



Sacred Waters

CULTURAL VALUES OF HIMALAYAN WETLANDS



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Sacred Waters

CULTURAL VALUES OF HIMALAYAN WETLANDS



Government of Nepal
Ministry of Forest & Soil Conservation
Department of National Parks & Wildlife Conservation



2037
Foreword

Conservation of ecological integrity of freshwater sources of the country is one of the priority programs and key responsibilities of the Government of Nepal. Including National Wetland Policy (2003), a number of other Policies and Regulations are also in implementation for the conservation and management of wetlands' biodiversity, wise use of water, fisheries, etc. The National Wetland Policy has clearly specified the responsibility of conservation and management of such important wetlands within the protected area system (PAs) by the Government itself whereas the wetlands outside the PAs through the community participation.

Globally, freshwater sources are in crisis. By being a Himalayan country, Nepal is rich in fresh water resources and has been conducting various scientific studies on wetlands for the conservation and sustainable use of these important sources of fresh water. The studies in wetlands included are: inventories and documentation of wetland biodiversity along with their traditional, ethnic, religious, and cultural significance and values for conservation to the local residential communities. The main aim of these studies is to conserve wetland biodiversity and wise use of wetland resources for improving the livelihood of the local and downstream communities as well.

WWF Nepal has been one of the key conservation partners joining hands with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) in various areas of biodiversity conservation, PAs management, and research. Such collaborative approach has yielded various field based scientific researches to generate and establish the baseline information on natural, biological, and socio-cultural resources of Nepal. Based on the results and recommendations of these studies, it has made possible to Nepal list high altitude wetlands such as Rara, Phok-Sumdo, Gokyo and Gosainkunda lakes as the Ramsar sites: wetlands of international importance. I believe that this will certainly help and encourage all for the conservation of those valuable wetlands which are outside the protected areas of country.

This publication has been able to document important traditional, ethnic, religious, and cultural significance and values of the local communities on conservation of wetlands. Publication and dissemination of such an important documentation of our natural and socio-cultural heritage will of course help in conservation and wise use of the wetlands in a sustainable manner.

Last but not the last, I would like to thank all those who directly and indirectly helped to document valuable information on our natural and socio-cultural heritage making it possible to disseminate among wider public arena in the form of a book.

Gopal Prasad Upadhyay
Director General
Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation
Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation
Government of Nepal

Director General

MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE

Wetlands are one of the most important parts of the ecological system. They store and purify water, provide various resources to the local communities and give shelter to many wildlife, birds and plants. They also have invaluable religious, cultural as well as historical significance and serve as important tourism destinations.

Though Nepal is rich in having many important wetlands, the research and studies of the values of these wetlands are yet lacking. There have been many studies and documentation of the wetlands in Terai, however, we still lack in-depth studies on wetlands in the Mountain region. We hope that this study will initiate filling these information gaps on cultural aspect of High Altitude Wetlands in Nepal

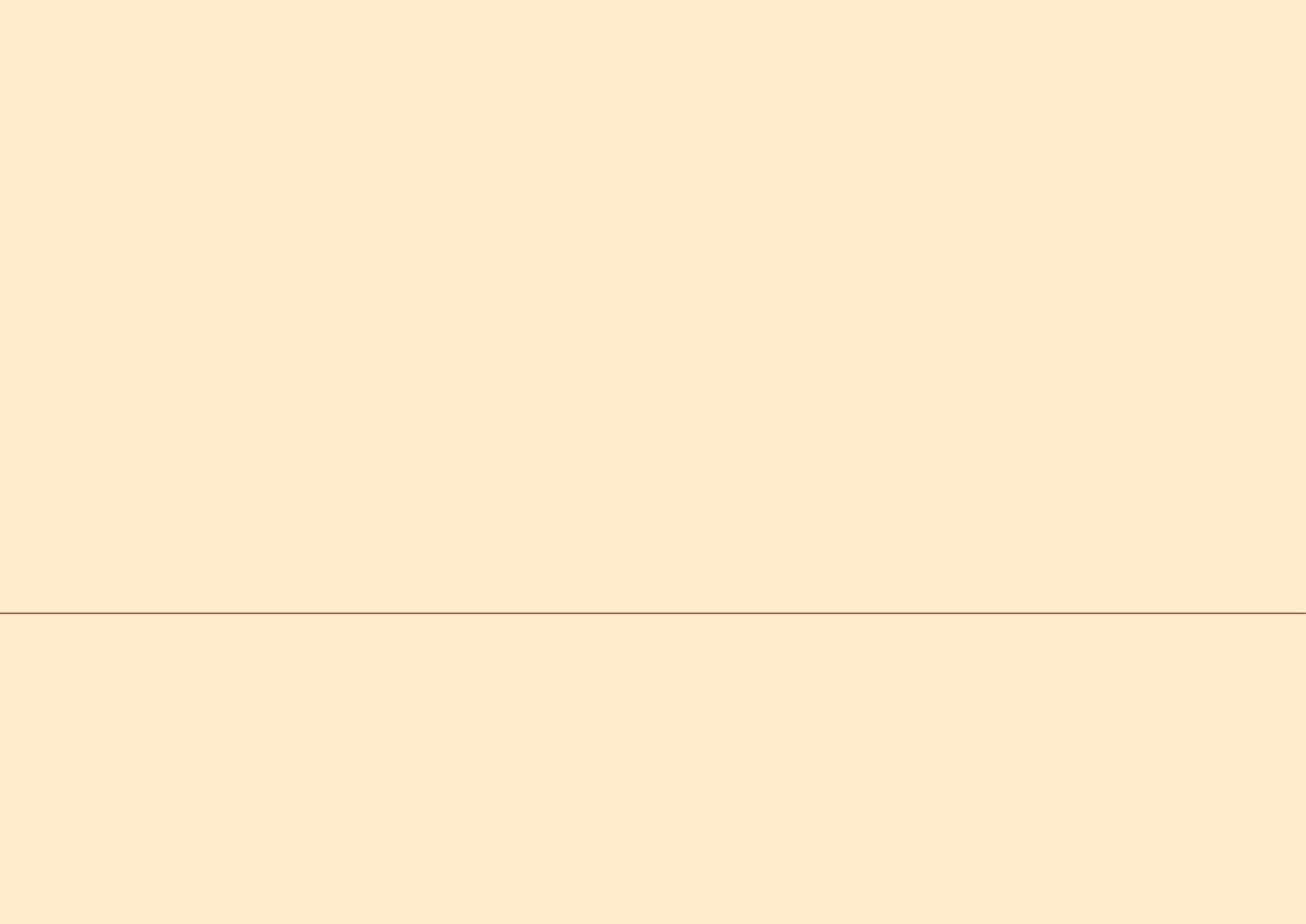
This book is a compilation of many interesting stories that came from the local and indigenous people who preserve their wetlands with high religious and traditional beliefs. Many examples of conservation and use of the wetlands are documented based on these beliefs.

On behalf of WWF Nepal, I would like to thank the Government of Nepal, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) and Department of Forest (DoF) for their support in conducting these studies. I would also like to thank WWF Network especially WWF-Netherlands, WWF International, WWF-UK, WWF-US and WWF-Finland for their continuous support for the Freshwater Program.

Anil Manandhar
Country Representative
WWF Nepal

Table of Contents

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| GOSAINKUNDA | 1 |
| MAI POKHARI | 27 |
| PAACH POKHARI | 37 |
| PAACH & JATTA POKHARI | 49 |
| PARVATI KUNDA | 57 |
| PHOKSUNDO TAL | 65 |
| SALPA POKHARI | 75 |



Gosaikunda

RASUWA DISTRICT





amid magnificent vista of snow peaks Ganesh, Langtang, Lirung and Yalapik and diverse wetlands and wildlife lies Gosaikunda. It stands out among over a hundred lakes and ponds within Langtang National Park because of its religious and cultural significance. Gosaikunda and its associated lakes is also listed in the Ramsar Site of International Importance. Situated at an altitude of 4,380 meters in Syabru VDC, Rasuwa district (in Tamang language 'Ra' means sheep and 'suwa' means grazing land), Gosaikunda attracts thousands of pilgrims every year. The district is endowed with fifteen types of forests, around 3000 species of flowering plants and 250 species of birds and animals such as snow leopard, panda, musk deer, mountain sheep and 70 different glaciers. Native Tamangs are the majority in terms of population; other communities include Brahmin, Chhetri, Newar, Danuwar, Rai, Dalit and Sherpa.



Water spout from Himalayan Mountain

According to a legend Lord Shiva swallowed poison called Kalkut. He went looking for water in order to soothe the burn and when he struck a Himalayan mountain with his weapon Trishul (trident) pure water spouted out. As he went on drinking the pure water huge Gosaikunda lake was formed. The tradition of the thousands of devotees coming to the lake twice a year, on Rishitarpani-Janipoornima and Dashahara, for a *darshan* (sight, glimpse) of Lord Shiva resting in the pond is still strong.

Perpetuating this tradition the Hindus has been bathing in Gosaikunda, throwing the coconuts brought along by them into the pond, and lighting oil lamps in leaf cups offer *agni* (fire) to the pond, and praying 'Shiva, grant salvation (*moksha*), if sin has been committed grant deliverance, may I find abode in heaven' in expectation that their wishes may be granted they return from there. They also recite *Roodree* (hymns in praise of Lord Shiva); it is believed this contributes to the spread of worldly wellbeing and peace, to the creation of a cheerful atmosphere for the living beings, and to a healthy human society.

