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Rana Tharu of Western Nepal: Celebrating Cultural Pride and Social Unity

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Abstract

This research paper discusses the main customs of the Rana community residing in Kailali and Kanchanpur districts of western Nepal and their social significance. The heritage of Rana culture, and rituals along with their festivals and tradition have fostered social unity which mark their agrarian lifestyle. This research aims to describe the cultural identity of Rana community and its societal contributions. A qualitative research approach was adopted for this study, utilizing the historical and observational methods for the data collection. While secondary data have been used where applicable, primary data is primarily based on interviews, active participation, and field visits. Among the sixteen main rituals found in the Hindu community, the Rana community primarily practices four significant rituals. Additionally, the Rana community uniquely practices singing mourning songs after a person's death. The local traditions and customs prevalent in the Rana community play an essential role in fostering unity within society. Moreover, the rituals of the Rana community are mainly associated with agriculture, as it is their primary occupation.

Keywords: Rana Tharu, Cultural pride, Ritual variety, Social unity, Western Nepal

Introduction

Among the various Tharu communities, the Rana community mainly resides in the Kanchanpur and Kailali districts of Sudurpaschim province of Nepal. Known for greeting each other with "Ram Ram," the Rana community has been living in this region since before the 1816 Sugauli Treaty, which returned Kailali, Kanchanpur, Banke, and Bardiya to Nepal as a '*Naya Muluk*'. A significant population of the Rana Tharu community also resides in areas like Khiri and Lakhimpur in Uttar Pradesh, and Puranpur

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(Pilibhit), Rudrapur, and districts like Nainital and Udham Singh Nagar in Uttarakhand, India. The Rana Tharu language is a part of the Indo-Aryan language family of the Indo-European language group, spoken along the Nepal-India border. The Rana Tharus are recognized as an indigenous group in both Nepal and India and have established a notable presence in agriculture and other sectors. The community still practices the joint family system, symbolizing social cohesion.

The Rana Tharu community has remained a significant group in western Nepal, maintaining social unity through its religious and cultural practices despite exploitation by some individuals (Kalauni, 2001). There is no caste-based untouchability or discrimination within the community. All Tharus share water and social relations freely, indicating an egalitarian society. There are no restrictions on marriage and transactions between different Tharu subgroups, as there is no dowry system like in other Tarai/Madhesh communities. Menstruating women face no discrimination or need for isolation (Nathuram). Menstruation is considered auspicious, symbolizing the maturity of girls. Marriages within the same "Kuri" (lineage) are prohibited (Kaluwa Devi). The Rana Tharu community is considered straightforward and simple, which has sometimes led to challenges in leadership and susceptibility to exploitation. Although the broader Tharu society is male-dominated, the Rana Tharu community is matriarchal with women playing leading roles. The community is nature-worshipping and believes in the worship of various deities. Menstruation is viewed as auspicious, symbolizing the maturity of girls. Marriages within the same "Kuri" (lineage) are prohibited. Hospitality is a hallmark of the Rana community (Kalauni, p.187, 2001).

This research paper aims to highlight the customs of the Rana Tharu community and present their significance from a social studies perspective to the readers. The objectives of this research include discussing the customs of the Rana Tharu community and their relevance from a social studies viewpoint.

Research Design and Method

A qualitative research design has been adopted to describe the prevalent customs and social relationships within the Rana Tharu community. This approach includes the use of various methods for collecting cultural data relevant to the community, alongside historical research techniques. Direct interviews with community members were conducted to gather cultural and social facts. The interviews included elderly members, influential figures, and community activists. Observations of daily life, customs, and festivals of the community were also documented through direct observation and

discussions conducted during field visits to Kanj Basti of Belauri Municipality in Kanchanpur district. These discussions contributed to consolidating the community's collective perspective and experiences.

