English statement is generally arranged in the sequence of 'SVO' order. But this is not always true with the poetic expression. The order is sometimes completely reversed and there can be unusual collocation. John Milton's famous epic title seems to violate the ordinary syntactic rules. The epic is entitled *Paradise Lost*. In this, 'Paradise' is a 'noun' and the word 'Lost' is an adjective. But in the ordinary rule adjective never occurs after noun just as 'a girl beautiful'. Hence the correct order is *Lost Paradise* not the *Paradise Lost*. There is another example of syntactic deviation in Nepali as *'Abiral Bagdachha Indrawati'* [Indrawati (a river) flows continuously]. Now, this expression has the order of adverb (*Abiral* [continuously]) + verb (*Bagdachha* [flows]) and noun (*Indrawati* [Indrawati River]*)* > adv. + verb + noun. The Nepali grammar prescribes the syntactic order as *'Indrawati Abiral Bagdachha* [Indrawati

continuously flows]′ > sub. (noun) + adv. + verb. The ordinary rule is sub. + (adv.) + object + verb.

When we look up the syntactic structure in the Limbu Mundhum, we find the example of distortion of rule in the sentence level. Let us have a look at the following verse lines of Mundhum:

> *Sanglangobase; anglangobase.*
> *Siphak saha; Yemiang saha.*
> *Sawala saha; yetchhammang saha.*
> *Telele meba; tenjiyep yaha.*
> *Telele meba; tenchhammuk yaha.*
> [We, the descendants of the *'Yebas'* named *Sanglangoba* and *Anglagoba,* who were renowned for their excellent performances and learning, are standing and dancing beating the brass-dish.] (Kainla 56)

Of the given litanies, the last two lines have explicitly violated the ordinary linguistic norm. Obviously person being used as subject cannot occur at the end of the assertive sentence. But these two lines have ignored the grammatical rule about the sentence structure. Though being so, the lines are fully successful to communicate. They are attractive and catchy as well since they have defimiliarized by doing so. The concept of defamiliarization was developed by a Russian Formalist, Viktor Shklovsky (1893-1984). He means that defamiliarization is to make fresh, new, strange, and different what is familiar and known (Cuddon 213). Cuddon states, through defamiliarization the writers modify the readers/listeners habitual perceptions by drawing attention to the artifices. He further adds that this is a matter of literary technique. What the listeners/readers notice is not the picture of reality that is being presented but the peculiarities of the writing itself.

The matter of syntactic deviation is not complete in disordering the words' sequence in sentence structure and unusual collocations but it still proceeds to other aspects like selectional restrictions, contradiction, anomaly and tautology.

Stereotyped Classical Language

One of the characteristics that Mundhum language departs from the ordinary mode of speech is marked by its classical nature of language. Though the term 'classical' does not allow specifying the particular meaning, As Cuddon states, that it has principally three different meanings: (a) of the first rank or authority; (b) belonging to the literature or art of Greece and Rome; and (c) a writer or work of the first rank and of generally acknowledged excellence (138). When considered the term 'classic' the meaning it holds seem to be changing over the time period. Nowadays, the word 'classical' in literature suggests that the work has the qualities

of order, harmony, proportion, balance, discipline and so forth. In other words, nothing can be taken away from it or added to it without doing injury (139).

The classical languages like Sanskrit, Arabic, Latin, and Greek do not seem to entertain any kind of additions or deletions to them. Whatever condition they are in, they are self-contained and perfect. They are classical in the sense that they are rule bound, disciplined, well ordered and so on. When Mundhum is looked into associating the characteristics, it, too seems strictly following the norms, hence the language is not only stereotypical but also classical one. Let us take an example of consistency and stern featured collocation of Mundhum language. In non-standard speech form the male pig is called *'lameba'* or simply *'pha?k'*. But the same *'pha?k'* during the ritual performance is addressed as *'sum-dang'gen lame pha?k'*. Angdembe gives different references of the linguists like Benedict and Shafer, and he confirms that Mundhum language is the relic of the ancient forms of Kirat language. Particularly, the term *'sum-dang'* is the ancient term for the 'horse' (26). But it entails a serious question before the linguist that why the grown up pig not the 'horse' alone is termed as *'sum-dang-gen'*. In most of the ceremonial rituals certain animals are offered to the deities. The offering has some specific goal that is some person's healing or overcoming evils and danger with the grace of the divine. The *phedangba* (Limbu priest) offers a pig to deity so that his earnest request can be received by the certain deity riding, through the *'lame pha?k'* (a pig). A pig is slaughtered thus its spirit transports the request of the *phedangba.* This is inference that a simple *'pha?k'* or *'lameba'* (a pig) is addressed as *'sum-dang'gen lame pha?k'*.