The devotees, young and old and healthy and disabled have been coming to the lake to pray for health and wealth, most of them traveling for days. Expressing their wishes, longings, anxieties and pains to Lord's envoy Gosaikunda, returning with the pond's water as holy water clearly shows the steadfast religious and cultural affinity of the masses with Gosaikunda.







A broken promise

Dawa Tamang, 65, a *dhami-jhankri* (Traditional healers) speaks of the deep historical relationship that their ancestors, customs and tradition have with Gosaikunda and Bhairavkunda.

Many years ago two sisters from the south came to the village Bharku and assuming the form of Dhyangpa Pokhari resided there. The pond granted wishes to the people who visited them. The villagers started the custom of offering prayer and worship to the pond. The outline of the pond is still there in Bharku and the site is revered as a representation of social responsibility, love of nature, tolerance, and a place of manifestation.

After a lapse of several years as the pressure of the human and domestic animal population increased two sisters left that place and established themselves as Seeping Ghyu Pokhari. When the villagers came to know that the two sisters had moved they again began offering *puja-aja* (worship) and also brought along their animals. When the two sisters discussed as to how to avoid close contact with the villagers and stay away from their birds and animals the didee (the elder sister) said that she would go looking for a site that is exclusive. She left promising her bahinee (younger sister) that she would come to fetch her later. After wandering for several days the didee assumed the form of Bhairavkunda in an inaccessible location to human beings without informing her bahinee.

Distress-ridden from a long wait bahinee ventured out looking for her sister and happened to take the same path. Knowing this the Bharku inhabitants followed her. As she kept moving ahead she found her didee already settled as Bhairavkunda. Enraged at her sister for breaking her promise, she cursed her 'From this day onwards no human will come for your darshan, devotees will come only to me for my darshan, and all the filth and dirt flowing down from me will enter your mouth'. Bahinee then moved forward and assumed the form of Gosaikunda. On hearing this curse the didee Bhairavkunda's face darkened and turned black. Since then people only visit Gosaikunda and offer their prayers to her. Bharku inhabitants, till this day have carried on the tradition of performing *puja-aja* (worship) at their ancestral place Dhyangpa in the month of Mangsir (November-December). Bhairavkunda is referred as Chhona, meaning 'pond with a dark face' in Tamang language.





The pilgrimage

The religious customs and traditions which pre-date the Buddhist culture are still practiced in Tamang communities. Donning a religious cap decorated with feathers from monal pheasant's tail and feathers of other birds, a turban and elaborate costume Sapasing Lopchan Tamang, a *dhami-jhankri* speaks about their religious tradition and cultural custom handed down by their ancestors. The ability to speak with air, water, stones, earth, trees, rivers and rivulets, wind, ponds and lakes is the strength of *dhami-jhankri*.





Dhami-jhankri along with the pilgrims start their journey from their villages six or seven days before Janaipoornima to reach Gosaikunda the day before Janaipoornima. On the first day of the pilgrimage kul devta (deities of the households) and the ancestors are calmed and appeased, and strength and blessings are sought from them.

Placing trishul (trident), stone, new harvest like corn, wheat, buckwheat, millet and eggs in a bamboo basket and bhakari devta (grain store deity) in the courtyard, *dhami* worship the deity with pitcher-full water to placate him and seek permission to take some of the produce with them for the pilgrimage.







Beating the dhyangro (drum) with drum stick they invoke kul devta, bhakari devta and external gods and goddesses and placate them. They pray for safety of the pilgrims and those who stay home and to bless them with vim and vigour. Then all the drummers, women, children, and old people hold each other's hands behind their back and chant Sai Bombo Sai-Sai (bless us with vim and vigour), Yaholo Bombo Sai-Sai-Sek-Sek (let us all dance vigorously), and then pilgrimage to Gosaikunda proceeds in orderly columns. This is called Syapta dance.

The pilgrimage continues revering the deities and divine forces residing on hilltops, rivulets, cliffs, streams and forests until the night falls. They rest at temporary hotels after seeking permission from the surrounding deities, divine forces as well as the kul and bhakari devta.



Hotels owners on they way keep raksi (alcohol) on the path to welcome the pilgrims. Dhami (traditional healers) explains about this to the gods and then all of them consume it as a good portent and move onward dancing.









The pilgrimage stops at the rock above Bhairavkunda. A drummer places an egg in a doko (wicker basket) balanced on the big rock and the *dhami* performs his *puja* (worship).



Early in the morning of the Janaipoornima *dhami* performs *puja* at the Gosaikunda complex. Following the drummer carrying kul devta, *dhami*, singers and dancers head for Trishuldhara, all of them chanting Sai-Sai-Bombo-Sai-Sai, Sek-Sek. It is believed that the ancestral spirits reside in Trishuldhara.





“Sprinkling the jal (holy water) brought along from home and exhibiting the food grains the custom is to pray for our farm produce, and for favourable weather for animal husbandry in these circumstances.”





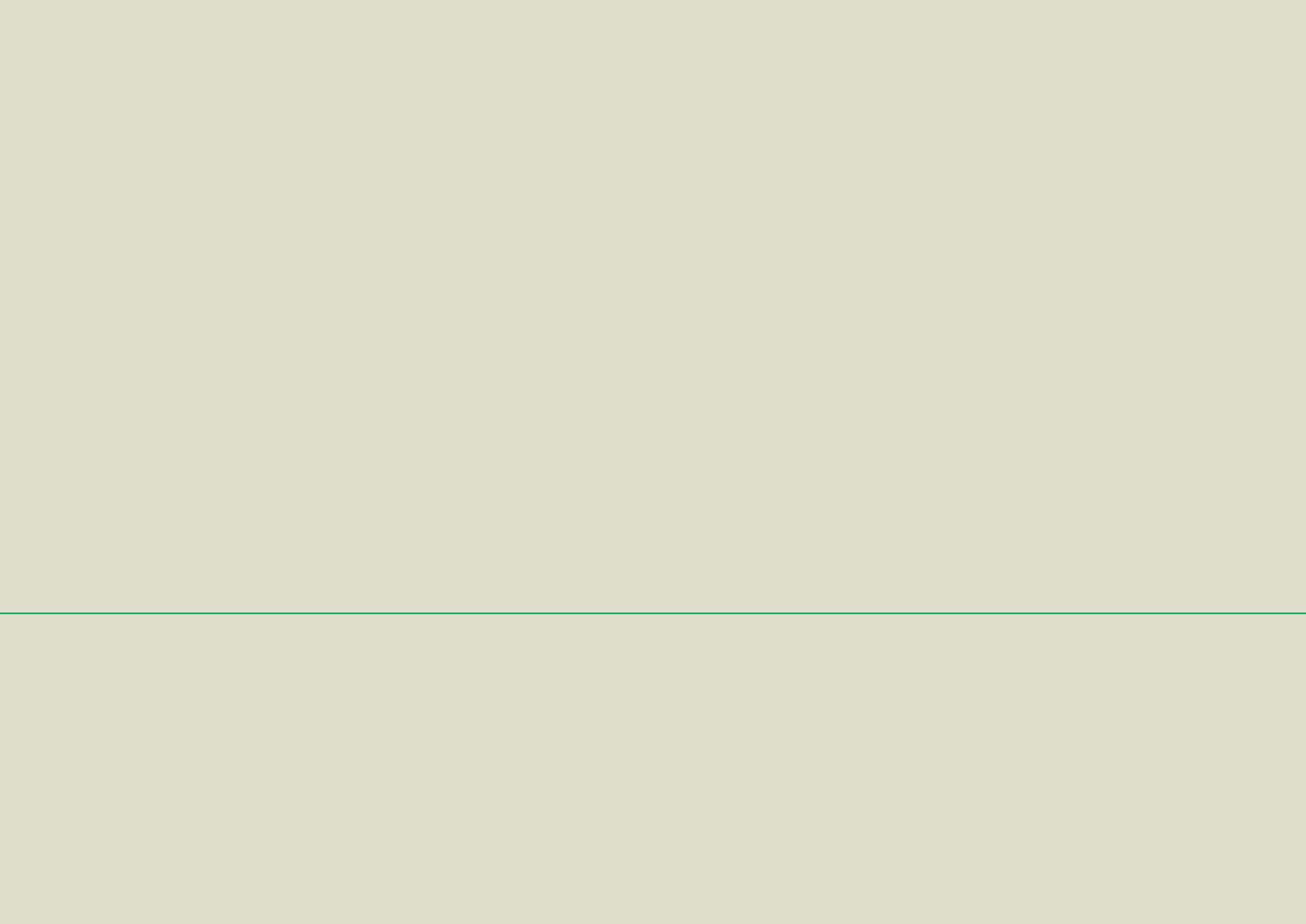


At the pond among the rocks above Trishuldhara, *puja* continues. Egg is placed on white cloth tied to a bamboo pole and offered to the deities residing in the pond.



After the *puja* has been performed, the drummer offers water to everyone as prasad (sacred offering) which is accepted with the faith that their respective wishes, health, farm produce, livestock and family members will flourish. Devotees ask for forgiveness for any error committed by them and wish for favourable environment for the deities. They start their journey home with a promise that they will return next year.