Important factual data was collected from an interactive one-day workshop organized by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Far Western University in Magh 2080 BS (January 2024) involving the key social activists, elders, and intellectuals of the Rana Tharu community. I personally participated in various cultural and social programs of the Rana Tharu community in Kailali and Kanchanpur, presenting research papers at seminars held in these regions. The significant contributions of intellectuals from the Rana society have enriched this research article. Utilizing diverse sources, the article provides an authentic depiction of the cultural and social relationships of the Rana Tharu community, analyzed through a scholarly lens.

Result and Discussion

The term "culture" refers to social, cultural sentiments, and ideals. In general, specific rituals and mantras performed from conception to death are called culture. Every society has some cultural beliefs, when these are done, they bind not only the individual but also the society and the state in discipline. Culture makes a person responsible for himself, his family, and his society. Hindu culture is not just a theoretical principle but also has left an immense mark on the world practically. The principles of Hindu culture are fully scientifically accepted. The purpose of all principles is to benefit humanity, and Hindu culture can be seen as a lasting imprint of culture throughout the life cycle from conception to death and after death. Only refined, regulated, and organized cultures make society and the country advanced (Ball Krishna). The Rana community helps in the resolution of all problems. If someone in the village is ill or a year has been good for agriculture, the village stays in the braid of the village. The village prays to the deity of Bhuiya in a temple or a mound on Ashadi Pooja. Holi starts from the Padhana house of the village (Premavati). Fighting in the village is organized under the leadership of Bhalmansa. In the Holi festival, forgetting the old cv, all the villages celebrate the Holi festival collectively. Similarly, each festival is celebrated collectively in the Rana community (Bist & Bist, 2022). The objectives of these festivals are to give messages of social unity and mutual love. In this community, economic dignity separates individuals between those who believe in religion and culture.

In Hinduism, sacraments (samskaras) hold great significance. The major sacraments are as follows: conception (garbhadhana), quickening (pumsavana),

parturition (simantonnayana), birth ceremony (jatakarma), naming ceremony (namakarana), tonsure (nishkramana), first feeding (annaprashana), ear-piercing (chudakarma), initiation into learning (vidyarambha), ear piercing (karnavedha), sacred thread ceremony (yajnopavita), commencement of Vedic studies (vedarambha), hair cutting (kesha), completion of Vedic studies (samavartana), marriage (vivaha), and last rites (antyeshti) (Kripa Ram). Similarly, in the Rana community, like devout Hindus, they observe fasts and rituals such as the significance of fasting. Fasting has the effect of purifying the soul. It enhances resolve and strengthens intellectual abilities, thoughts, wisdom, and knowledge development. Ultimately, it fosters devotion, faith, and absorption in the Supreme Being, spreading enthusiasm in business operations, artistic activities, scholarly study, and practical disciplines for a healthy life and longevity (Kalyan, p. 628). In the construction of Rana Tharu homes, one can see glimpses of their cultural heritage, but increasingly, traditional homes are being replaced by cement houses (Lam, 2009). Globally, buildings consume approximately 40% of the energy produced. Due to population growth, urbanization, and improvements in quality of life, urban centers of development consume a significant amount of energy. Depletion of energy sources contributes to climate change risks, necessitating development based on renewable and energy-efficient resources (Bodach, Lang & Hamhaber, 2014). In this context, the traditional construction art of Rana homes preserves a natural environment adapted for them. House construction art is also a part of Rana culture. In human life, children imbued with refined values form the foundation of successful and prosperous household life, and initiating a campaign from within each household for a cultured family is essential to create a happy and prosperous nation (Kedar). It is the duty of every householder or parent to nurture their children into moral beings, safeguard them from bad influences, and propagate noble ideals and values (Kedar). Rather than simply instructing children, becoming an exemplary figure of values within the household itself can establish a culture of values (Kedar). In the Rana Tharu community, it is fortunate that the joint family system still thrives, which fosters affection, blessings, love, and parental affection for children, aside from their parents (Kisan). In the Rana Tharu community, generally, there is great respect for all rituals, and currently, following one's convenience, the following four rituals are mainly seen in behavior: conception, naming (sixth day), marriage, and funeral.