The classical languages make use of ancient terms. In the Hindu rituals, the Hindu priests offer the mixture of rice, ghee, sesamum-seed and barley in to the burning fire. The burning fire place is termed as *'Yegya Kunda'* and the mixture offered to the fire is '*Charu*' and the process of throwing is *'havan'* or *'hom-nu'*. During that time, the priests announce as 'Om *Swaha'*. This pronouncement 'Swaha' has got a special meaning and purpose that is '*Swaha*' is the wife of '*agni*' (fire). So the priests utter *'Swaha'* in order to send the offering to fire god 'agni' through medium of his wife *'Swaha'*. Here '*Swaha*' is the medium between the priests and *'agni'* (god) so is the *'Sumdang-gen lame pha?k'* between the *phedangba* and deity.

The languages which are regarded as religious sacred ones, they do not embrace the change so easily. Regarding the sternness of such languages Campbell holds the opinion that ritual language requires exact verbal performance. In his article entitled "The History of Linguistics' he further says that while no change was acknowledged in formal Arabic after the eighth century the realization that the spoken Arabic of the eighth and ninth centuries was charging stimulated the development of Arabic grammatical study. The Mundhum being a ritualistic language is found to be the stereotypical form away and untouched by the flow of linguistic change. But this unrevised position, through time unfortunately, pushes the classical

language to the verge of extinction and unintelligibility. The gap between day to day communication and classical language widens horribly. The reality and mostly the fate of the classic language is to be limited to hymn of praise, incantation, and prayer invocation. The Mundhum language is therefore, obscure, strange and also sublime only because it employs the ancient forms and terminologies. In this regard, Angdembe refers to Dahal's Nepali example of incantation in which the terms are unusual for average Nepali native speaker both for the ordinary and the intellectuals (26). The incantation 'mantra (Mundhum) reads as '*Kali kukadaki tepri kan, ganga dunoi! ganga dunio!! ganga dunio*!!!' This 'mantra' very easily confuses the modern people as to which language either Nepali or Hindi, it belongs. It is thought to be classic for it has employed the classical terms.

Archaism or Linguistic Anachronism

Obviously, the Mundhum language does not sound modern. There are terms which are no longer used in the present situation and they seem to be stranger for the modern native speaker. One reason that takes Mundhum away from the present day native speakers is the pervasive use of the archaic or anachronic dictions. Regarding archaism Abrams states that archaism is the literary use of words and expression that have become obsolete in the common speech of an era (12). According to Wales, archaism in poetry is complicated by an additional factor that reflects a subtle distinction in the sense of the term itself. She further says that it can mean not only the retention of what is old, but its imitation not survival but revival (29). The remark is clear enough that archaism is a technique of imitation of the ancient which is not surviving at present but it is a genuine effort to revive the linguistic form of antiquity. The pervasive involvement of archaism in Mundhum has got a straight forward motive since most of the part of Mundhum is devoted to worship and prayer. Archaism is thus the language of liturgy that is directly meant for ceremonial performances.

When one tries to see the reasons behind the use of archaism, s/he may find a number of reasons behind this. The first reason, as Cuddon states, is sometimes the older form of word was more suitable metrically. The next reason is that writers intend to associate with the past to suggest the timelessness or to prevent something being 'dated' (52). These two possible reasons of using archaism or anachronism give an insight into the mind that our Mundhum '*Sabas'* (glee men) were/ are consciously or unconsciously of great visionary personalities who tacitly claim the human spirits and aspirations are ever flowing denoting timelessness. The direct psychology of the Limbu '*Phedangbas'*(priests) in using archaism must be that they want to give weight, dignity and sonority to their expression by archaic revivals.

The Mundhum is mostly larded with the linguistic version of liturgy. The *phedangbas* have a deep-rooted concept that the Mundhum does not become the Mundhum unless it embraces the anachronic language. Most of the noun words precede some additional terms

which reflect a distinction in terms of ordinary speech variety to that of the Mundhum language. If we consider the Mundhum language there are plentiful examples of archaic dictions. For example:-

> *unchhon unahuri dinelen;*
> *manghang torangding tangsang,*
> *iksading khambekma, surit kezong, pangmending wahit, mudhang koshi, labe, nambe, wabe, single, lungbe*
> *koizong phang, tabu kusing, thaksa, pusa*
> *menchhamgen yapmi theang, theang, mehopte.*
> [In the past, before the creation of the universe, there was nothing in its existence. There was no god, the sky, land (earth) the sun, the moon, stars, air, rainfall, forest and creature.] (Chemjong 1)