“In our religion this area is of great significance because our forefathers’ spirits have turned into air and have been staying here in hiding. If the psyche of any villagers comes to those ancestors who live here those villagers fall ill. They have to come to this place to ask back for their psyches. We come to this place to show to our ancestors that we have still been preserving the farms, harvests, chicken eggs, clarified butter that they toiled hard for and bequeathed to us and to request them to send favourable weather to our village for the next harvest.”



Mai Pokhari

ILAM DISTRICT





The sacred and religious Mai Pokhari lies in the Mai Pokhari village, of Ilam district, Mechi zone in far eastern Nepal. Famous for the 6As: Aloo (potato), Alaichi (cardamom), Amliso (field broom plant), Aduwa (ginger), Aolan (or Olan, fresh milk) and Antu Dada (the Antu hill), Ilam falls in the Sacred Himalayan Landscape program. Formed naturally, Mai Pokhari is situated 2,100 meters above sea level. Lying in the communities forest area, the religious spot is considered important for its biodiversity. It also recently added to the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance.

People of Kirant, Sunuwar, Magar, Limbu, Rai, Gurung, Sherpa, Tamang, Brahmin, Newar, Chhetri, Dalit and other castes inhabit the Mai Pokhari complex. The district of Ilam boasts diverse wetlands. Wetlands like Mai Pokhari, Hanspokhari, Mudke, Gorkhe Dhap Santpur, Kalpokhari Dhungepokhari and sacred rivulets like Mai, Jok Mai, Puwa and Deomai are the major ones.





Keeping on the family tradition

Uday Bahadur Mukhiya (Sunuwar) has been active in tying conservation efforts and religious, traditional and cultural beliefs for the protection of Mai Pokhari. Mai Pokhari is believed to have been created when nine goddesses descended on earth, inhabiting the nine corners of the pond, as sentries of nature and local people. The pond and the surrounding ecosystem is venerated and believed to have divine power. The ecosystem is maintained because of honor and respect the local people hold for the goddesses. Any activity that may negatively impact the pond or the surrounding forest is thought to bring on bad omen.



“साईपोखरी महोत्सव-२०६२”
लिम्बु जातीय च्याब्रुङ्ग नृत्य प्रदर्शन
— प्रायोजन —
पुवामाई विद्यार्थी समूह
साईपोखरी-९, अधिकारीवास, इलाम





Uday Bahadur's parents, Narayan Dil and Nirmal Mai, as a young couple went on pilgrimages every two or three years to ponds and lakes around Mount Kailash such as Laxmi, Jamle, Lamba, Nir, Mayur, Ramlaxman, Dunge and Dudhpokhari. With them they brought back holy water from the ponds along with seeds and saplings of the trees found around those ponds. They offered the water to goddesses of Mai Pokhari and planted the seeds and saplings in the forest around the pond. They have now grown into mature trees and become a part of this diverse forest which is revered as religious forest. Proud Uday Bahadur is aware that the forest is home for many species of birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals and the forest itself is located between ecologically

significant areas; Kanchanjunga Conservation Area in the north, Garuwa Valley in the south and India's Singhlila National Park in the east. The conservation of the Mai Pokhari area not only implies the sustaining the populations of iguana, endemic lizard-like salamander (Nepal's only salamander group), 18 species of orchids and rhododendrons but also setting an example for the surrounding conservation areas and protecting the habitat of migratory birds and animals.

In his earlier days, Uday Bahadur has seen what actions without long term vision can do. He remembers "carpet bush", a native bush spread over Mai Pokhari and plenty of water fowl basking in the sun and swimming with fish. A few persons from the district headquarters came with the idea of the developing of the area as a tourist destination. They planned to remove the "carpet bush" and clear away other aquatic plants so that visitors could ride boats in the pond. Despite the protest from Uday's father, Narayan Dil and the communities, they went ahead with their plan and started operating boats in the pond. Narayan Dil said this would infuriate the goddesses and hurt mother nature. It would surely bring repercussion to the whole communities. After nine days, Narayan Dil fell ill

and passed away after nine months. Dead fish were seen floating in the pond and carpet bush grew only in a smaller corner. With the initiative from the communities the boating was stopped. Since then the population of the fish has stabilized but carpet bush and water fowl is a rare sight.

Uday Bahadur continues the work his father started in conserving the ecosystem around Mai Pokhari and upholding the religious traditions. At his initiative the "House for Religion" was built and Mai Pokhari Religious Festival 2062 B.S. (2005 A.D.), in which WWF had also participated, was also held. If the ideas, consultancy and knowledge of broad thinking, nature loving Uday Bahadur Mukhiya (Sunuwar) could be applied in conservation that would be doubly beneficial.

Mai Pokhari, existing as a focal point of people's religious and cultural faith, is a priceless blend of the contributions of Narayan Dil, Nirmal Mai and their son; various *yogis (saint)*; union of religious scholars; divine power; and biological diversity. It is essential to promote the task of long term conservation of the biodiversity, which is inter-linked with the cloudy forest and Mai Pokhari in the high mountain region which has remained pristine with the support of the folk customs and practices handed down by tradition.





Maruni Nach (Maruni dance)

A visitor to Sulubung village near Mai Pokhari maybe surprised to see a man dressed as a woman wielding a bronze plate, and another man mimicking searching for firewood and cutting it.

They are dancing to the tune of mandal (drum). They move through the village and the crowd watching them, places money and other gift on the plate.

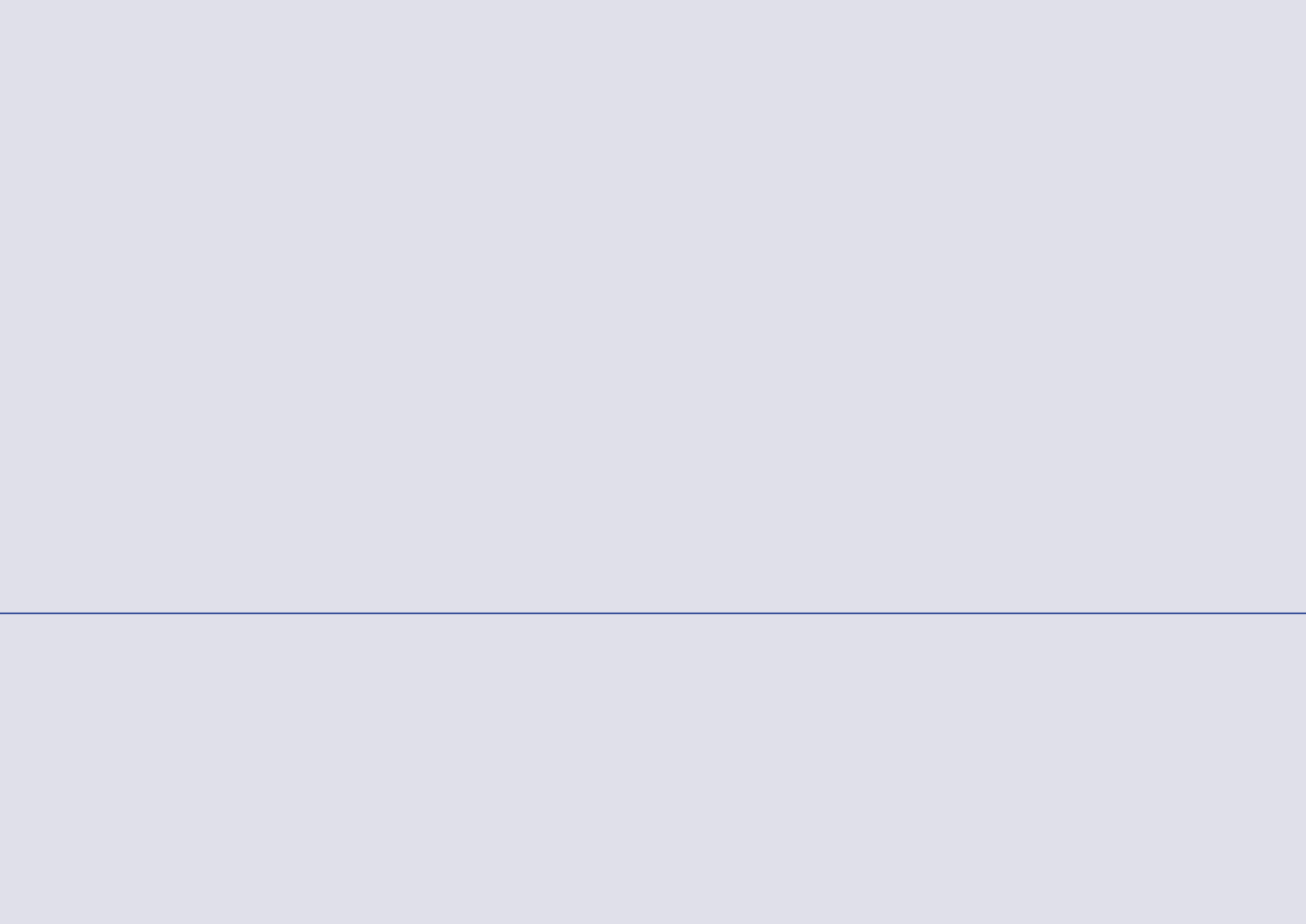


The dancing duo slowly makes their way to Mai Pokhari. They offer the collected offerings and pray to Mai Pokhari for continued strength, vocal sound and rhythm.

They also seek forgiveness for any mistakes they might have made and earnestly request her to look over and guide them forever.



