UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, Centre For Sámi Studies

The Tharu Cultural Museum: A Conduit for Cultural Revitalization and Indigenous Identity Creation

Iswar Upadhyay

Thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Indigenous Studies, June 2021

The Tharu Cultural Museum: A Conduit for Cultural Revitalization and Indigenous Identity Creation

By

Iswar Upadhyay

Master of Philosophy in Indigenous Studies

Centre for Sámi Studies

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

UiT the Arctic University of Norway

June 2021.

Supervised by

Professor Else Grete Broderstad

Centre for Sámi Studies

UiT the Arctic University of Norway

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Else Grete Broderstad, for her guidance, feedbacks and supports throughout the journey of this project.

I am grateful to the Centre for Sami Studies for giving me a remarkable opportunity to carry out this research from this university, and for providing financial support to conduct the fieldwork. I also wish to thank my fellow students and the staff at the Centre.

I am also thankful to my research participants, who have shared their stories, experiences and knowledges with me. Many thanks to the director of the Tharu Cultural Museum and Research Centre, Chitwan, for his friendly supports during the data collection processes, and thanks to my friends who as gate openers to the community, helped me.

Finally, I thank my family, my parents, brothers and sister, who constantly supported, encouraged and motivated me to pursue my academic journey.

I would like to also extend my special gratitude to my loving wife for her warm support even though we were departed physically from each other during my study at UiT The Arctic University of Norway.

ABSTRACT

This thesis centers around the interrelationships between a community museum and the local community in the process of cultural revitalization and cultural identity creation. The project focuses on how a community-based museum negotiates and revitalizes the meaning of the Tharu cultural identity in a historically marginalized indigenous Tharu community. This is illustrated through the case study of the Tharu Cultural Museum and Research Centre, Chitwan, Nepal in relation to the local community efforts to establish the museum and its endeavor to bestow meaning to their cultural identity by reviving and sustaining their original culture.

This project is based on the empirical data collected from the fieldwork using semi structured qualitative interviews and field observation. Secondary sources of data such as documents related to the Tharu people's culture, and the museum was reviewed. In discussing the research questions, the concepts of community museum practices, cultural identity, indigeneity, and cultural revitalization was discussed within three approaches of understanding the role of museums. These approaches include traditional approach, bottom-up approach and institutional approach.

With reference to the Tharu cultural museum and the local community, this project argues that while the Tharu culture, traditions, and indigeneity faced threats due to multiple factors such as migration, displacement, national assimilationist policies, bonded labour system, and the endemic malarial disease, they were penetrated by a cultural reviving movement within the community that worked for the enhancement of their indigeneity through museum practices. The incredible community sense of socio-cultural awareness, self-actualization of the community self-determination, and indigenization revitalizes the meanings of the Tharu cultural identity and indigeneity through community museum practices and vise-verse.

LIST OF FIGURES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

To pursue my master's thesis in Indigenous Studies, I travelled back to Nepal to conduct a study about the indigenous Tharu people living in the southern lowland called Terai. Although it was not my first visit to the Tharu people themselves, the selected community, the area, and the museum where I conducted my fieldwork were new to me. Since I already had a few years of experience working in a Tharu community, I had heard stories about the Tharu people. During my almost five years of teaching tenures in Nawalparasi (now Nawalpur) district, I had the opportunity to get acquainted with Tharu cultures and ways of living. Additionally, I got the opportunity to experience their various festivities, cultural performances, food cultures, and day to day life. During that time, I visited a few newly constructed cultural collection centers and cultural houses in Nawalparasi, where traditional artifacts, paintings, photographs, costumes, everyday objects, and more were on display. I also observed some cultural performances at the cultural houses. From that time on, I was fascinated with and interested in knowing more about Tharu culture, heritage, and indigeneity. Specifically, I wanted to work with Tharu people about how those cultural collection centers and cultural houses contribute to revive and strengthen their culture, traditions, and indigeneity. The Tharu people were marginalized, and their culture and way of living was threatened due to some of the state policies, and other multiple tragedies that had taken place in the past, which is one reason why these institutions are important for this community and vice versa.

