



## **The Sociological Perspective on Maghi Festival as the New Year of the Tharu Community**

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**Abstract:** The Tharu are an indigenous community living in the Terai and inner Terai regions of Nepal, which is known for its diverse caste, ethnicity, language, social structures, culture, and religions. Maghi is the main festival of the Tharu community. The present research paper clarifies the relevance of Maghi festivals. In this paper customs, procedures and celebration of Maghi are examined. The present study uses a combination of exploratory and descriptive research designs and is based on interviews with elders, ritual performers, and educated members of the Tharu community. Tharu people celebrate Maghi as the New Year, marked by the government has declared holidays. The festival, lasting seven days, involves cleaning, refurbishing houses, and cultural activities. Rituals include holy baths, prayers for children, and offering to deities. It fosters community bonds, while its culinary traditions highlight cultural significance. Economic, social, and cultural factors have contributed to the dynamic nature of Maghi practices, A sociological study by concentrating on the Maghi festival as Tharu new year of study area Birendranagar Municipality-9, Patalganga village, Surkhet. It offers particular insights into Maghi festival's importance, practices and gradually changing to reflect qualities that are inconsistent with modern morals.

**Keywords:** Maghi, custom, festival, Tharu, process, Guruwa, Cultural, significant, change

### **1. Introduction**

Nepal is a multicultural, multiethnic, and multi religious nation. It's also claimed that unity exists in diversity and diversity exists in unity. Geographically, Nepal is separated into several administrative regions as well as three main regions: the Tarai, the Himalayan, and the Mountains. Himalayan regions are traditionally inhabited by Bhote and Sherpa. The Bramhan,



Chhetri, Newar, Rai, Limbu, and Tamang are the people who hinder the mountain region; similarly, the Tharu and other caste and ethnic groups hinder the Terai region. One of the indigenous populations of the country's Terai and inner Terai regions is the Tharus.

According to Bista (1967) term, 'Tharu' is used to describe one of the largest groups of people living in the Terai. Living all along the Terai, though slightly more concentrated in the west and middle, are the Tharus. He goes on to say that "Tharuwan" or "Tharuwot" refers to the Tharu people's ancestral homeland. It consists of the forested area a few miles south of the Terai itself and along the southern edge of the Siwalik Mountain range. He goes on to say that the Tharus are most likely one of the first groups to oppose the Terai. Large populations of Tharuwa can be found in the center of the forest in little clearings. The majority of the sizable, compact Tharu settlements are located in regions with tropical malaria.

Many scholars have recognized the Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, and Saptari people of eastern Nepal, as well as Bara, Parsa, and Chirwan in the center, Rupandehi, and Kapilvastu in the west, and Dang Deukhuri, Banke, Surkhet, Bardiya, Kailali, and Kanchanpur district in the midwest and far west, as the Tharu are native inhabitants of these regions (Gautam and Thapa, 1994)

Tharu has customs and traditions of celebrating the festivals and enjoying it there. Tharu celebrates Dashain, Tihar, Phagu Purnima, Maghi Sankranti, Aitwari, Guriya, Ananttar etc. A Maghi festival is the most important festival of Tharu in these festivals, they do not work before three or four days for the celebration of Maghi festivals. They drink Janda and Oaru and enjoy the festival. They eat a lot of varieties of food like chicken, pork meat. Some Tharus take a fast on that festival. The whole night they dance and sing. They sing Ohamar, BadkimaretcMaghi festivals take place nearly five/seven days. The Holy Purnima festival holds on from the Falgun Purnima and takes one week. Tharu men and women drink a lot of Janda and Daru (home-made alcohol). They spray colors in those festivals with each other. Tharu male start to sing Fagu songs and females go to visit relative's door to door. In the early morning of the Maghe Sankranti they have baths and go to worship.

According to Census 2021, the total population of Nepal is 29,164,578, of which the number of males is 14,253,551(48.87%) and the number of females is 14,911,027 (51.13%). Accordingly, the sex ratio is 95.59 males per 100 females. Annual average population growth rate is 0.92 percent. There are 142 caste/ethnic groups according to the national population and housing census 2021. The Major top four high population caste/ethnic groups are Kshetri 4796995 (16.45%), Brahman - Hill 3292373 (11.29%), Magar 2013498 (6.9%) and Tharu 1807124 (6.2%). Likewise, ten religions have been accepted throughout Nepal. The major five religions are Hindu 23677744 (81.2%), Bouddha 2393549 (8.21%), Islam 1483066 (5.09%), Kirat 924204 (3.17%), Christian 512313 (1.76%). Total number of households is 6666937 and the average household size is 4.37. There are 124 mother languages spoken in the nation, reflecting its rich linguistic diversity.