Dhan Bahadur Burjamagar of Sulubung village explains that this is Maruni Nach, Magar communities traditional culture which has a deep relationship Mai Pokhari and its ecosystem. Maruni Nach can be performed up to two months during Deepawali (light festival). He further explains that it is their custom to first venerate their tribal deity, ask him for strength and then pray to Mai Pokhari. They invoke the gods, goddesses and deities who reside in forest, water, tree, fire, air, stone, soil, earth and accordingly begin Maruni Dance. Although this tradition has been practiced for centuries it is unfortunately disappearing from modern society.



Paanch Pokhari

BOONG, SOLUKHUMBU DISTRICT





located on a hill top on the lap of legendary Charpate Himal, glacial lake Paanch Pokhari is the symbol of faith in religion and history for the people of Boong village in Solukhumbu region. The Kirant Kulungs are the major inhabitants of Boong village which is with the Chheskam Makalu Barun National Park. The sacred glacier at an altitude of 4,679 meters is significant in terms of biodiversity: herbs like spike nard, *thulo okhatee*, *panch aunle* orchid, gentian (found within the Paanch Pokhari area); species of plants like *Swertia purpurascens*, used as medicine in the village; *lokta*, the raw material for making Nepali paper; *Daphne cannabina*, *Urtica dieica*, used for cloth making; edible wild fruits, vegetables and a variety of mushrooms; orchid and other wild flowers are found in the area around the lake. Wild rabbit, jungle cat, leopard cat, bear, sloth bear, lizard, snow leopard, leopard, deer, Himalayan serow, mongoose, red panda, Himalayan goral, musk deer, wolf, falcon/king kite, owl, Eurasian eagle owl, monal pheasant, Himalayan pheasant, flamingo, *chuneeya*, crow, dove, wild pigeon, quail, swallow also inhabit the surrounding area of the lake. The frogs which have very close relationship with the weather changes and environment are found to be used for prayer and worship, religious rituals, meat and medicine. The frogs found in the wetlands are traditionally used for religious rituals, meat and medicine.

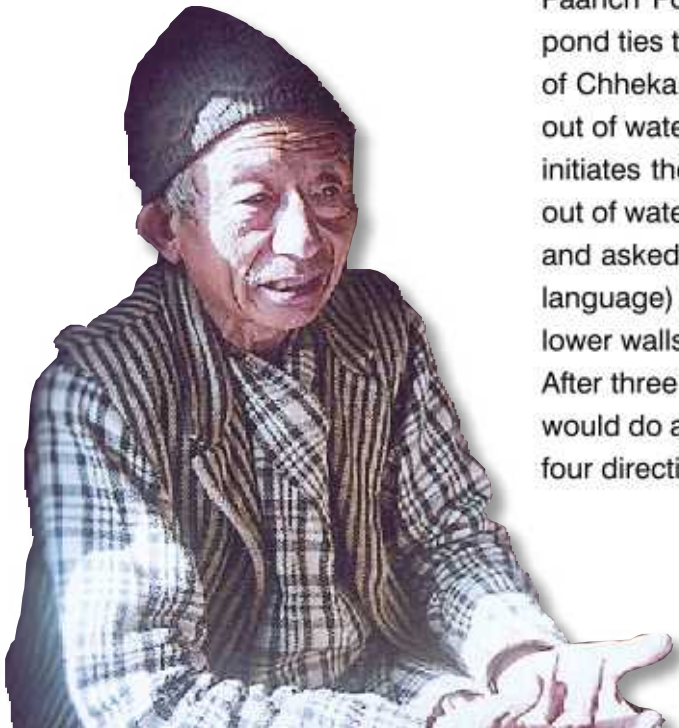
On a community basis conserving and promoting ponds, lakes, wells, water taps, and sources of water in the locality has been a tradition here. It is believed that it is pious to make fresh water available to oneself, one's communities and wayfarers by making taps of bamboo splinters or carved stones. This has increased accessibility to water for people, birds and animals like.





40 days of continuous rainfall!

Paanch Pokhari literally translates to five ponds. The folk tale associated with origin of the pond ties the creation of the world with water. 55 year-old Kirant Amrit Bahadur Kulung (Ghire) of Chhekaming retells the story he has heard from his grandparents - this world was created out of water and it will also end in water. The earth being round and mobile, natural upheavals initiates the process of dissolution and resurgence. At such times God created living beings out of water and by pairing them off perpetuated the world of the living. God raised three sons and asked them to build a house on a raised platform ("Chhem Kheem" in the Kirant Kulung language) by tying large wooden beams. They also made front and back doors, windows in the lower walls and smaller back and front windows in the upper room just as they had been told. After three years when the house was ready they were married. But they wondered what they would do alone in this world. So keeping three doors of the house ajar they kept shouting in all four directions for six days and eight other people who were scattered gathered there.





They suspected a deluge and began to worry how they would flee. They were shutting all the windows and doors when rain started pouring down and all the animals, birds and insects of the world came to take shelter in their house. It rained heavily for 40 days and night and the world was full of water. The raised platform kept their house afloat and on the fortieth day, the house struck the top of a mountain. The rain stopped and starving humans, birds and animals peered out. The house was on top of Charpate Himal (Boplung, Maulung, Kurlung in Kirant Kulung language) and stretching their limbs and flapping their wings, they descended down the mountain.

While descending, the human beings built Paanch pokhari to provide clean fresh water for all the living beings. Irkhu River flows out of Paanch Pokhari, situated in the northeast of Charpate Himal. When winter came all the people, animals and birds moved further down, along the left of Charpate Himal. On their way they built small lakes and ponds and reached somewhere to the east of Himal. In that same place they built another Paanch Pokhari and began to spend their time in caves. After some interval gradually they crossed over high mountains and came



to settle down in the caves in the upper part of what is now called Boong-Chheskam. When they peered down from the caves they saw a beautiful land and thought, 'We have left our father up in the Himalaya and now if we go down

to that land we might meet our mother'. On their way down to the present Chheskam they built ponds; three of the five ponds have turned into wet paddy fields. However, the other two remain as they were then.





Keeping with the traditions thus set, every rainy season people, birds and animal go up (*Unbhaulee*) to Charpate Himal to meet the father, the house, and in winter they go down (*Uddyoulee*) to meet the mother. Birds migrate to Nepal from all over the world. Similarly the Kirants also climb up to Paanch Pokhari at an altitude of 4,679 meters during every full moon period in the month of Shravan (Jul/Aug). In remembrance and honour of their ancestors they go there to pray to them for longevity, vigour, wealth, peace and well being, and clean environment. It has been the tradition of the Kirant priests and wizards to proceed to Paanch Pokhari wearing turbans decorated with orchid, nettle, porcupine thorn, and feathers of birds like monal pheasant and jungle fowl playing drums and cymbals, and flaunting gourds, tufts of sugarcane and branches of plants.

This legend reinforces the indigenous communities belief that the area around Paanch Pokhari is sacred and is in one way or the other connected with their livelihood as well as with religious rites, rituals and culture. It is also believed that it is source of biodiversity and freshwater and activities like plucking, cutting, uprooting of plants and destroying wetland should be avoided otherwise epidemic may spread, crops may not grow, or some harm will occur in the village.



A family of five ponds

Passing by the thickets of rhododendron, pine and reed across the Hurhure Mountain through a mountain forest destroyed by wildfire is the sacred glacier Paanch Pokhari. The group of Paanch Pokhari (five ponds) the father pond sits comfortably on the lap of the mountain, directly below him and in an uneasy place the mother pond, next to her the son and daughter-in-law ponds, and next to them the grandson pond. On the right side of the husband pond, which remains covered in thick snow, innumerable tridents of various kinds offered are supported by stones. On one side of the pond there is a raised portion where stones are offered and where no tridents are visible. In that portion there is a path also for the purpose of circumambulating the pond.

Charpate Himal, situated next to Mera Pik, and Paanch Pokhari is ancestral place for the Kiranti communities and believed to be linked with the origin of all the living beings, plants and seedlings, fish and birds. Elaborate preparations are made for the pilgrimage to

Paanch Pokhari. Priestly elders have to address *guru* (teacher), *kul devta* (family god), all other divinities, ghosts and spirits. Assuming different forms they remain present in the water, air, tree, stone, mountain, snow, forest or elsewhere according to their choice. Calming and placating them in the Chumung, Maulung and Boblung languages they have to pray to them, 'O Creator, along with our children we have come to seek your shelter; please bless us; forgive our mistake if any; grant us long life, our souls, wealth and manpower; whatever we have grown we have brought for you also as offerings; please send favourable weather in time for good harvests'.

According to their earliest ancestral tradition the *dhami-jhankri* go to Paanch Pokhari taking along their family members and drummers. In Mundhum language they soothe, placate and invoke divinities, ghosts and spirits along the way. Then *dhami-jhankri* describes their religious activities of the whole year to them. The traditional custom is to pray to the ponds, Charpate Himal, mountains, water gods, stones

and caves, *Arundinaria racemosa* (*malingo*), forests and winds in Mundhum language for ill persons whose spirits is believed to have strayed to the pond. The religious priests invoke the divinities existing in Charpate Himal complex to plan their future steps on the basis of the indications received in their dreams. A week or two before leaving for Paanch Pokhari they pray morning and evening to the ancestral *kul devta*, *bhakari devta* and gods of water, forest, bamboo and stone.