When I first reached the Tharu Cultural Museum and Research Centre in Chitwan, I passed through the Tharu village Sauraha. I came to witness only a few of the houses were built in traditional Tharu archaeological pattern. Many of the houses were made of bricks and cement using modern technologies. At the same time, I witnessed the museum which was designed in the traditional Tharu style of housing. It was beautifully decorated with colorful handprints and leaf-like paintings and drawings on its outer walls. That firsthand experience to the village further motivated me to contemplate what would be the reason behind building the museum in the traditional way of Tharu archaeology while the same community houses have been re-built in diverse ways. It made me think that the indigenous Tharu culture, tradition, and indigeneity is under threat even at present, and through museum practices they are trying to preserve, protect, and continue them. But it does not necessarily mean that only the

traditionally patterned houses can save cultures and traditions. What I faced as a firsthand experience in the village motivated me to anticipate how the museum has addressed the growing needs of the revival of culture with due focus on preservation, protection, and promotion of Tharu traditions and cultures in order to heal the communal trauma and challenge the negative stereotypes that were associated with them in the past.

Since I was curious about the role of the museum to revive the lost culture, the cultural exhibitions attracted me more inquisitively as they described the past tragic events and the experiences inflicted upon the Tharu people by state authorities. I learned about their displacement and the adverse effects of massive immigration of the hilly (*Prabatiya*) peoples to their original land. I had not thought about this before the visit, though I was aware of the assimilationist policy of the state in the past, the spread of malaria in Terai, and the bonded labor system prevailing among the Tharu peoples. All of which were crucial factors leading to the loss of Tharu culture, traditions, and indigeneity in the past.

With these relevant historical illustrations, this thesis tries to analyze the role of the community-based cultural museum. It also looks at how the Tharu Cultural Museum and Research Centre in Chitwan revisits the past, safeguards the present, and promotes the Tharu culture for future generations. This pioneering community-based cultural museum is located in the southern lowland, Terai. That was the first reason that I chose this museum. Secondly, I was inspired by the initiation and active participation of the local youths in museum activities to preserve and promote Tharu ethnicity, identity, and indigeneity.

To understand the essence of this study, a brief Nepalese historical account is crucial about how the Tharu people were marginalized, prejudiced, displaced, forced to be bonded laborers and how these events led to the loss of the Tharu cultures, traditions, heritage and way of living. Thus, the second chapter is about the selected past events and incidents that were crucial for the loss of the Tharu culture which gives a background knowledge of the issue of study.

This thesis, with the historical illustrations, focuses on the role and importance of community-based museological practices in the revival of culture, traditions, and identity. To justify the objectives of the study, the indigenous politico-cultural movements in Nepal are also taken into consideration. The terms ‘tradition’ and ‘culture’, ‘Tharu identity’ and ‘indigeneity’, and ‘cultural museum’ and ‘community museum’ are interchangeably used in different

contexts, as they refer to the Tharu museum, their traditions, and indigeneity. This section is followed by an overview of relevant literature in order to identify the research gaps and to formulate the research statements as the research gaps demands.

1.2 Relevant Literature

Although the focus of my study is Tharu Cultural Museum and Research Centre, Chitwan, I found very few scholarly works of literature about this museum. This museum itself is relatively new and scholarly studies so far are not many. Neither are there much literature on indigenous cultural museology practices and their roles in community development in Nepal. In this context, I have tried to summarize previous literatures on the chosen museum, and community museum practices in Nepal on ethnic cultural revival, promotion, and conservation. Therefore, briefly contextualizing the cultural museum practices in Nepal, I tried to sum up previous studies about this museum and its efforts, as a community museum, in the Tharu cultural revitalization and conservation processes.

In the context of Nepal, the history of cultural museums and museum practices is relatively recent. National minorities and indigenous ethnicities had been exhibited and represented by the state authorities in the National Museum[1] and the National Ethnographic Museum[2], established lately in 1995 in Kathmandu. The National Museum was established in 1938 as an arsenal collection center. Later in 1967, it was developed as the National Museum of Nepal. From its establishment, it has also collected and exhibited cultural, religious, historical, and pre-historical objects such as artefacts, sculptures, paintings, archival materials, and cultural phenomena. It remained close for a long time for the general publics (from the

---

[1] **National Museum of Nepal** is stablished in 1928 as an arsenal museum, which is situated on the way to the Swayambhunath (a famous religious and tourist center) hill in Kathmandu. The museum is housed in a historical building built by General Bhimsen Thapa in the early 19th century.
http://www.nationalmuseum.gov.np/content.php?id=57.

