

# **Palam; Historical study**

**Mugip Hang Limboo**

Asst Professor, Dept of Limbu, Sikkim University  
Muringla10@gmail.com

## **Abstract**

The Limbu community also known as Yakthung, is an indigenous ethnic community. They have their own language as Limbu language which comes under Sino Tibetan Language Family and have their own Limbu script that is Srijanga Script. Some of the Limbu community speaks Nepali, English and Hindi as other means of communication. Limbu community basically deeply rooted in animist and ancestral spiritual practices. The Limbu have rich culture heritage including traditional dance like Dhan Natch, Palam, Kheyali, Hakpara and Tam:kakand Ke lang etc. and has its own importance.

Limbu folk songs play a pivotal role in the social, spiritual and cultural lives of the Limbu community. Originating from the Limbu Mundhum these songs convey mythic stories, religious ceremonies and everyday activities, showcasing the community close relationship with nature and ancestral heritage. Various genres and performs different function from work songs to ritualistic chants led by shamans. Limbu folk songs persist as a source of indigenous knowledge and an emblem of Limbu identity and its indigeneity. The times, tempos and lyrical meaning uphold the sacred importance and oral historical aspects of community. The contemporary music's has made several obstacles in folk musics' and it's intangible cultural aspects of the community and its history. This paper aims to explore the rituals, indigenous and oral historical aspects in Limbu folk songs. This paper is based on qualitative methods of research and community approaches.

**Keywords:** Oral song, Oral History, Folks Rituals, and Indigeneity.

## **1. Introduction**

Palam is a central folk song sung by Limbu community. Palam is not only the song but it includes group dance where their partners joins hand together makes similar foots steps according to lyrics of the songs. The Limbu are indigenous ethnic community mainly resides at Sikkim, Darjeeling, Doar's, Assam, Nepal and some other parts of India. Outside India Limbus resides at Nepal, United Kingdom and Hongkong as well. They are one of the indigenous communities in the abovementioned areas and they use their own mother tongue i.e. Limbu Language. Palam is performed in various social, ritual and festival and Palam serves as a vessel for the community's collective memory reflecting themes of love, creation, history and community identity which is related to Mundhum. Mundhum is religious statute for performing all rituals. Palam is not only entertainment it is a mode of preserving oral history and transmitting Limbu values across generations.

## **2. History of Palam**

Palam originated from the oral traditions of the Limbu community. The Limbu community has belief in Mundhum. The Palam is closely tied to traditional festivals and social rituals such as the khe:ya:li. Yalak. Ke.Lang . Hakparay etc. where it is performed in a distinctive call and response format between group of people (male and female). Historically, Palam was song without musical instruments, emphasizing vocal richness and poetic dialogue and its lyrics often reflected narratives relating to Limbu origins such as creation stories involving the deities ‘Tagera Ningwaphu’ and ‘Yuma mang’ as well as agricultural life, romance and community stories over the centuries. Palam has served as a living chronicle documenting and celebrating key events rituals and festivals among the Limbu communities. It highlights their indignity through songs and dance expressions.

Historical data related to origination of Palam is quite rare to prove in the century-based aspects. But the truth is that when the community formation and the social gatherings began, it holds the origination of Palam. So, we can consider the origination of Palam is totally based with the origination of Limbu community and social gatherings tradition. Since that primitive era Palam is basically grown with the oral practices and traditional activities.

## **3. Significance of Palam**

Palam poetic and dialogue encourages social harmony and gender equity as both women and men participate actively during performances. The tradition reinforces language preservation serving as a key medium for sustaining the Limbu language and its identity as well as cultures and modernization. Palam acts as an oral library crucial for preserving the historical and mythological knowledge of the Limbu community. It fosters community unity, being performed during important communal events rituals and courtship, allowing younger and older generations to be a part in the transmission of values and stories. Palam expressing themes of creation, romance and nature. Palam affirms the cultural pride and dynamics of a uniqueness of Limbu community. Palam remains an enduring pillar of Limbu heritage allowing the community to celebrate its history that communicates values and maintain distinct identity in the era of rapid changing phase in the Limbu communities.

## **4. Performing structure of Palam**

The performance historically did not involve musical instruments relying solely on vocal exchanges, tones and tunes, through contemporary renditions may incorporate both traditional and modern instruments. Palam is typically song as a dialogue between the people male and female constructed with the question and answers patterns. The Palam also includes dance where the male and female joins hands together and focus on foot steps and facial expressions.

Palam traverses a wide spectrum from origin myths and tales of human civilization to romantic expressions and social commentaries. It also expresses the historical and rituals aspects of Limbu community.

## **5. Cultural context and Function**

Palam is not only entertainment, it is a mode of preserving oral history and transmitting Limbu values across the generations, it reinforces group identity and fosters intergenerational dialogue with the call and response structure symbolizing communal participation and reciprocity, the lyrics of Palam celebrate the Limbu worldview addressing the community's relationship with nature their God ancestry and daily life. Its philosophical underpinnings Palam echoes Mundhum narratives embedding spiritual and mythical lore.

The main festivals of Limbu community is 'Chasoktongnam', 'kokfetla' and 'wedding ceremony' and occasional meetings at melas, other social meetings. Though festivals and ceremony has different significance the Palam sung for the celebrations.

## **6. Evolution and Modern Challenges**

The modern period has brought changes to Palam performance including the use of musical instruments and popularization through recordings and digital media. Nowadays the community singing is gradually changing into individual songs through digital platforms. The basic changes can be considered as including modern instruments like guitar, drums, madal, keyboards etc. The very essence of Palam as totally based on singing without music. Similarly, the Limbu instruments Chyabrung is also playing during the Palam Singing.

The transforming community involvement into dual or the individual singing. The Palam includes more than two or three males and females during singing it may extent upto more than ten peoples. That truly is signifies the community performances.

However younger generations face linguistic and cultural barriers as proficiency in the Limbu language declines threatening the authenticity and transmission of Palam. Contemporary artists continue efforts to revitalize traditional Palam by creating new compositions organizing cultural festival and recording performances for wider dissemination. It may becomes hindrances or the opportunity to revive the culture as well.

## **7. Conclusion**

Limbu folk songs are not just entertainment but a cultural and spiritual legacy representing the Limbu community, their identity and history. Limbu folk songs are an indispensable element of Limbu heritage embodying their worldview spirituality and communal bonds. Their preservation is crucial to maintain the ethnic identity and cultural diversity of all over the world. Limbu Palam stands as a testament to the cultural resilience and poetic ingenuity of the Limbu Community, its retention, adaptation and celebration are vital for sustaining the communities linguistic, historical and artistic heritage in drastic changing phase of the world. The modernity and indignity became the parallel point of view in this postmodern world.



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