It is the religious custom of the members of the society to act in accordance with the wishes of Paanch Pokhari and to promise to the pond to carry out some specific good deed (in return for some favour). While going to make such promises, for the reward of good health for oneself or for their relatives they go dancing and singing the song of "Swae". Thus Kiranti society has a close relation with nature and we are the natural worshippers of ponds, water taps, air, streams, and living beings and so on.

Paanch and Jatta Pokhari

RAMECHHAP DISTRICT





Located in Ramechhap district which extends up to the Himalayas, Paanch Pokhari (4,443m) and Jatta (4,028m) attract devotees from all across Nepal and India who come to pray. Strong faith of the pilgrims, some even walking for five to seven days, is seen as they recount stories of their prayers being answered. Although there is no dense vegetation or habitat for wildlife, from the religious point of view it is believed that hunting, plucking and uprooting plants, slaughtering (animals), dirtying and looking with bad intentions near the pond areas are taboo and if anyone does that the ponds will be annoyed.

The natural forest in the southern neighborhood of the Paanch and Jatta ponds is considered to be important from the point of view of biological diversity. Snow leopard, red panda, musk deer, bear, Himalayan poppy (*Meconopsis regia*, kyasras in Nepali, included in CITES Annex 3) medicinal herb, wild edible mushroom, fruits and flowers are found in the area. However, local residents have also seen evidences of red panda and musk deer being hunted. There also have been incidences of snow leopard killing yaks. The yak herders collect *yarsagoomba* (life plant), *padamchal* (a medicinal herb), *boodha okhati* (another medicinal herb) which are used to treat ailments.





Paanch Pokhari Where Lord Shiva Almost Drowned!

The story behind Paanch Pokhari's creation is an interesting one. During a certain period in history there was a severe drought over the whole world and in panic mankind began praying to Lord Shiva.

When Lord Shiva realized that humans were faced with this moment of calamity he prepared to take his seat on the hillocks that were in the middle of Paanch Pokhari. It is said that when Gangamai (wife of Lord Shiva) came to know about that she began raining water on his *jatta* (matted hair) and as the stream of water poured down on Paanch Pokhari it swelled heavily. The overflow turned into several swollen rivers and rivulets which flew down along many places and the people of as far as Bharatvarsha (India) got water for drinking and farming. As for Gangamai it is said that she felt like drowning Shiva in Paanch Pokhari and so began sending down a still heavier stream of rain. Sensing what Gangamai was up to Lord Shiva flung off his *jatta* (matted hair) and the lake Jatta Pokhari got created. It is said that since then the custom has come into practice of praying and worshiping to Paanch Pokhari and Jatta Pokhari in times of adversity and emergency. In the indigenous community there are several instances of success achieved by appealing from the innermost heart to Paanch-Jatta Pokhari marked as the embodiment of Lord Shiva.

Brahmin, Chhetri, Sherpa, Tamang, Newar, Gurung and Dalit communities have been living intimately with the ecosystem around Paanch Pokhari and Jatta Pokhari. The lakes unite the communities in their faith as well provide nutritious food and medicinal herbs. From historical times these lakes have been of religious and cultural significance to the people speaking different languages and dialects and following different faiths. *Dhami-jhankris* usually go to the Jatta and Paanch Pokhari following their religious tradition (mundhum), cultural dances and songs with invocations. Devotees also carry *trishul* (trident), gift, cob of corn, flower, cucumber, pumpkin, to offer to the Jatta and Paanch Pokhari. Sherpas are found to offer yak milk and Brahmans cow milk. Sprinkling the holy water from the lakes on their heads, they return with the conviction that their wishes will be granted.

There have been incidences of the Jatta Pokhari giving *darshan* to the devotees and to those persons offering milk in odd manners. For example, sometimes the pond is full of milk, sometimes snakes play around, sometimes lamps burn, and sometimes displaying the utensils used in the kitchen. It is believed that any improper act or behavior on the part of anyone against those ponds occasion events like famine, poor harvest, crop damage by hail fall, diseased livestock, delayed rainfall, illness in the family, and death in the society.



A child is born

At Paanch and Jatta Pokhari, pilgrims wish for relief from ailments like weakness, impaired speech, and shortness of hearing, and for passing examination, thriving livestock and agricultural produce, and wealth. Chandra Bahadur Vishwakarma, 65, a Dalit had his wish fulfilled years ago.

Worried that he did not have a child even after many years of marriage, he talked with his mother. She had a solution. She advised him to pray to Paanch and Jatta Pokhari and follow their tradition. Taking her guidance, he knit a bamboo cradle fit for a new born. He put two stones from the lake in each pouch without anyone noticing it. Carrying the pouches and cradle he went around the lakes and wished for a son. He also vowed that when the son is born he would come and show it the lakes. That same year his wife became pregnant and gave birth to their son.

Next year Chandra Bahadur took offerings, a trident mounted with precious stones and his baby son to Paanch and Jatta Pokhari. He also took the stones in his pouch and placed them back by the lakes where he first took them from. He is blessed with a healthy family. He believes in the divine powers of Paanch and Jatta Pokhari who listen to worldly woes and blesses them.



Parvati kunda

RASUWA DISTRICT



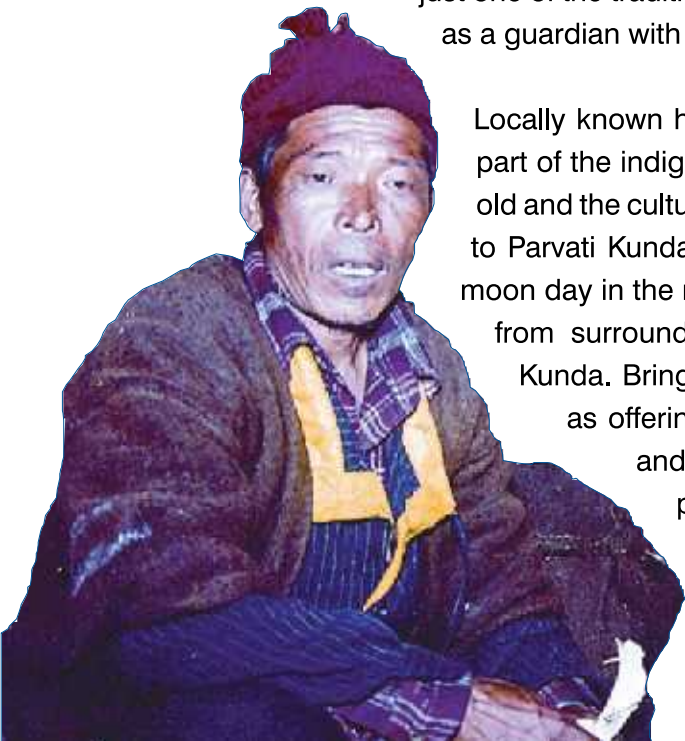
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arvati Kunda is one of the ponds in the Rasuwa district famous for 101 sacred ponds and spectacular peaks such as Ganesh, Langtang, Lirung and Yala. Wild pheasants, dove, eagle, owl, barking deer, Himalayan goral, jungle cat, jackal and yellow-cheeked marten are among the many inhabitants of the pond complex. Situated at an altitude of 2,500 m in Gatlang village, the pond was known as Chhedingmo Kunda before being renamed as Parvati Kunda in 2040 B.S. (1983 A.D.). Parvati Kunda is near a jungle and the water from it flows out in the form of minor brook called Parvati Khola. For the local residents, among which most of them are Tamangs, Parvati Kunda has cultural and religious value which prohibits hunting and slaughtering of most animals.



Praying to the pond for rain

Towards the north of Langtang Himal lies a small and tapered Gatlang village. Most houses are stone-built using traditional Tamang carpentry. People are seen wearing homemade sheep wool clothing. Sometimes, a jogi (mendicant or monk) running around a pond, face smeared in colours, going to the source of the pond can be seen. He pours home-brewed beer at the source, gamboling and chanting prayers. He returns to the village and joy can be sensed among the villagers brought on by the down pour of the rain. They are thankful that once again Parvati Kunda (pond) has heard their prayers and drought has ended. Such practice, 'Jogidhyepa' is just one of the traditional practices that instills strong faith in Parvati Kunda as a guardian with divine powers.



Locally known as Chhedingmo Kunda, Parvati Kunda is an integral part of the indigenous community. It is said to be thousands of years old and the culture of people worshipping and pouring out their wishes to Parvati Kunda is just as old. Especially on Shrawan Purnima (full moon day in the month of Shrawan-Jul/Aug) *dhami-jhankri* and people from surrounding villages come singing and dancing to Parvati Kunda. Bringing food grains, fruits, flowers, white cloth, and milk as offering to the pond, the devotees pray for peace of mind and end of their sufferings. There is also the yearly *puja* performed on empty stomach. During the yearly ritual, first, local hen's egg (napum), black banner, sheep



wool is offered to the spirit guarding the queen deity residing in the pond. After placating the spirit, milk from red cow and white goat, charu (a mixture of rice, sesame seed, barley, pulse and ghee), other grains, fruits and flowers is offered to the pond. People pray for long life, good health of their families and livestock and favourable weather for farming. Parvati Kunda is also known to bestow children to married couples after their sincere prayers for a child.