Conception Ritual of Rana Tharu Community in the Region

Tharu women must take precautions from conception until the birth of the child. For instance, if it becomes necessary to go outside during a solar eclipse, it's essential to

wear a protective covering over the belly and keep it uncovered. This is a form of scientific tradition because during an eclipse, many harmful radiations are emitted (Kedar). Pregnant Rana women are forbidden from going to haunted places, touching corpses, going to crematoriums, and going outside at night. It is considered appropriate for every pregnant woman to wear a 'taboo' bracelet made of turmeric. From the chanting bracelet, the pregnant woman is said to stay away from ghosts and demons (Basmati).

Some people within their own caste, according to their respective family deities, have a tradition in the Rana Tharu community to perform the child's sixth day ceremony on auspicious days and auspicious times (day or evening). It is a custom among some Ranas to celebrate the child's sixth day on Wednesday and Saturday according to their deity. On the day of the sixth, it is customary to wake the child and mother in the morning, apply cow dung inside and outside the house, and decorate the surroundings (lipopot). It is also a tradition to go to the pond and riverside to catch fish together with family and community members, if fish are available. If not, fish are bought from the market today to celebrate the sixth (Lakshmi).

On the child's sixth day, the child's cot is smeared with cow dung. The fire, which has been kept burning for six days, is extinguished, and its ashes are prepared into an '*angeethi*'. Tharus believe that if another fire is lit late, the child will have a short life. A nurse (dai) washes the child with warm water. Additionally, the mother bathes and provides new clothes. Outside the house, people celebrate with lamps and a communal feast, among other things, and name the child. The child's naming ceremony is done according to the country and circumstances; Brahmins are not called there (Field Interview, 2023). On the child's sixth day, a new *looga* is worn for a new born, and the child and the female are fed with rice once more. Sibling, and the tradition is also dances Marriage ceremony.

In human society, marriage has existed in the form of a religious and social institution since ancient times. Marriage exists in one form or another in all societies. In Hindu Ashram tradition, comprising Brahmacharya (student), Grihastha (householder), Vanaprastha (retired), and Sannyasa (renunciate), marriage has been practiced since ancient times. Getting married in the Grihastha Ashram is considered a mandatory duty. Controlling and regulating sexual relations between man and woman, and producing necessary human resources for family, society, and the nation, are also purposes served by marriage. According to Hinduism, marriage serves many purposes, including

preserving religion and producing offspring, and satisfaction of sexual relations is its ultimate purpose.

Through marriage, family structure is established. Therefore, it is also a social institution that provides social recognition or acceptance for the desires of men and women. The state also grants legal status to marriage. Every society and country values its own traditions. These traditions are recognized and approved by relevant states and governments. In this sense, marriage is a means of controlling and regulating sexual relations and norms. The meaning and importance of marriage vary according to the society and environment of the world. Marriage is an extremely important practice in human society or sociological institution. It is the fundamental unit of the family, which promotes human species progress, it is a one of the most important traditions.

Marriage, established through prevalent and accepted laws, forms the basis for marital relations and family life. From such relationships, spouses acquire various rights and responsibilities. On one hand, the wife gains the right to enjoy sexual pleasures, while on the other hand, she is obligated to care for and nurture the children. In most societies, through legal marriages, inherited property rights typically pass only to children born within such unions.

Marriage Related Aspects in the Rana Community

In the Rana community, several fundamental traditions and specifics are associated with marriage rituals. While many practices have been influenced by Vedic Hindu rituals such as ceremonies and customs, numerous unique traditions of their own persist (Pandey, 1997). In this community, marriages primarily occur during the months of Poush and Magh (December to January). Marriages do not take place between the children of maternal cousins (Kanshi / Mausī). Individuals from the Tharu community do not accept pre-marital sexual relations. Therefore, child marriage was prevalent in this community. Initially, marriage was done in two ways *Kaaj* and *Dola*.

Where *Kaaj* indicates the abduction (taking away) of the bride used to happen for marriage and *Dola* indicates the marriage where the bride was purchased/acquired through mutual consent and discussion was called "*Dola*." However, such types of marriages do not occur now.