There are several endogamous sub groups of Tharus, such as Rana, Katharia, Dangaura, Kochila and Mech. This work will concentrate on the Tharus of Surkhet, dealing mainly with



the DangauraTharus. The present study is devoted to the Tharus of PatalgangaGau of Surkhet District in general and their practice of celebrating Maghi festival as Tharu New Year in particular. The Tharu of study area are the DangauraTharu group who come from Dang district in the first. They are very rich in its culture, their language as well as a very unique system of cultural practices, which distinguishes them from others.

According to the national population and housing census 2021, the total population of Karnali province is 16,88,412, of which 8,23,761 are men and 8,64,651 are women. Total number of households is 366255 and the average household size is 4.61. Geographically, the largest province in Nepal is called Karnali Province. The province is 27,984 km<sup>2</sup> in total. It shares 6% of Nepal's population and accounts for almost 18.97% of the nation's land area. The provincial capital is located in the Surkhet district. Total population of Surkhet district is 415126, of which 199740 are men and 215386 are women. Total number of households is 97893 and the average household size is 4.24. The province's ten districts are Surkhet, Dailekh, Salyan, West Rukum, Jajarkot, Dolpa, Jumla, Kalikot, Mugu, and Humla. Here are the local governments of 25 municipalities and 54 rural municipalities. The provincial capital city of Karnali is Birendranagar. In the Patalgunga Tharu village of the Birendranagar Municipality-9, the researcher has selected its research area.

Culture encompasses the behavior and activities of individuals, groups, or societies throughout life, knowingly or unknowingly, transmitted across generations. It is a socially accepted oral or written treasure, including traditions, clothing, dance, festivals, dietary practices, naming rituals, marriage systems, funeral activities, and more. Culture forms the identity of any society, and Tharu culture, unique to this community, differs from other castes and ethnic groups.

Festivals hold socio-cultural importance, preserving culture and fostering social integration and discipline. Maghi plays a very important role to maintain social order and stability in Tharus society.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Maghi festival (Maghe Sankranti) is a major festival observed on the 15th of January, which is the Bikram Sambat calendar's equivalent of the month of Magh. Another name for the celebration is Makar Sankranti. In Nepal, it marks the start of the auspicious month of Magh. In contrast to the chilly month of Poush (December), the festival is thought to mark the start of warmer days. This is thought to be the day that the sun begins its journey toward the Northern Hemisphere. Nepal celebrates this solstice festival.

Now, Tharu are aware about their tradition and festivals and are eager to preserve. New generations in this community are conscious about their culture and they try to adopt it. The festivals celebrated here are Maghi, Aitwari, Holy Fagu, Guriya (Nagpanchami), Astimki (Krishna Janmastami), Dashain, Tihar, Hardahuwa and Auli.



Research on the Tharu festival has been done in extremely small quantities. In recent years, the Tharu group has been the focus of most domestic and international research. However, their social, economic, cultural, and historical backgrounds have been the focus of most research. Most scholars have focused on identity, ethnicity, and caste. (Subedi and Uprety, 2014). So, In the Patalgunga Tharu village of the Birendranagar Municipality-9, the researcher has selected the Tharu festival Maghi. To sum up, a research gap is an area where there is not enough information or investigation, which encourages researchers to investigate and provide new insights to close the gap.

Many scholars have studied the different aspects of Tharu people but there is a research gap in the Tharu festival, Maghi, as new year. So, the following Research questions are raised in this article are

- What are the specific socio-cultural significance of the Maghi festival?
- What specific activities are involved in the Maghi festival?

### **3. Objective**

The research aims to explore the significance and practices of the Maghi festival within the context of the Tharu community, considering its role as a New Year celebration.