Bojho, the sweet flag

An old couple was singing Chheppaphoolpa song and dancing near Parvati Kund. As is the local custom they were holding fruits and flowers, red and white cloth streams and pure milk. Bojho (*acorus calamus*), a tall wetland plant, slid gently and swirling so slowly, barely discernible, came to the very spot where the old couple was dancing. They presented their offerings to bojho, and it again slid back into the pond. It is believed that if bojho comes to receive *puja*, the pond is pleased, a good *darshan* (visit) has been had and that one's endeavors are going to be successful.



Bojho, locally known as pangkortong, has also been fondly called as sweet flag by writers such as Henry David Thoreau. A local resident explains that upon seeing the devotees arrive with Prasad (food offerings) and *puja*, bojho lying in Parvati Kunda used to come along spinning. But these days such a sight is not seen. Another resident recounts the story of outsiders coming to their village to convince them to weed out bojho from Parvati Kunda. They thought it would make the pond clean and increase the aesthetic value. The villagers replied saying that bojho plants should not be pulled out from the pond; it could bring pond's wrath may cause natural calamities like flood and landslide, and pain and suffering in the village. Later on the Nepali army came and fell the trees on the east side of the pond. Since then the turning around mound of bojho in the middle of the pond stopped and instead moved to the upper wall of the pond and has remained stuck there. Thanks to the religious values, bojho, the medicinal herb, remains protected.

The communities believes that bojho provides habitat for three subspecies of toad.

The inhabitants of Gatlang village and Parvati Kunda have a mutually dependent relationship. Hunting and felling trees are banned in the wetland surrounding Parvati Kunda as a way of paying respect to the holy pond. This culture of conserving the natural resource is reciprocated by the pond. Parvati Kunda blesses them with offspring, assets, good harvests and livestock, life, and also favourable weather. The wetland area provides clean water for consumption, washing and cleaning, and feeding domestic and wild animals. A number of water mills along the Parvati brook are used for grinding the cereals, maize, wheat, millet, buckwheat and barley which are grown locally. Although scientific research on identification of species remains, the jungle lying around Parvati Kunda complex is a remarkable habitat for various kinds of vegetation, herbs, edible mushrooms, wild flower butterflies, fruits and flowers, birds and wildlife.



Phoksundo Tal

DOLPA DISTRICT





haped like the letter 'Y', as between the hollows of two palms, up in the high mountain range this beautiful lake Phoksundo Tal changing its appearance and color is naturally enchanting. Phoksundo Tal, which lies in the Phoksundo National Park is 650 meters deep spread over an area of 494 hectares at an altitude of 3,611 meters. The water flowing from the southern corner of the lake has formed a-170 meter waterfall. It is also one of Nepal's four high altitude wetlands in the list of Ramsar Site of International Importance.

The Kham and Gurung communities living in these parts follow the Bon Po religion, propound by Tomba Seran some 18,000 years ago, and speak the Tibeto-Burmese language. Formerly known as Ringmo, the lake was named Phoksundo by late geographer Dr. Harka Gurung in 2023 B.S. (1966 A.D.). The residents explain that 'phuk' means 'in', 'above', or 'wall'; 'sam' means 'three'; and 'dho' means 'confluence' in Kham and Tareli dialects.

Dolpa district is popular for *yarsa gumba* (*Cordyceps sinensis* medicinal herb that is half caterpillar and half mushroom), also known as life herb. Around Phoksundo Tal Himalayan goral, barking deer, deer, snow leopard, wild sheep, Himalayan serow, wild pigeon, Himalayan crow, dove, woodpecker, swan, owl are found. The villagers living near Phoksundo Tal have been growing traditionally *uwa* (Himalayan grain), mustard, buckwheat, potato and radish. Their religious values uphold breaking the branches of the trees around the lake, and pelting stones and hunting there, and dirtying it as taboos.



Story from great-great grandfather!

Karma Lama, 55, and his wife Nisar Lama, 50 of Phoksundo village narrate the story of the origin of Phoksundo Tal they heard from their grandparents which has been handed down from generation to generation.

Once upon time, a giantess came fleeing from the side of Tibet towards Dolpa carrying oil in one bamboo vessel and water in another. Seeing this giantess with long unkempt hair, large eyes, and a terrifying face come tearing along unrestrained, Ringpuche, an incarnate lama thought that this giantess is going to finish off the human race. He began to follow her. Realizing that Ringpuche is following her, the giantess began running even faster. Her intention was to destroy the mountain range. When the giantess arrived at Saldang she met a shepherdess on the way. Giving a nice necklace of vitriol to the shepherdess the giantess told her to keep it inside the fold of her dress *bakkhu* and not to tell anyone that she had passed that way. The incarnate lama arriving at the place asked the shepherdess about the giantess, but she replied she had not seen anyone. Sensing the deceit of the giantess when the incarnate lama requested the girl to show him the inside of her *bakkhu* he saw a huge python wound round the girl's waist. The girl fainted.



The incarnate lama exercising all the craft at his disposal brought the girl back to her senses and killed the python saving the people and animals in the village. At the exact spot where the snake was slain a pond, Senthuprang, formed. In that place there is Tripura temple and Kaikoi meadow where skeletons of animals have been collected and dumped. In the memory of the slain snake, horseracing is held and *puja* is offered in the first week of Shrawan (Jul/Aug).

At nightfall the giantess reached the charming village of Phoksundo. She requested the villagers for accommodation for the night but everyone shut her out. Enraged, the giantess fetched white clay in her gown and before midnight drew a circle around the village. Then she poured out the water that she had brought with her in the bamboo pot inside the circle. The water started rising and all the houses began to drown and disappear. Screaming and shouting domestic animals – goats, sheep, horses, mountain goats, chicken and cats tried to escape but most of them perished. As this happened at midnight, not one single person survived the deluge. The giantess had placed the monastery, where was given accommodation, outside the circle and it was spared from her wrath.

The incarnate lama was furious when he saw that the giantess had already turned the beautiful village into a lake, began chasing her away. The giantess sensing the lama's rage ran and reached a place called Chhidak near a buckwheat field. The lama killed the giantess on that same place and plucking out her heart and liver pierced them with a sharp weapon. The site where the giantess was killed sank into a trench and the blood spilled from her liver turned into water. A mound shaped like a head still exists there. After slaying the giantess the incarnate lama returned to Phoksundo Tal. Worried that the lake might overflow affecting nearby districts – Jajarkot, Salyan and Surkhet, he created an outlet at a rocky corner of the lake forming a waterfall, Chhalchhap. He also dug a hole in the ground with a sharp weapon arranging for a constant flow of water.

Our story tellers, Karma and Nisar Lama and the villagers believe that the story of Ringpuche must be true. The village-turned-lake, Phoksundo Tal, the monastery spared by the giantess, and the heart and the liver of giantess still exist near their village. Illness in the village is cured by chanting *mantras* (prayer) to ghosts residing where the giantess was killed.





A storehouse of religious and historical importance

Beautiful Phoksundo Tal held in high regard since primeval times for historical, native and oral stories, religion, customs and culture is a matchless natural heritage.

“

The tree close to the lake is important for the religion. It is a religious conviction that activities like dirtying, bathing, washing clothes, pelting stones around that should not be done. The water from the lake is considered clean and pure and it has remained a religious custom to carry water from this same place to offer to the sacred shrine (*chorten*) situated on a high mountain to the west of the village.

”

A resident of Ringmo village



“

We would be happy if this sacred and the deepest lake of ours could be listed among the world heritage sites. The people who come to collect *yarsa gumba* (*Cordyceps sinensis*) cook, bathe and wash in this area of the lake and make it unclean which by tradition should not be made so.

”

Ringmo village residents



“

The tradition is that twice a year the lama *dharma* gurus (Religious teacher) first address the mountains (“Chhome Talma” in the local language) around the lake in their own ecclesiastical language. And then carrying the sacred water of the lake they go to the chorten at the top of the Ringmo village and perform *puja* there. All the villagers from their respective villages bring with them flour of *uwa* (a Himalayan grain) and rice, and clarified butter and mix them into *torma* (a pudding-like dish, ‘dhake’ in the local dialect) shapes, offer them to the deities and then eat them as *Prasad* (boon) praying that in their households there be no diseases and famine and that the harvests flourish and the livestock be productive. It is also an old custom to sip the pond water thrice praying ‘May my own and my family members’ health be good and the crop on the farm flourish’ and then joining the two palms in a namashkar, take leave.

”

Dorje Gurung, 87, Rikhe village



“

The water of this religious lake is sacred. This lake which assumes different colours at different times must be very deep. There are small streams of snows melting from two mountains that flow into this lake. Observing that the volume of water flowing out of the lake is bigger than the volume of water flowing into it from both the places obviously water must have spouted from within the lake. The water of this lake, revered by historical and religious tradition, is pure and also beneficial for health. This lake of natural beauty into which inner feelings are poured is recognized as evocative of a historical site of the Bon Po religion and its tradition.