[2] **National Ethnographic Museum** was established in 1995 in Bhrikuti Mandap Kathmandu. Among the 59 recognized national minorities and indigenous groups in Nepal, it has displayed only eleven different nationalities such as Thakali, Sherpa, Tamang, Gurung, Rai, Limbu, Chepang, Newar, Magar, Sunwar, and Tharu. **https://www.tourismkathmandu.com/things_to_do/places_of_interest/museum_and_galleries/details/national-ethnographic-museum.**

webpage of the National Museum of Nepal, 2020). Since the museum was restricted for the general publics, the culture exhibition was maintained by the 'others' for the 'others.' To some extent, in the name of preserving and promoting indigenous cultures, it played a key role to create a stereotypical image of the Tharus and other national minorities of the state.

Anthropologist Ken Teague (1995), studies Nepali cultures, ethnicities, and museum practices and remarks that "Nepalese museums are of the type familiar to westerners and largely contain fine arts, weapons and memorabilia" (Teague, 1995, 50). There are no clear divisions between collections or objects of various type which are simply labelled as "art or antique materials" and "ethnographic materials or items of daily life" (Teague, 1995, 50-51). By Teague (1995) in the Nepalese museums, exhibitions were dominated by mostly Buddhist and Hindu objects of religious art. Less ethnographic representations can be found in such museums. To some extent, it is obviously difficult to assure representation of the entire ethnicities in such a multi-ethnic country. However, contemporary museums, especially those of Kathmandu valley, need to identify the objectives of the cultural productions and the targeted groups of visitors (Teague, 1995). He further remarks that museological practices in contemporary Nepal are not concerned with the representation of other cultures and artefacts but are merely displaying objects (Teague, 1995).

Achut Nepal (2021), in a similar manner, observes that even in todays' museology practice in Nepal, there is a lack of minority cultural representations in many museums governed by the nation-states. Although he has not dealt with the issue of community-based cultural museum practices that have recently been introduced in Nepalese indigenous communities, he further remarks that the public/national museums and other museums especially governed by the state authorities are not working adequately in the field of conservation of the historical antiquities, cultural and national heritages, as well as endangered cultures and ethnicities. Besides that, observing the threats of loss of cultures and historical antiquities, he suggests that museum practices should be reformed in scientific, innovative, and culturally inclusive ways instead of following the mere exhibition technique of museum curatorship (Nepal, 2021).

However, Pierre Walter (2020), seeking a close tie between community-museum practices and community-based eco-tourism, highlights the issue of cultural conservation and promotion. He takes two villages, Sirubari Village and Ghale Gaun, as a case located in the

high Himalayan mountains in central Nepal. As he states, although these two villages do not have museums as institutions, they try to preserve and conserve their indigenous artworks, culture, traditions, and heritage through collective efforts of the villagers in the cultural centers especially designed for tourists attractions (Walter, 2020). Walter, through his endeavour, highlights the recent trends of community involvement in the processes of their cultural revival, conservation, and promotion. It is a powerful example of public participation to conserve their cultural assets and even developing their village or community itself as a living museum owned collectively by the community not only for economic motifs but also for cultural revival, conservation, and transformation (Walter, 2020).

Durga Prasad Neupane (2019), studies the Tharu community in Nawalpur district Nepal and their efforts in cultural conservation from the tourism perspectives, and argues that the newly built cultural centers, performances houses, the cultural museum, and the practice of home-stay tourism, are crucial phenomenon for both cultural promotion and the economic-empowerment of the collectivity (Neupane, 2019). Similarly, Ishwar Koirala (2016) presents the Tharu Cultural Museum, Chitwan from the cultural tourism perspectives and articulates that this museum is a crucial monument for the community in attracting tourists who are interested in the indigenous Tharu culture (Koirala, 2016). Every year thousands of tourists, both domestic and international, visit the museum, and it is one of the major sources of revenue to run the museum (Mahato & Mahato, 2010; Koirala, 2016). Koirala (2016) further mentions that even though this museum is located at the famous tourist area, it is not only motivated by economic benefits rather it is destined to cultural conservation, promotion, and transformation through exhibitions, festivities, and cultural performances.