### **4. Literature Review**

Tharus have their own language, religion, culture and social rituals which give the Tharus identity. They are coming to celebrate festivals like other castes. They are Maghi, Fagu, Holi, Dhuriya, Gurahi, Hareri, MuthaLehai, Astamki, Dasya, Dewari, Panchami, Sharad, Barka, Aatwari, Sawaniya Sankranti, Aaulilena, AauliUtarna, Badka Puja, ShirawaPaban, Jitiya Pawan, Same Chakewa etc. (Dahit; 2005).

In the nineteenth century, Tharus were described as representative of either the East Asian phenotype or anthropological admixture of “Mongoloid racial stock” or “Indo-Chinese” and a “Negrito” race (Chaubey et al., 2007). “Tharuvani” is a group of various Indo-Aryan inter-related languages such as Bhojpuri, Maithili, and Awadhi which are prominently spoken by Tharu people (Grierson, 1968)

The ‘forest people’ came from many regions at different times to seek peace and shelter in the Jungle; the environment then molded them, over a very long period of time into groups of special people, all of them called the Tharu (Meyer, 1995).

The Tharu community played a pivotal role in transforming the Terai into a fertile and productive cultivable belt. Today, the Terai is recognized as the 'Bread basket' of Nepal, and the immense contribution of the Tharu people in making the region green and productive is noteworthy. Despite facing challenges such as fatal malaria, and encountering fearsome animals like tigers, elephants, rhinos, scorpions, and snakes, the Tharu people tirelessly cleared



thick forests, converting them into cultivable land through their persistent labor and effort (Chaudhary, 1999).

The Tharu were represented as a single, non-Hindu tribal group in various nineteenth- and early twentieth-century works of literature, but more recent authors have placed more emphasis on the group differences. Nowadays, it's more common to describe the Rana Tharu, the Dangaura, the Kathariya Tharus, and so on as geographically separate tribes with unique cultural identities. As noted by Mc Donough (1984, 1994), the various groups have distinct languages, religions, cultural traits, and geographical locations.

According to Dahit (2005) there are scholars who believe that the Tharus are the descendants of Lord Buddha and that they are the Mongols who ruled over the region that periods from the Himalayas to the basins of the Yamuna and the Ganga River in India.

The distinguished Tharu scholar Singh (1997) confidently proposed and substantiated the idea that the Tharus originated near Kapilavastu, predating the Aryan community and having a Mongoloid origin. Singh further investigated the Tharus' descent from the clan of Lord Gautam Buddha, specifically the Sakya people of Kapilavastu. He asserts that Siddhartha Gautam belonged to the Tharu community.

The study of Tharu from the anthropometric and blood group survey method by Majumdar (1942) is another important work about the racial composition of the Tharu and it concluded that they were originally mongoloid people.

There are many controversies about the origin of the Tharus scholars have not been able to come to a definite and clear conclusion regarding the origin of Tharus. The Tharus come from the 'Thar' desert of Rajasthan in India, hence they are named as Tharus (Bista; 1980)

According to Chatterjee (1951), The Tibetan Buddhist Lama Taranath (16th century) has maintained the Thrus or the Tharu tribe, who belonged to the kingdom of Camparna, as Tharui-brgyud. According to the great Tibetan scholar SumpaMkhan-po, Tharu as mentioned by Taranath is the name of a tribe while according to Sylvain Levi Tharui-brgyud must be translated as 'The country of Them.

Tharus are known for their festive and joyful nature, celebrating with eating, drinking, singing, and dancing. Their settled economic life and adoption of deities from various religions have led to the development of unique rites, rituals, and ceremonies for special occasions. Festivals play a role in preserving their traditional culture and promoting social integration, solidarity, and discipline within the Tharu community. The researcher aims to explore the unique Tharu culture by studying the Maghi festival, a significant aspect of their festivities. In feature they possess more or less oblique eyes, mostly brown or yellow-born complexion, very scantily and straight hair on the body and face, thin nose of medium size; while in other features they resemble Nepalese more than any of the Asteroid or pre-Dravidian castes and tribes (Srivastava, 1958).



## **5. Methodology**

This study employs qualitative research methods to investigate the Maghi Festival of the Tharu people. Primary data was gathered through participant field observation and semi-structured interviews, key informant interviews among respondents, representing different generations within families. The focus of the article was on understanding the socio-cultural significance and practices associated with the Maghi Festival. Additionally, a general field survey was conducted among respondents from various individuals. Books, journals, articles, CBS reports, and internet documents were among the archival materials used to gather secondary data.