Marriage is organized with the consent of parents or guardians from both sides. Unlike other communities, they do not manage the relationship between sons and daughters by themselves but through intermediaries. Such intermediaries are called "*Manjpatiya*" by the Rana community. They assist in bringing both sides into contact and

finalize the marriage. This service is selfless, but after marriage, it also brings joy to them. However, this work is done in a highly confidential manner. Intermediaries play a facilitating role. Intermediaries inspect whether any member of the family of any side is suffering from leprosy, disabled, or harassed by ghosts, and then only they propose marriage. Because it remains in the form of advisors, their role is also commendable for both parties.

Apna Paraya (Mangni / Sagai)

"Apna Paraya" refers to "Mangni". In this ceremony, a pot of jaggery or sweets and some fish are taken by the groom's side to the bride's house. If the bride's side accepts it, they finalize the marriage by saying "Ram Ram Samdhi" (Pandey, p. 550). In the Rana Tharu community, there used to be a tradition of conducting Mangni for boys and girls at a young age, but now there have been some changes in this practice. The Mangni process involves intermediaries (Lami) negotiating relations between the boy's and girl's families. Once the families understand each other, Mangni formalizes the relationship before marriage. The Ranas call this process 'Dikhouri', and it begins with the auspicious gesture. On that day, in the evening, men from the bride's side go to the groom's house with some relatives. There, they provide a feast with alcohol, meat, fish, and more. On the same day, during the daytime or evening, the relationship between the groom's and bride's sides is strengthened. Once the traditional process of *Mangni* is completed, both sides' participants accept the relationship by saying "Ram-Ram Samadhi". Finally, as a gesture of goodwill, the groom's side distributes sweets such as Ladu, Penda, and sweets like (Premvati and Basmati) to everyone. On that day, the Rana Tharu community enjoys entertainment throughout the night with dances, folk songs, and music. The next day, after having breakfast, the groom's side returns home after Mangni. Although this tradition of the Rana Tharu community has been considerably modified today.

"Baat Kahee" or "Baina" is a tradition where when a boy and a girl agree to marry, before the marriage, representatives from the boy's side visit the girl's home and fix the wedding date. On this day, sweets or traditional sweets like peda are distributed. This ritual usually takes place on Sundays or Thursdays (Pandey, 1997). This day is known as 'Pichhauchho' day, when the boy and girl are mature or ready for marriage, their elders or guardians decide that the marriage should happen after a few days or months. When the girl's family is ready for the marriage, the 'Pichhauchho' day is fixed either on the same day or later, with the consent of both families. Usually, about 12 days after 'Pichhauchho', the auspicious wedding rituals or the wedding itself takes place.

In the Rana Tharu community, on the day of "Pichhauncho," the groom's side goes to the bride's house to apply turmeric to the bride. They bring turmeric, a little fish, rice, salt, oil, and chili. In this community, especially on the day the girl's family is ready for their daughter's marriage, or from the day the engagement happens between the boy and girl until before the marriage, the gifts given by the boy's side to the girl's side are called 'Baina.' Generally, Baina is given in the same year that the marriage is confirmed. In Baina, the boy's side gives sweets or jalebi (jери) according to their capacity, but sometimes it is necessary to give Baina in a way that also addresses the demands of the girl's side. Currently, this tradition is almost lost.

Wedding Ceremony of Rana Tharu Community

After the date and time of the wedding are set, invitations are jointly sent out to relatives from both sides to attend the wedding. Along with the invitation, the groom's side sends sweets, while the bride's side sends betel nuts. Preparations for the wedding, similar to other communities, begin a few days in advance. Weddings usually take place in the months of Magh or Phulora Duj. The Rana Tharu considers Thursdays and Sundays auspicious (Pandey, 1997). They believe that the goddess of purity visits both the groom's and bride's homes on those days. They hold that these days are beneficial. On these days, women from both sides plaster their homes with cow dung and cow urine. The entrances are decorated with flowers, leaves, and animal motifs. A new stove is set up in place of the old one, symbolizing a prosperous start to the couple's married life.