The question as to what makes the above lines different from the ordinary speech, can be answered only after considering the excerpt very keenly. There are terms added to the certain nouns which are not necessary at the ordinary conversation. The additional terms are never expected in the everyday conversation

Ordinary Speech	Mundhum Version
khambek (earth/ land*)*	*iksading khambekma*
surit/sammit (wind)	*surit kejong*
wahit (rainfall)	*pamending wahit*
yapmi/mana (man)	*menchhagen yapmi*

The above underlined terms are additional which create complexity in the meaning. They collocate with other preceding or following terms only to make high-sounding or sublime expression. Obviously, the underlined terms are out-dated terms in the speech. If they occur separately, most of them have not got specific meaning. They are more often treated as bound morphemes in terms of lexical meaning because they do not issue a particular meaning in isolation.

Rhetoric

Rhetoric is concerned with the way of language use. It is a skilled speaking/writing in order to persuade the audience/readers with the point or topic the speaker has taken up. According to Aristotle rhetoric is an art of discovering all the available means of persuasion in any given case (Abrams 268). In a broad sense Cuddon focuses that rhetoric can be described as the study of language in its practical uses, focusing on the persuasive and other effects of language and on the means by which one can achieve those effects on audience or reader (748). The writers use different techniques in making their expressions rhetorical. For example Plato

in his writing "The Allegory of the Cave" uses the types of rhetoric as 'allegory' and 'dialogue' (Losin 50). By using these two rhetorical techniques he has presented his complex thought in clear cut manner. The other writers have used different techniques as aphorism, comparison, contrast, parallelism etc.

In fact, the term 'rhetoric' has now come to be used in modern linguistic and literary theory in senses which reflect current rather than traditional perspectives. So for Leech, for example, rhetoric is a set of conversational principles and maxims, interpersonal and textual and for Jordan, it refers to principles of information structure and signaling strategies (rhetorical structure theory). Any discourse, either conversational or textual employs the rhetoric because the ultimate aim of discourse or text is to persuade the readers with the point taken. So the discourse may take up different types of rhetoric depending on the nature of the topic or matter.

When we turn to the Limbu Mundhum and consider about the rhetoric it has used, mainly we find 'parallelism' in terms of diction and syntactic structures. The rhetoric parallelism' refers to the equality of meaning level and sentence structures. Parallelism in terms of lexical level is maintained by presenting the words equal in their gravity of meaning and the number of syllables. For example, in the *Limbu-Nepali-Angregi Shabdakosh* Kainla refers to "*tut-tu-gen tummyahang*, *yaklagen* <u>*suhangse*</u> [Venerable] (Kainla 584). The underlined words are base words and both words have the same meaning 'gentlemen'. The preceding terms of the base words have occurred only to raise the weight, dignity and sonority of the expression. When these preceding terms like *'tuttugen'* and *'yaklagen'* occur in isolation, most often, they are like bound morphemes. Even if they give meaning, the meanings are entirely irrelevant to the base words. For instance, the word *'yakla'* has its literal meaning as 'small bush' or 'wild arum lily' (*Limbu-Nepali-Angregi Shabdakosh* 2059 V.S.)

> *Ye-- unchhon --- netti meghosu phungwa meghosu*
> *netti yukhum lo phungwa yukhum lo.* (Kainla 133)

These two lines appear to be parallel in terms of syllabic structure, intra-line and interline rhyming pattern.

The next rhetoric, the Mundhum has embodied is that most of the discourses are in the address form. This can be called as a dramatic monologue. The person is presenting his expression forcefully through monologue. He is addressing both the mortal beings as well as the supernatural beings. The expressions are short, precise and pointed. The above example is right enough to prove this rhetorical device. "Basically the poetic expression has involved partial repetition whether of metrical patterns, rhymes or sentence structures" (Trangott and Pratt 78). In the above example there are words repeated in both intra-line and intertine levels.

e.g. *'meghosu'* and *'yukhum lo'* are the words repeated in intra-line level and *'netti'* and *'phungwa'* the examples of inter-line repetition. This kind of repetition seems to aspire towards the condition of music. The lines are precise so as to complete reciting within a single breath.