## **6. Results**

### **6.1 Significances of Maghi Festival**

Maghi festival marks the New Year for the Tharu community, celebrated with sweet dishes, cultural dances, and the selection of community leaders called Barghar-Mukhiya. Sakhiya dance, featuring the Madal hand drum, showcases Tharu traditions, showing the product of their indigenous knowledge. Preparation is underway in every household, with Barghar overseeing key decisions. The festival involves meat preparation, especially pork, sheep, chicken, and traditional dances. Married women reunite with their families, and the selection of Barghar-Mukhiya is a crucial tradition carrying significant responsibilities. Barghar's directions are vital for community discipline, with defiance considered a breach of social norms. The festival, signaling the end of winter and the beginning of spring, includes worship of the sun god. The celebration involves staying warm with music, dance, and a communal fire, culminating in morning rituals, temple worship, and sacrifices. The key significances of Maghi festival of Tharu people are as follows:

- The Maghi Festival is extremely important to the Tharu people because it heralds a time of cultural renewal.
- The celebration marks the harvest's end, expressing gratitude for the land's abundance, closely tied to agriculture.
- Maghi marks the start of the Tharu New Year, a period of rebirth, optimism, and promising prospects for the coming year.
- Maghi fosters community unity through shared rituals, bringing families and the Tharu society together.
- The Maghi celebration frequently carries a religious connotation, with prayers and rituals honored.
- The Maghi Festival preserves traditions, passing down customs from one generation to the next.
- The celebrations feature cultural performances, dances, and music, bringing vibrancy and joy to the community





- Maghi is not just symbolic; it includes practical tasks like assessing crops and planning for the next farming season.
- The festival strengthens social harmony, fostering unity and cultural pride among Tharu community members.
- Maghi boosts the local economy with fairs and markets, supporting businesses and fostering community economic growth.

## **6.2 Celebrating Processes and Practices of Maghi Festival**

Patalganga Village is located at the south part of Kakrebihar of Birendranagar Municipality ward no. 9. It is located 4 kilometers south of the Birendranagar main market. More than 45 Tharu households are there in Patalganga. They have practiced Tharu community homestay in the village. So, the villagers celebrate various Tharu social, cultural, and festival activities. Maghi, is the special festival of Tharu, and holds particular significance as the Tharu new year. It is a major festival, marked by a government-declared national holiday, signifying the conclusion of annual agreements between masters and servants or landlords and tenants within the Tharu community. The practice has evolved since the abolition of the Kamaiya system in Nepal in 2000. The Maghi festival starts on the 1st of the month of Magh (15th of January) and lasts for five/seven days. Tharus celebrates Maghi as the New Year and of course part of the festival is worshipping, drinking, eating and dancing. Maghi festival is also called Maghe Sankranti, Tila Sankranti, Khichra etc. On the previous day of Maghi all the family members gather together and share sorrows and happiness of the whole year. They have drinks of different alcoholic items, Dhikri, wine and Sikar (meat).

On Maghi day, many young and adult males wake up to the sound of a rooster and proceed to two river junctions for a holy bath. Women, occupied with tasks, bathe in nearby wells and taps. Couples without children visit the holy bathing points, pray for offspring, and symbolically offer copper coins to the river and well. After the bath, they present flowers and water to a stone god's statue, apply tika on their foreheads, and receive blessings from elders and visit with their grandfather's generation, the son's generation and the grandson's generation. Each donor has to drop five Ujrifull of rice, five single hand-full of whole grain, black grams and the same amount of salt in the allotted pot for his generation then they greet their Bhutwa (gods). After the finishing of this ritual, all junior members of the family greet their elders by touching the feet called Dhoglagne. Tharus use white rice flour for tikka, then return home as "Murkutbas Jaina." They perform "Nisrau Kaharne," offering a special mix to married sisters and daughters. These rituals foster peace and coordination in the community. The day after Maghi, known as "Maghi Dewani," involves brothers offering Nisrau to married sisters, strengthening sibling bonds. During the Maghi festival week, starting from Jitmarna Din, everyone is free from work. Dancing and singing activities take place throughout the week, with visits to different houses for dance performances. Owners of the houses offer coins



and rupees on a mat, and a fun tradition involves dancers picking up money from the mat using their backsides. Dance involves performances between brothers and sisters or boys and girls.