Sanjaya Mahato & Birendra Mahato (2010), in their article "The Tharu Cultural Museum" published in a journal of UNESCO[3], present this museum and its motifs to be established in this community. According to them, cultural awareness and protection within the community, were the main objectives of establishing the museum. Additionally, gaining community supports and community participation in the museum practices and decision-making processes especially in relation to the community, culture and heritage conservation and development were also the foci of the museum when it was established (Mahato & Mahato,

[3] UNESCO: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

2010). Even though, in their endeavor, the part of the interrelationships between the museum and the community is highlighted, the community's responses towards the museum activities and the processes of cultural development is remained unanswered.

Mahato & Mahato (2010) argue that there is an enthusiastic public participation in each and every event, incident, and decision-making processes about the museum development, culture and heritage conservation. However, they do not elucidate how it is possible and what the community gets in return. Mahato & Mahato (2010) and Koirala (2016) did not address the motivating actors and inspirations behind the community's journey to establish the community-based cultural museum in this locality. At the same time, though Mahato & Mahato (2010) identified themselves as leading founding members of the museum, they are also less critical about the role of the cultural museum in the Tharu cultural revival, promotion and transformation. Thus, after reviewing this literature, I decided to do an in-depth study of the relationship between the museum and community.

1.3 Research Questions

In this thesis, I examine the relationship between the cultural museums and local ethnic groups by studying the Tharu people and the Tharu Cultural Museum in Chitwan. Precisely, I analyze the role of the community based cultural museum in cultural conservation, revitalization, and continuation of indigenous Tharu culture, traditions, indigeneity and eventually their ostensibly lost cultural identity. Tharus have long been suppressed, marginalized, and caught between the pressures of assimilationist national policy, migration, the resettlements of the 1950s, the bonded labor system, and the endemic malarial diseases in the past. Cultural revival and its sustainability for future generations are also the major concerns of the indigenous peoples to keep continue cultures, traditions and cultural identities. Considering this marginalized historiography, this thesis aims to focus on the roles and impacts of the cultural museum in the local Tharu community and vice versa. Additionally, it explores how a cultural museum can function as a conduit for cultural revitalization, identity creation, and the preservation and protection of cultural heritage and indigenous knowledges. More specifically, this study aims to answer the following research question:

> In which ways does the Tharu Cultural Museum, as a community-based museum, negotiate and revitalize the Tharu cultural identity?

This main question will be answered by exploring the following sub-questions:

> What were the main inspirations behind the establishment of the Tharu museum?
>
> What were the initial purposes of the museum? And how can these be assessed at present?
>
> Who were/are the target groups (elderly, youths, younger generations) of the museum?
>
> How is the museum helping the community to preserve, protect, and transmit/continue the Tharu culture and identity for future generations?

1.4 Position and Ethical Considerations

As a non-indigenous outsider researcher in the community, I lack their real experiences and endurances. Since I had already an experience of working in the Tharu community, as a researcher, I could influence my research design relying on my prior assumptions and knowledge about the topic and the issues. I understand that my prior knowledge about Tharu historiography and culture relied mostly on my readings and commonly known accounts and stories about them. With this reflection, I went to the community considering them as 'research participants' rather than as mere 'informants.' That helped me to dissolve my presuppositions and paved a path towards community perspectives and indigenous way of doing research; research 'with' and /or 'by' indigenous people (Saugestad, 1998; Smith, 2012). I believe that this approach best allows me to hear, represent, and eventually interpret and analyze the data from the indigenous decolonizing perspectives concerning the museum, its roles and impacts in the community.

The issue of ethics is crucial in indigenous research designs. Ethics "is the foundation of good deeds," whereas research ethics "is about the responsivities" that are essential to be followed by a researcher during the research process, for instance in the data collection process, fieldwork, interviews, interpretation, analysis and the findings of the research (Olsen, 2016, 28). Therefore a researcher, who deals with indigenous issues, "needs to reflect on both the consequences and motifs of the research . . . and is regulated by a set of duties, responsibilities and regulations" that are preferably assigned by the particular research institution, community, and/or nation-state (Olsen, 2016, 28). Research topics might also have a great impact on the reliability and validity of the collected data and eventually the result of the study. Therefore, ethical issues, research duties, and responsibilities were considered in this project accordingly.