Following this, seven unmarried girls at the groom's house and five at the bride's house soak urad dal in water for the next day's meal. This dish is considered auspicious by the Rana Tharu. The next day, the men from the village go to the forest to gather wood as fuel for cooking the wedding feast. The day before the wedding, a ceremony called Bhuiya Puja is performed. Before Bhuiya Puja, a ritual known as Kastei Puja is conducted.

According to Dharamraj Rana (Key Informant),

The Ranas are Rajputs. In Rana Tharu weddings, a "Kataro" (a type of iron dagger), a shield, and a sword are used for protection during the ceremony. The groom's palanquin (dola or chandal) must also have a crown made of peacock feathers, called "Chhaturi" in the Rana language. These practices are still prevalent in the Rana Tharu community and are seen as evidence of their Rajput heritage. During weddings, various hymns, mantras, and traditional songs of the Rana Tharu community are sung (interview).

In the Rana Tharu community, the transport used by the groom when going to the bride's house for the wedding is called "Barait." Specifically, the groom's brothers-in-law (Bahanuiya or Lami) carry the groom on their shoulders in the Barait to the bride's house. After the wedding, they must safely return the groom in the same Barait. This Barait, used only in Rana Tharu weddings, is artistically crafted.

On the wedding day, the groom's brothers-in-law build the Barait in the morning. It involves a medium-sized bed called Pindas (decorated with various deities, elephants, horses, birds, and floral designs) or Palkhiya, with long bamboo or wooden poles attached for carrying. At each corner of the Pindas, four to five-foot-long sticks are tied, meeting at the top, where a square-shaped bamboo roof is created. The Pindas is draped with cloth embroidered with deities, elephants, horses, birds, and floral patterns, with small mirrors sewn in, while the top is covered with white cloth.

At each corner of the square roof, bunches of peacock feathers (Murchal) are tied, and a crown (Chhaturi) is placed in the center. The top of the Chhaturi is connected to the bases of the Murchal with decorative cloth featuring embroidered mirrors. A shield is also attached to the Barait for the groom's protection. Similarly, the Rana Tharu make a "Doli" for the bride. The bride's brothers carry her in the Doli to the groom's house, and after completing all the wedding rituals there, they return her in the Doli the next day. The construction of the Doli is similar to that of the Barait, but it does not have the Chhaturi on top.

Funeral Rites of Rana Tharu Community

In the Rana Tharu community, when someone passes away, the deceased is placed on a cot, and a lamp is lit near their head. The body is covered with white cloth. Both burial and cremation practices exist, but cremation has become more prevalent due to Hindu influence. Like in Hindu traditions, deceased children are typically buried. According to the Ranas, death can be either natural or untimely, with untimely death believed to be caused by spirits or divine wrath. Previously, the deceased were placed directly on the ground, but now they are laid on the ground from the cot to avoid a painful death (as mentioned by Premwati). The son or a close relative places water and a coin in the mouth of the deceased, believing it will ease the passage of death. Similar to Hindu customs, the body is washed by the riverside, anointed with ghee, and then placed on the pyre. After igniting the pyre, when it is half-burnt, the mourners perform rituals, bathe in the river, and return home to grieve.

The Ranas believe that after a person dies, their spirit can return home and cause trouble. To prevent this, they sing mourning songs from the house to the burial or cremation site, believing that this will keep the spirit from returning. After the funeral, they wash their hands and feet and touch fire and iron upon returning home. They also light a lamp at the place where the person died during the night. In the Rana Tharu community, the ritual of honoring deceased ancestors is called "Ghada." On the day of Ghada, it is customary to serve food and alcohol to mourners. Fakirs and ascetics are buried according to Hindu customs. Embracing Hindu ideals, the Rana community performs the Ghada as a form of Shradhha. During Kartik, the community conducts the Ghada dance to remember their ancestors. The lyrics of a song sung during Shradhha are:

Are Kunsh Ki Putriya Panch Rang Chir Bhajan Karle Kunsh Ki Putriya...