”

Gese Tenzing Nima Osar Lama, 62, Kai village



SALPA POKHARI

BHOJPUR DISTRICT





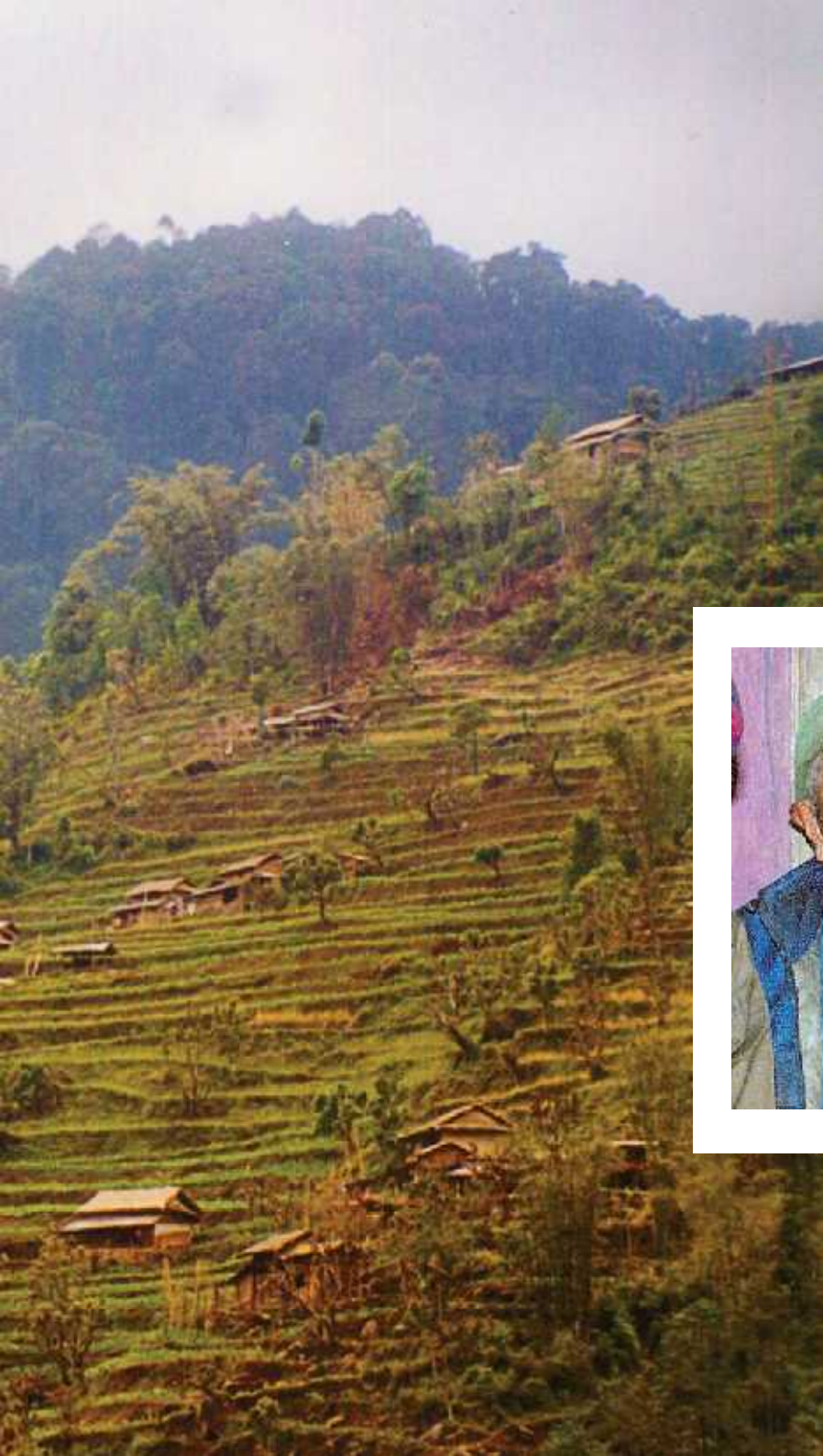
Salpa Pokhari is located at Dobhane village in Bhojpur district. The ethnic groups in this area are Brahmins, Chhetris, Limbus, Magars, Gurungs, Bahai and Dalits. The major flora found in this area are Orchids, Rhododendrons and Salla while major fauna are Mountain hare, Red panda, Deer, Leopard and Migratory birds. The surrounding wetlands of Salpa Pokhari are Kala Pokhari, Panchakanya Pokhari, Chhaga (in Chirkhuwa Khola), Teen Chhanga Juge (in Wokhim Khola); Bilbate Pokhari, Sukebar Pokhari lying in the Salpa Pokhari complex and the streams and brooks like Weta Khola, Dokhambota, Kusungwa, Morongwa, Soyangsewa, Salpawa and Seeleechangwa.

The importance of religion, culture and tradition in Conservation

Shaped like a cup by the hills surrounding it on all four sides, Salpa Pokhari has been found to be addressed by the Kiranti people as Salee-Pa: “Ancestral Deity residing at the highest place”. Full of the biological diversity found in the Himalayan region, Salpa Pokhari is found to be lying amidst diverse communities like a hallmark of the trust that befriends you both in good and bad times.

Abounding in natural splendor the district of Bhojpur is adorned with famous major and minor rivers like the Arun and Sunkoshi including the Sangkhuwa, Pikhuwa, Chirkhuwa, Bokhim Anduwa. For the biological diversity existing on the banks of the Arun River, it is found to exist as an invaluable wetland. Salpa Pokhari and surrounding wetlands have connectivity with Arun River which flows into Sapta Koshi.





The historical, religious and cultural value of Salpa Pokhari

In the course of going on a study visit to Salpa Pokhari inquiries were made with different intellectuals and with people of position in Kathmandu. In the same way contacts were made with the residents including elders, faith healers, priests and teachers of Sankhuwasabha, Khotang and other places and with those (living) close to Salpa Pokhari.

An elder over 70 years, Kirant, narrates an oral historical origin of Salpa Pokhari

“

It is found that in the remote past Mahadev had, in course of his visits to Terai (plain areas) and Kailash, seen a powerful king rule over an area which is the present Sankhuwasabha. Mahadev (Lord Shiva) liked to live in that place and rule over it. Therefore he inflicted dangerous diseases like nasal catarrh on that Kirant king and incarnating himself as a lama (Buddhist monk) used to walk up and down. The king went to consult with the lama about his health problem. The king, listening to the lama's advice that he should move to some other place otherwise his life would be at risk, headed towards Terai along with his aides. After regaining his health when the king came back he found out that Mahadev, who had appeared as a lama had destroyed the Kirant kingdom and created the Sankhuwa river, driven away the queen, and begun his own reign. Crying and wailing he consulted with banyan and pipal trees, ponds and other things and went searching for his queen and upon getting the news that the Kirant queen had been heard crying and going towards the Salpa area he went there looking for her.



Tales are being heard that at several places the walking queen's footsteps have created pools and marshes and that until a few years ago there used to be footprint-shaped collections of water. On his way from Sankhuwasabha the king landed up at Jaubari at the foot of Bhojpur. He climbed on a high stone lying below Jowari and when he looked out to see how far the queen had reached he saw only the head. Then placing another stone on top when he looked out he saw the queen in Salpa Pokhari. Reaching there in desperation the Kirant king found his queen encircled by a snake. So when he wanted to kill the snake the queen told him, 'You shouldn't do that, I have already married this serpent, you arrived too late, and this serpent may kill you. Go with this rooster, as you proceed wherever it crows for the first time there your kingdom will be established.' So saying, she bid him farewell. Carrying the rooster he reached Kathmandu via Okhaldhunga. The rooster crowed at Kathmandu and that is where his kingdom rose. It is found from history that even before 600 BC 32 kings of the Kirant dynasty worshipped shila (stone) and Nature and reigned. Since then our forefathers have maintained that we Kirants, especially those who practice dhami, jhankri, bijua, nuwgeere, bijuani have the custom of going to Salpa Pokhari to worship and receive blessings.



From the above historical and religious values it is obvious that the Kirant community has deep and inseparable relationship with Salpa Pokhari. In fact people of all castes and tribes following various religions, cultures and customs also respect Salpa Pokhari as a holy place.

Linking the Hindu religion with a pilgrimage to Salpa a follower of that religion says -

“Son, it is written in the religious scriptures that in their life all people should go to Salpa. It is said that after death when we arrive at heaven we are asked whether we have been to Salpa or not, and if not we cannot secure a good place in heaven.”



Until 2052 B.S. (1995 A.D.) white-colored swans used to be seen at Salpa Pokhari, but these days they are not seen any longer, perhaps because some people killed them or they became extinct.



- Communities



One shouldn't go to Salpa Pokhari alone, when going there alone the pond water suddenly soars high, sometimes the sound of flowing water and sometimes terrifying sounds are heard. I have myself heard that many times when herding cattle there.”



- Focal group discussion

“ It has been the custom of all of us to offer milk, rice, kheer (rice pudding) to Salpa Pokhari at the time of Rishitarpani full moon (Jul/Aug). At that time the whole pond is seen to have turned white. At that time a Nag (serpent) appears to have come and eaten those offerings. For that reason also it is believed that there is a Nag in the pond.”

” - Animal herders

“ In the Salpa complex if anyone messes or urinates or defecates here and there then atmospheric changes like thunder, squall, downpour, hail, and lightning occurs.

Our son whom we had begged for and brought from neighboring Salpa Pokhari now has his own sons and daughters who are sturdy and from time to time those children are taken to Salpa Pokhari.”

” - Villagers at Phedi, Bhojpur

“ Salpa Pokhari has remained a center of the symbols of the faith that determines the fate of the communities.”

”

“ There are two outlets for the water of the pond. Between them sometimes one dries up and sometimes the other one. The belief exists that in the villages towards the direction of which the outlet has dried up famine occurs, the crops are not good, animal husbandry is not good, and diseases spread in the communities.”