As per the senior member of the village, known as Maghi Festival, it serves as a New Year celebration. During this festival, villagers engage in thorough cleaning of the entire village and their respective residences a day prior. Traditional mud houses undergo a refurbishment with fresh layers of mud, and the community adorns themselves in new and tidy attire. In Patalganga Gau, there is an ancient well known as a sacred site for Tharu people. According to historical mythology, gods visit there in the well with music, and angels also dance there at midnight. This well is related with 5 Pandab stories of Mahabharat. Among 5 Pandab, the Second elder brother Bhim bathed in this well. When Bhim started bathing, the clean water was dirty every time. Bhim wants to know the exact reason for this problem. He passed out all the water from the valley, after that he found the huge snake in the well and finally, killed this snake. So, Patalganga village is a very famous place. Consequently, many Tharu individuals from various parts of the country aspire to visit this revered location.

The people in the Tharu community, mostly from Patalganga, are observing Maghi, the greatest festival of the community. The Tharu community observes this festival with much fanfare and gaiety for five consecutive days. Maghi festival is celebrated as the New Year by sharing the sweet dishes and performing cultural dance and selecting community leaders. The Sakhiya dance performed with the tune of Madal (hand drum) is popular among Tharu community people of all ages for centuries, which demonstrates the costumes, traditions and folk culture of Tharu, Man Bahadur Tharu, a leader of Tharu community said.

The people should manage meat, especially pork, a day before Maghi festival while the women remain busy cooking local dishes including Jaad and Dhikri. Dhamar and Dumru dances are also equally popular in the Tharu community in this festival. Prem Chaudhary, an elder person from the Tharu community, said that the Tharu people have already slaughtered pig in every house for the celebration of this festival. Likewise, the married women have visited their maternal home to reunite with their parents, brothers and relatives to celebrate the Maghi festival, he added.

In general, these leaders oversee the overall tasks of the community including protection of the village, development works, irrigation, drinking water supplies, power supplies and other issues that could surface in the community. Defiance of the orders of Barghar is considered as violation of social norms in the Tharu community and every individual should abide by the directive of Barghar since this helps maintain discipline and collectivism in the community. It is cold and foggy the evening before the 1st of Maghi, but the festival spirit is in the air tonight. A group of Tharu people is sitting around a big fire and some young children are dancing. There is a big hall (homestay hall) in the North side of the community, Tharu people are gathered there and perform their cultural dance. Everybody is dancing and enjoying themselves.

The Maghi festival holds significant cultural importance among the Tharu community in Nepal, distinguishing itself from other Tharu festivals. Designated as the new-year day and the





commencement of the new fiscal year within the Tharu culture. Maghi lacks any religious myth or legend associated with its observance. The culinary aspects of Maghi, particularly the preparation of traditional dishes such as "Tillko Laddu" (Brown Sesame), "Chakku" (Malays), "Ghee" (clarified Butter), "Tilauri," Spinach, and Yam's curry, highlight the festival's gastronomic significance. Notably, Tarul (Yam) holds a special place in the culinary tradition of Maghe Sankranti. Believed to confer health benefits and warmth during the cold winter, foods like Ghiu Chaku, Tilko Laddu, Spinach, and yam are consumed on this occasion.

According to a key informant, for the Tharus, traditionally Maghi is the time of eating, drinking and celebration and of doing no work at all. Previously, when the Kamaiya (contract labor) system was in practice, personal servants and agricultural employees of Tharu origin used to get holidays during this festival. All the annual agreements between landlords and tenants or masters and servants end at this day and must be renewed during or after the festival, if both sides wish to do so. In the course of the year neither party is supposed to break an agreement made during the Maghi festival. These all systems were practiced under the Kamaiya system, which was abolished by the Nepal government some years ago. Research participants further said that nowadays they only celebrate the Maghi festival just for enjoyment and as their New Year. The festival may last one week. There is no more Jad to drink, pork, sheep, chicken to eat, and serious work must begin again.