In the evening, after sunset, a sacred grass called "Kush" is tied with a thread and placed in the center of a mandap. Members of the family, holding water and flowers, stand around it, sprinkle water on the Kush, and offer flowers in remembrance of the deceased. A lamp and various foods prepared that day are placed near the Kush, covered with a bamboo basket called "Chapriya," and topped with another basket filled with puffed rice, biscuits, and fruits.

Using five sugarcanes, they create an effigy of the deceased and dress it in appropriate clothing based on the gender of the deceased. This process is called "Putri Basalne" in the Rana Tharu language. Throughout the night, the spirit of the deceased is honored, with clothing being changed periodically. Sweets are distributed as prasad to all present. Dinner is served to the attendees only after the effigy of the deceased has been properly set up. During the setting up, female relatives and family members often cry, while the men focus on completing the rituals. Despite the somber occasion, the meal may include fish and meat, such as goat, chicken, or sheep for males and female counterparts for females, to please the spirit of the deceased. Alcohol is offered to those who consume it, though it is not mandatory.

In the Rana Tharu community, the Shradhha festival, called "Ghada," is observed for two days starting on the 27th of Kartik. A mourning song is sung, which translates to "The soul has come, take rest." As the night progresses, the songs increase in intensity. They sing about Raja Harishchandra and Lord Krishna, including a song called "Tirtharaj." The belief is that reciting "Vaikuntha Leela" during Shradhha ensures a place in heaven.

The lyrics reflect the longing and messages from another realm:

*Kaun kahe re samjhāi khabar un desh kī bāten,
itesh bahut jān hain. utairse bahutai āvem.
bīch racho hai khayāl, agāda dam kachu na ruhāvai.*

Rana Tharu community completes the Shraddha or Ghada ceremony within a year as required. In this community, the tradition is to perform Shraddha only once. Just as everyone is invited to weddings, in Ghada too, invitations are extended to everyone present and food is served. The task of giving invitations is called 'Dinandu'. On the first day of Shraddha, invitations are sent out to relatives who will be visiting the respective house. They prepare a small hut for the departed soul. A picture is made inside it. This is called 'Mundak'. For the deceased soul, an expansion is made on that Mundak and the Shraddha is done on another day (Badliya).

This ritual is called 'Prahariwalo Din'. On the day of Shraddha, water is filled in the clay pot ('ghada') along with 'panchad' and brought home. Near the Mundak, sacred grass ('kush') is tied with a thread and placed there, pressing it into the soil. Family members take water in their hands, remember the deceased soul, sprinkle water on the grass pressed into the soil, and offer flowers at the designated time. In the same place, an oil lamp and edible items are placed. Food items are covered with a basket ('tokari'), and on top of the basket, a new 'dhakiya' (dolwa) filled with biscuits and fruits is placed. A clay doll representing the deceased is made and kept outside. Grass is used in making this doll. The doll is watched over and sweets are distributed during the night. Female members of the family and relatives gather together during the day to prepare and serve the meal. Relatives bring vegetables, pickles, fish, meat, etc. All the guests arriving during the day are served rice, pickles, lentils, vegetables, fish, and meat. Those who drink alcohol are served alcohol. Goat meat is served on the day of a man's Shraddha, and lamb meat is served on a woman's Shraddha.

The clay dolls prepared for the ghada are dressed according to whether they are for men or women. For men, they are dressed in traditional attire like daura-suruwal, coat, pant, and sometimes dhaka topi and kurta. For women's clay dolls, they are dressed in jewelry, saree, blouse, kurta, pants, and so on.