Figurative Language

Limbu Mundhum is graceful in its form and recitation. It has made use of figures of speech for its decorative purpose. The Mundhum language has been beautified as to make its form splendid and rhythm sonorous. Figures of speech are the process of breaking away from the established standard of language. Figurative language appears to be nonsensical from the literal level of meaning. For example William Wordsworth's poem 'My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold", in one of the lines, it is "The child is father of the man' (Lohani and Adhikari). While considering this line from literal level, this is absurd and meaningless. But from the figurative level, this is epigrammatic expression. According to Bain, epigram is an apparent contradiction in language which, by causing a temporary shock, rouses our attention to some important meaning underneath. Mundhum has also employed various types of figures of speech to achieve certain effect in the reader or listener. Let's consider one excerpt from Kainla's "*Limbu Jatima Kokh Pooja*" below:

> *aalla kan ga ting-ding mendoke*
> *nahen mendoke, mikson mendoke ro*
> *kan sigi khekhung sonam, mata imet khekhung*
> *tho gara tangsang khekhung, yo gara iksaang khekung*
> *tadigen sepmang menzonne, lahigen sepmang menzonne*
> [Now jealousy and envy may not affect/come
> I tie the spirit and soul with speech
> I tie the sky and the earth
> May the vision's head not bow down?] (13)

These lines are figurative by the use of metaphor. The abstract notions like jealousy and envy have been treated as if they have lives like ours. In one way they are metaphors in the others, they have been personified. The rest thing is that the persona 'I' is tying the spirit and soul as if they are concrete objects or animate things. Similarly the land and sky are also being tied by the speaker (persona). The last line is essentially metaphorical expression that says the vision (dream) head should not bow down. Here, the vision is implied as human being with the head up.

When one goes through the Mundhum s/he easily comes across with the idea that Mundhum embraces varieties of clues of the language embellishment. The term 'embellishment' is one of the four elements of the stylistics. This term, according to Robey and Jefferson takes the form of assumption that writing is automatically made beautiful through the addition of

certain standardized linguistic ornaments of which are the best known are the various poetic figures: metaphor; antithesis, hyperbole and the like. Mundhum being a classical writing is filled with such linguistic ornaments. The use of ornament is viewed strictly in its relation to the tone or level required by the writing in accordance with the principle of decorum. Personification, onomatopoeia, imagery, allusion and simile have been massively used in it. Consider the following piece of *Sapok Chomen* Mundhum by Kainla:

> *Ye nam sang katto thek sang kattu*
> *thang tiding tiding kattu*
> *thang thang yeppit kattu*
> *kan ga tho ... sodhung menchape ro*
> *Walak menchape ro*
> *alla sodhung phong he: ro*
> [Keep it (spirit) safely and cover by embrace
> Up and high-up as the glowing moon.
> Keep it up standing firmly
> May the ocean of life not dry away
> Let us fill its life's ocean with water.] (25)

With much care, multiplicity of linguistic ornaments has been implied in this given stanza.

Obscurity/Hermeticism

Obscurity is sharply felt on the part of Mundhum by the Limbu native speakers. This is the reason Mundhum is aloof from the most of the native speakers. Furthermore, it is limited to a handful of the Limbu *'phedangbas'* (priests) and Mundhum *'sabas'* (persons with sound knowledge of the Mundhum). But surprisingly, these *phedangbas* and the Mundhum *sabas* are reluctant to share and handover the idea to the inquisitive native people. It is needless to mention that Mundhum has remained obscure and strange for the majority of its native speakers. The priests further mystify it saying that it is the language of deity but not the language for ordinary speech. While observing the so-called divine language, the ordinary speakers constantly trip over the stumbling blocks going through the Mundhum language. Especially, the marks of obscurity according to Cuddon are an elliptical style (loose syntax, anacoluthon, asyndeton), recondite allusion and reference archaic or ornate language and private or subjective imagery (606). Similarly the term 'hermeticism' also suggests obscure, difficult poetry in which the language and imagery are subjective and which the music or suggestive power of the words are of as great an importance as the sense.

Conclusion

Mundhum is the religious scripture of the Limbu ethnic community which is residing across the districts of Koshi and Mechi zones. The Mundhum is recited, with the admixture of plentiful of paralinguistic features. It is in the poetic form, for this reasons it is essentially classical and stereotyped because it requires accurate verbal performance during the rites, rituals and ceremonies. The form of the Mundhum language is markedly different from the everyday communicative speech. It has exploited the sources of language to the utmost level removing itself from ordinary speech by sound and meters and all the devices of imagery. The Mundhum being highly poetic in expression, there is a systematic violation in the norm of the standard. For this, there occur deviations in two aspects that is structural arrangement and the semantic level whether in the lexical (word/vocabulary) or syntactic (sentence structure) field. It is a tight universe of sound and meaning, so closely interlocked that it is hard to distinguish content and form. The Mundhum language, in this sense, poses much difficulty to the average Limbu natives because of certain linguistic features which are considerably distinct from the ordinary communicative speech form of the Limbu language.

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