”



From the different experiences of the villagers it becomes apparent that the religious and cultural values of their life have an intimate relationship with Salpa Pokhari. It is found that at Salpa Pokhari religious and cultural fairs are held four times a year. The fairs are found to be held on the Chandi Poornima full moon day in Baisakh (April/May), Rishi full moon day in Bhadau (August/September), on Kartik (October/November) full moon day, and on the full moon day in Mangsir (November/December) with great splendor. It is found that while coming to Salpa Pokhari the custom is to sing 'Sai-Rani' (queen) and 'Sai-Sai-Raja' (king).

“ In winter the snow freezes and one can even walk on the pond stepping on the snow, sometimes the frozen snow over Salpa Pokhari cracks making a loud sound. ”

- A participant

“ The seasonable fruits and grains should first be shown and fed to our historic queen and king and then only one should eat them. Likewise we come to pray for a good monsoon for our next year's good crop.

It has been our ancestral religious custom vis-à-vis Salpa Pokhari for issueless families in our society to make cradles and chanting 'This year we have with a cradle Sai-Rani Sai-Sai-Raja Sai-Sai, next year we will come with a plump son Sai-Rani-Sai-Sai Sai-Raja-Sai-Sai', go around Salpa Pokhari, Seeleechong and thus pray for children. Doing so many people who have had no issue got blessed with children and have now been raising good families. ”

- Kirant, Magar Community





Khadka Bahadur Khapangi Magar, coming from the Kirant, Magar community, is 63 years old. At present he has been living in Khandbari, Manebhanjyang, and Sankhuwasabha. His ancestors belonged to the district of Solu very close to Salpa Pokhari.



“ When my forefathers died the treacherous and wily people of the neighborhoods looted all my inherited property. We left the village at mid-night. Had to ferry across the Arun River but didn't have any money with me to pay the fare. After I pleaded with the boatman he ferried me, my son and daughter and wife across the Arun. Then arrived at this place, cultivated somebody else's land , went as a porter to carry foreigners' loads, always kept Salpa queen and king in my mind, now I have built a small hut.

While trekking along with foreigners I have seen many ponds. Some of them are strange also. I go to Salpa Pokhari at intervals of 3-5 years along with my family members. Daily morning and evening we worship Salpa queen and Salpa king and we pray to them 'Please keep us cool, let our harvests be good, may we not have to face hardship, and for you over there let peace and comfort prevail. In my dreams I see the gods, goddesses and deities who reside around Salpa Pokhari and I can converse with them in the Mundhum language.

”





Kirant Sotang Rai community

A *dhami-jhankri* group belonging to the Kirant Sotang Rai community residing in Phedi village, Bhojpur was approached for the above mentioned research study.



Different Cultural Values







Biodiversity Values



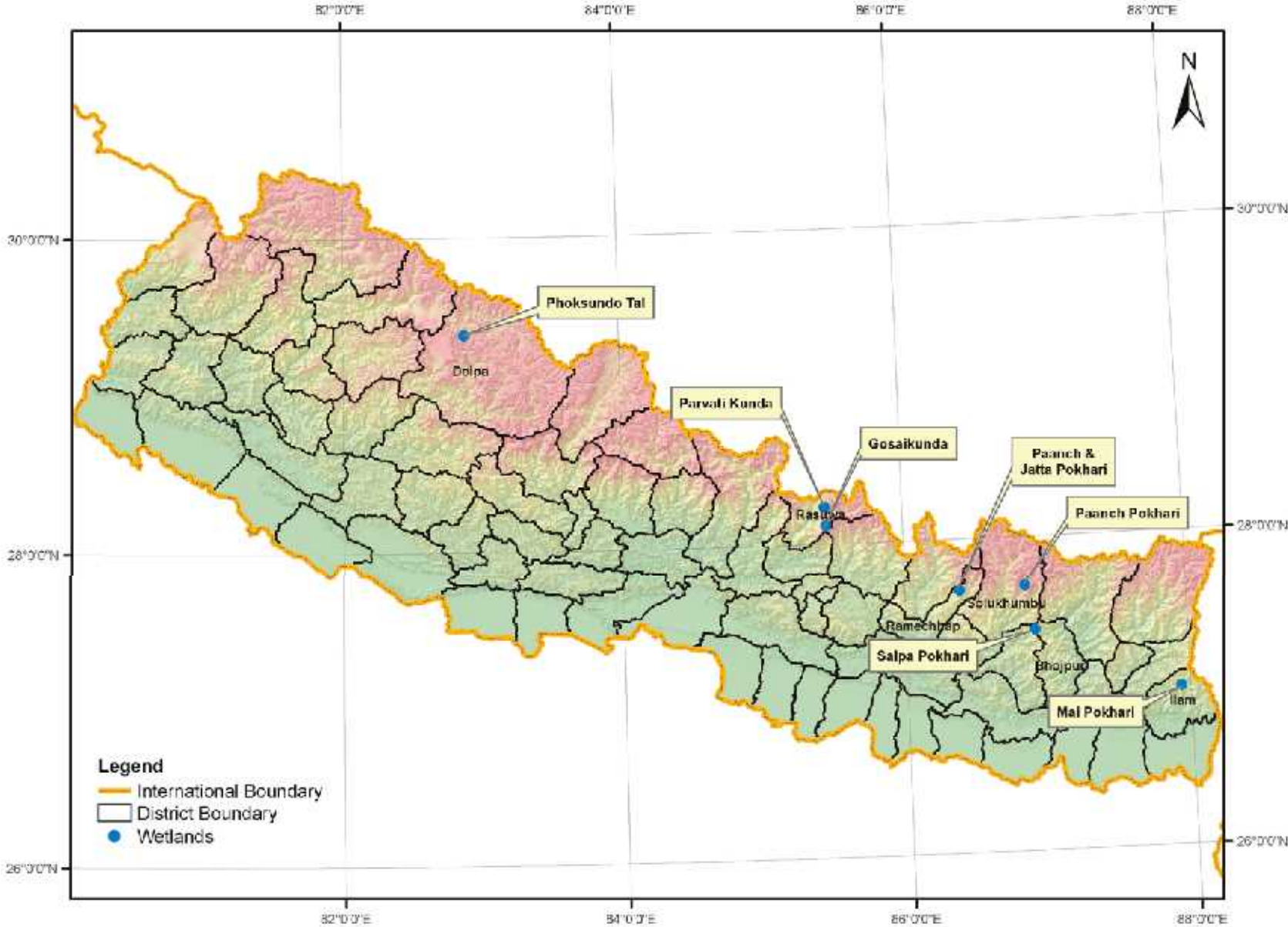
GLOSSARY

| | | | |
|------------------------|--|----------------------|---|
| agni | fire | doko | wicker basket |
| bahinee | younger sister | Gangamai | Sacred river |
| Bakkhu | dress that the women of the Himalayas wear | guru/gurus | religious teacher |
| bhakari devta | grain store deity | Himal | High Mountain region |
| Bharatvarsha | India | jal | holy water |
| bijua/dhami | spiritual healer | janaipoornima | full moon day in Shrawan/Bhadra (Jul/Aug) Rishi poornima/ religious festival Rishitarpani |
| bijuani | spiritual healer (female) | jatta | matted hair |
| Chandi Poornima | full moon day in Baisakh (Apr/May) | jhankri | spiritual healer |
| Charpate | Four faced/square | jogi | mendicant |
| chorten | sacred shrine | Kailash | Place where Lord Shiva lives in the Himalayas |
| darshan | sight, glimpse | Kalkut | a kind of poison |
| Dashahara | religious holy bath festival | kheer | rice pudding |
| Deepawali | Hindu festival of lights | kul devta | deities of the households (family god)/ house dieties |
| dhami | spiritual healer | Kunda | Lake |
| dhami-jhankri | spiritual healer | lama | Buddhist monk |
| dharma | Religion | | |
| dhyangro | Religious drum | | |
| didee | elder sister | | |

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Mahadev | Lord Shiva |
| mandal | drum |
| moksha | salvation |
| mundhum | religious oral songs |
| Nach | dance |
| napum | local /indigenous fowl (hen's) egg |
| nuwgeere | Kirant Sampang religious priest |
| Pokhari | lake |
| prasad | sacred offering, food offerings, boon |
| puja-aja | worship |
| raksi | Local whisky/Liquor |
| Ringpuche | an incarnate lama |
| Roodree | hymns in praise of Lord Shiva; |
| Sai Bombo Sai-Sai | bless us with vim and vigour |
| Sai-Raja | king |
| Sai-Rani | queen |
| Salee-Pa | Ancestral deity residing at the highest rocky place/peack/caves) |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Shrawan Purnima | full moon day in the month of Shrawan (Jul/Aug) |
| Swae | way of chanting with singing religious sacred song |
| Tal | Lake |
| torma | a pudding-like dish, 'dhake" in the local dialect |
| Trishul | Trident |
| Uddyoulee | go down (seasonal migrating downward from Himalayan region) |
| Unbhaulee | go up (seasonal migrating upward to Himalayan regions) |
| uwa | a kind of Himalayan grain (naked barley) |
| Yaholo Bombo Sai-Sai-Sek-Sek | let us all dance vigorously |
| yarsagoomba | medicinal herb that has life of half insects and half plants, also known as life herb |
| yogis | union of religious scholars |

Map showing the wetlands



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