Bhajan and kirtan continue throughout the night of the Shraddha. No one sleeps. Fruits, sweets, beaten rice, tea, and sweets (basmati) are served from time to time. By early morning at four o'clock, the meal is prepared and offered to the deceased. At five o'clock in the morning, the clay doll is uncovered and taken to the river. The sticks used

in making the doll are not allowed to touch when the doll is immersed. Women cry loudly during this time, but men quickly uncover and destroy the doll. In the morning, all the guests are fed and sent off, and the harvested rice (soaked, dried, and ground into flour) is given as prasad. During the day, relatives eat together. Like in weddings, those who come to the ghada also live in the house for four to five days. The jhupdi prepared for the deceased is destroyed by the rise of the moon, and Shraddha/ghada is considered complete. After that, Shraddha is never performed. All the remaining utensils, such as clothes and other items, are distributed among daughters, sisters, and relatives. In Shraddha, as much charity as desired is given. Mainly, an image of the deceased is kept on the ghada. During Krishna Paksha, no other worship is performed, but Shraddha activities are conducted. In the Rana community, Shraddha is performed only twice, after the rituals of the deceased, and again on the day of Kartik Amavasya.

Choti Roti and Badi Roti: A Ritual of Rana Tharu

Choti Roti literally means pure. On this day, food is given to the deceased soul, and all the attendees eat. If food is not offered, it is believed that the deceased soul incurs a debt. Badi Roti refers to the final rites.

Ganga Leela: Ganga Leela is sung on both occasions of marriage and ghada. During the ghada ceremony, Ganga Leela depicts scenes from the secular world and is a song based on morality. In the Rana Tharu community, only mourning songs are sung, examples of which are as follows:

Main na jaeho re mrit lok Ganga Shivju se kahe,

Ao surasuti baith kanth aanand gun gaamo,

Matpita guru simar shish sadhunke naamo.

Aan buddh prakat karau guru Ganesh manaamo,

Jo jo akshar bichhde ho, maan baith likhdeo.

"Vyahgaro Nach Geet" is a traditional song performed in social ceremonies. This song reflects social rituals and is also sung during funeral rites (Ghada) according to social customs. Among the Rana Tharu community, such mourning songs are prevalent, primarily sung by women. This song narrates various life events from pregnancy to death, intertwining different rituals.

Mukat Bihari saiya girdhari kita e gae bansike bajaiya

Girdhari lal ko kita e gae hiyara ke judaiya

Pardeshi bhaiya ho gharki sudh bichudare

Aath mas nau garbhame rakhi hae raksha kari raghurai

Dui taramaniya, dui darmaniya sangai lae thade. Chali.

Sundar deh dharai pardeshi.

In the Rana community, discussing prevalent rituals is of utmost social, human, and psychological importance. These rituals provide a significant framework for preserving personality, society, and culture. They foster ideals, morality, camaraderie, empathy, and a cooperative environment in society, enhancing unity and prosperity (Man Bahadur). Rituals promote unity and collective growth in society. They enhance values like integrity, respect, and cooperation within the community, such as in the cultural, religious, and social cohesion of the Bhara and Rana communities. This fosters harmony and prosperity among various classes, castes, religions, and communities. The position of village head exemplifies individual activities in the community. Rituals pass down traditional knowledge, culture, and information, establishing institutions that provide cultural information in related villages. Rana Tharu community rituals effectively collect experiences from past generations' books, planning and determining the future in an optimal manner. The customs, traditions, and legacies respected in the Rana community have significantly contributed to the development of sociality.

Rituals play a crucial role in personal and ethical development. They provide individuals with insights into moral values and high standards, teaching them to discern right from wrong. Rituals also play an essential role in preserving and developing society (Bhojraj). They equip society to face inevitable challenges and enhance its excellence. Rituals build rich relationships and respect, fostering trust, respect, and community development within families, communities, and societies. In recent times, all communities in Nepal are increasingly integrating their own religious and cultural preservation efforts.

Conclusion

The Rana Tharu community places significant social importance on all its cultural programs, festivals, and celebrations. Events like Nwari, Chhathi, weddings, and funerals (Shraddha) involve widespread participation from members of the community, fostering strong social cohesion. The community believes deeply in its traditions and uses cultural events as a means to set examples even for other communities. Behind such exemplary

presentations lie social structures like Bharras, Bhalmanis, Padhnas, and Chakars, each playing a crucial role. In recent times, local governments in municipalities and rural municipalities where the Rana Tharu reside have actively organized rights to ensure development and peace related to Bhalmansa, further enhancing the possibility of substantial support in cultural, economic, and social development.

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