Preparations for the Maghi festival among the Tharu people commence months in advance, involving the meticulous crafting of Dhikri, various delectable foods, and the procurement of chicken and pork. In the days leading up to Maghi, specifically in the month of Poush (early January), a special Jad is prepared using Anadi (sticky) rice, alongside a common Jad. Families engage in fishing, soak rice, and pound it in a local rice holler to create Dhikri, an indigenous rice cake steamed for consumption on the festival day. Additionally, households, excluding the economically disadvantaged, ceremoniously sacrifice a pig the day before the festival, obtaining pork either through purchase or from local sources for those unable to afford a whole pig.

Key informants stated that after this, all people of the family eat and then go from one house to another of relatives and friends to drink more Jad (homemade liquor) and eat more chicken, pork, sheep, pickles and vegetables. Meanwhile long talks and discussions on such occasions generally concern the food, especially the Jad. Comparisons are made about the taste of food and drinks served during the Parva by the various houses, which have been visited. Therefore, everyone competes to serve Jad better than the others. These feasts last usually for about a week.

Research participants further indicated that, during the mid-day of the main day of the Parva, all the household heads are gathered at the Bargar's (village head) house carrying Jad, which they drink there. Next day, they gather again at the same place, with the same amount of Jad. This Jad is consumed during a Khel, in which the Bargar asks each individual household head about his problems: whether he is moving or migrating to a new place, whether he has any intention of building a new house or renovating an old one, or whether someone in his



house, is going to get married. These questions are asked to let the Bargar know what sort of community help at what time will be needed to the concerned household head, so that he may prepare or fix a rough schedule for such events.

As reported from the study area, during the Maghi week there are several male and female groups of amateur Tharu dancers in special colorful and charming dresses. On this occasion all girls and boys are free. Sometimes it creates some social problems like pregnancy before marriage. But most people easily accept premarital pregnancy. The Tharu people have an indigenous custom that if a girl is pregnant and if the male did not accept her as his wife, another male easily accepts the pregnant woman as his mate with her fetus. The baby is considered to be his own and belongs to his clan. The unmarried boys and girls can fall in love so it is the favorable time to select a life partner for them. If the unmarried girls eloped with the boy, the family and society also easily accepted them. This is the only community where the women enjoy freedom at least for a week during Maghi every year. Money that is collected by Maghi dance, they have a custom of feast. After one week, they all return to their regular life. Then Maghi is over for a year.

In conclusion, the central aspect of the celebration of Maghi is to follow continuity or change. In this sense, Maghi cultural practice is dynamic as society and culture and it is found that they change as those people or communities require it and it is continuous too. It is impossible that all factors should be changed without change in such practices, but not practically possible. So, it is essential to change these factors as their requirements by themselves. Some factors that are core components cannot be changed and it is continuous even though they do not bear any meaning but continue in the respect of their fore ancestors.

For these changes, it is found that economic factors are one of the key factors among all. Progressively improving the economic status of Tharu is the main factor to determine their status in their community. Parallel to it, infrastructural development and it also indirectly influences the lifestyle and livelihood of people of that particular area. Likewise, rental impacts, market of agricultural products and opportunities of laborers and skilled workers are also promoting the economy directly and improving the economic status of Tharu indirectly. Tharu community homestay also helps their economic status directly.

Similarly, social factors like, education, communication, networking, awareness, urbanization, modernization are also acting for changes in life style of all people in the study area particularly the Tharu. Likewise, such changes also indirectly or directly impact on the changes of Maghi Practices. Cultural factors like Sanskritization, identity awareness, ethnic and cultural identity, belongingness, cultural influences, enculturation, and assimilation are also the key factors for such changes. Inclusive policies and participation are also helping factors for the determination of such changes in Tharu, especially the Maghi Celebration.



## **7. Discussion**

The research titled 'Maghi festival: A sociological exploration of Tharu new year' was based on participant observation, key informant interview and field research of study area Patalganga Gau, Birendranagar-9, Surkhet. Their language, customs, dress and way of life are unique, and they have a rich culture. There are a number of theories regarding the historical origins of the Tharu people, so their origin is not totally clear. Now, they are aware about their tradition, custom and festivals and are eager to preserve. New generations in this community are conscious about their culture and they try to adopt it. The festivals celebrated here are Maghi, Aitwari, Holy Fagu, Guriya (Nagpanchami), Astimki (Krishna Janmastami), Dashain, Tihar, Hardahuwa and Auli.

The special ethnic community of Nepal, Tharu community, celebrates this festival with huge importance. The Maghi Festival as it symbolizes cultural renewal and marks the conclusion of the harvest season, expressing gratitude for agricultural abundance. It also signifies the commencement of the Tharu New Year, representing a time of rebirth, optimism, and promising prospects for the upcoming year. They call the first of Magh as "Maghi". The first of Magh is also considered as the beginning of Tharu New Year. Maghi is also the Harvest festival of the Tharus people. They celebrate Maghi as a joyful time after the heavy fieldwork. They prepare varieties of meals, beverages and meats and celebrate it by gathering their family members and community. The Maghi is the weeklong festival of Tharus. Through shared rituals, the celebration fosters community unity, bringing families and the Tharu society together, often carrying a religious connotation with prayers and rituals. The festival serves as a means of preserving traditions, passing down customs to subsequent generations. During the festival, they perform their cultural dances, dress up in the traditional Tharu wear, eat and drink with their near ones. It brings vibrancy and joy to the community. Beyond symbolic aspects, Maghi involves practical tasks such as assessing crops and planning for the next farming season. Furthermore, the festival contributes to social harmony, fostering unity and cultural pride among Tharupeople, and plays a role in boosting the local economy.

Maghi festival plays a dynamic interplay between continuity and change also. The cultural practices associated with Maghi festival ensure to meet the evolving needs of their communities. While certain core components remain unchanged in homage to ancestral traditions, adjustments are essential to align with contemporary requirements. Economic factors, particularly the improving economic status of the Tharu, infrastructural development, and market dynamics, play a vital role in influencing both lifestyle and livelihood. Social factors, such as education, communication, and urbanization, contribute to changes in the Tharu lifestyle, subsequently impacting Maghi practices. Tharu people celebrate Maghi as their New Year, marked by government-declared holidays and festivities. The festival, lasting seven days, involves cleaning, refurbishing houses, and cultural activities. Rituals include holy baths, prayers for children, and offering to deities. The festival fosters community bonds, while its culinary traditions highlight cultural significance. Maghi, lacking religious myths, holds



cultural prominence in the Tharu community. Economic, social, and cultural factors contribute to the dynamic nature of Maghi practices.

## **8. Conclusion and Recommendation**

The article entitled 'Maghi festival: A sociological exploration of Tharu new year' was based on participant observation, key informant interview and field research of study area Patalganga Gau, Birendranagar municipality-9, Surkhet. As the Tharu New Year, Maghi festival is celebrated differently from other festivals and is considered to be of great cultural significance among the Tharus of the research area. In Nepal, ethnic identity is becoming more and more important, especially among the Tharu people, following political changes. Maghi's growing popularity around the country is a reflection of growing recognition of its specific celebration. Family, kin, and other ethnic social organizations are brought together by the Maghi ritual and celebration, which is a powerful example of social harmony. Maghi has no religious myths or legends, despite its cultural importance. Additionally, in the wake of the nation's political changes, the Nepalese government declared Maghi a public holiday and formally recognized it as a national festival.

The Maghi Festival, celebrated by the Tharu community in Nepal, marks the New Year and spans seven days, featuring worship, traditional dances, and communal activities. Also known as Maghe Sankranti, Tila Sankranti, and Khichra, the festival lacks religious myths but is culturally significant. Celebrated with culinary delights like Tillko Laddu and cultural practices such as the Sakhiya dance. The festival involves pre-celebration rituals, a focus on traditional dishes, and cultural activities, emphasizing the significance of yam roots. Historically, Maghi was a time for rest under the Kamaiya system, with agreements renewed during the festival. Today, it serves as a time for enjoyment and celebration. Tharu people make elaborate preparations, including making Dhikri, purchasing meat, and engaging in traditional cultural activities. The festival includes rituals, family gatherings, feasts, and discussions about community issues. Maghi concludes with amateur Tharu dancers performing, collecting money, and feasting before returning to regular life, highlighting the dynamic nature of Maghi practices influenced by economic, social, and cultural factors.

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