In my case, I tried to consider the above discussed ethical subjects during my field works and data processing. For instance, I reviewed all the requirements at the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) and applied for the research approval before entering the community. I got consent from the NSD and the university before I started my research. As an outsider to the Tharu community, I had certain reflections about indigenous research as I had selected the methods of data collections informed by the indigenous methodologies that I discussed in detail in the methodology section of this thesis. During the data collection process, as an ethical process, I described my research motifs, purposes, and its implications in detail to the research participants and asked their permission to use the data that they had provided. During the process, the written consent forms were also filled out by the participants individually. Furthermore, I provided my mailing address, email, and phone number to my research participants so that they could withdraw the consent at any time without any explanation if they were unwilling to be a research participant. I did not include any sensitive data which could harm the community, researcher, or any others.

1.5 Data Collection Process

I conducted my fieldwork in the Bachheuli village in the Chitwan district. My research participants were the local Tharu peoples around the Tharu Cultural Museum. In addition to that, I also interviewed the director and the administrative staffs of the museum. I interviewed altogether 13 people. Friends and personal acquaintances were the door openers to the museum and the field. First, I visited the museum and its director and administrative personnel to collect practical information about the museum and the local community before interviews. Before interviewing the research participants, I gave them a detailed description of my project and clearly explained its purposes to them. I also assured them about the confidentiality of the given information. I made them aware that the collected data will be used only for this research project.

During the interview process, I used the semi-structured interview guide helping me stay on track and keep the research goals of the thesis in mind. I asked follow-up questions to get detailed information from the participants. I made detailed notes for the systematic presentation of the collected data. The interviews were carried out in the Nepali language. Some of them were in mixed languages (Tharu-Nepali). I recorded only those interviews and

got help from a Tharu schoolteacher to translate into the Nepali/English language so that I could accurately present their experiences. I visited the museum exhibitions and the local Tharu community to get more reliable data and information about the experiences of the Tharu people and their efforts to revitalize their culture and cultural phenomena from the past to the present through the museum. It was helpful for me to acknowledge the roles and impacts of the community-based cultural museum in the community.

1.6 Relevance

Since this research was based on how the Tharu Cultural museum has been a tool for cultural revitalization, identity creation and indigenization, the outcome of the project is expected to be relevant to the Tharu community to formulate plans and policies to sustain their culture, traditions, and heritage. I examined different historical and political documents on the Tharu culture, traditions, and indigeneity. The Tharus' experiences and endurances of the marginalized pasts and their responses at present in relation to their threatened identity, indigeneity, culture, and traditions were tried to grasp through interviews with the local people around the museum. My intent was to address and represent the story of Tharu struggles and their responses to the community museum practices through interviews, documents and literature, and field observation. I hope the research results are going to be helpful in enhancing social awareness about the socio-political and cultural rights of the indigenous Tharu people including other indigenous ethnic minorities inhabited around the Tharu inhabitations in the southern lowland Terai. Since this project analyses the process of revitalization of the Tharu culture and identity with reference to the recent trends of building community cultural museums, I expect it can motivate the other neighboring indigenous groups, ethnicities, and national minorities to take appropriate steps for the protection, promotion, and revitalization of their own cultural identities. Moreover, I will provide a copy of this project to the museum, so that the findings of the project will be beneficial to the museum community for the betterment of the community cultures.

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into seven chapters. Each chapter ends up with a brief summary. The first chapter introduces the research issues and problematizes the subject of the study. It also

includes the relevance of this study. Research motifs and motivations, ethical considerations and data collection process are also discussed in this chapter.

The second chapter highlights the background information on the issue. It introduces the Tharus as marginalized indigenous nationality of Nepal, along with their culture, belief systems, and a brief historical overview of the Tharus. Similarly, the third chapter tries to shed light on the theoretical perspectives. Providing a theoretical basis for this thesis, the concepts of community/cultural museum practices, indigenous cultural revitalization and conservation, and the issue of indigeneity and cultural identity are discussed in line with the issues and subject of the thesis. The fourth chapter highlights the research methods, methodology, and tools of data collection and fieldwork.

The fifth chapter interprets the primary data collected from the field. This chapter is a descriptive presentation of the findings of the field works. The following chapter, six, analyses the findings, drawing on the theoretical insights, the research issues, concepts, and socio-cultural scenarios around the Tharu community and the museum. Finally, chapter seven wraps up the entire thesis with a short concluding section.

2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

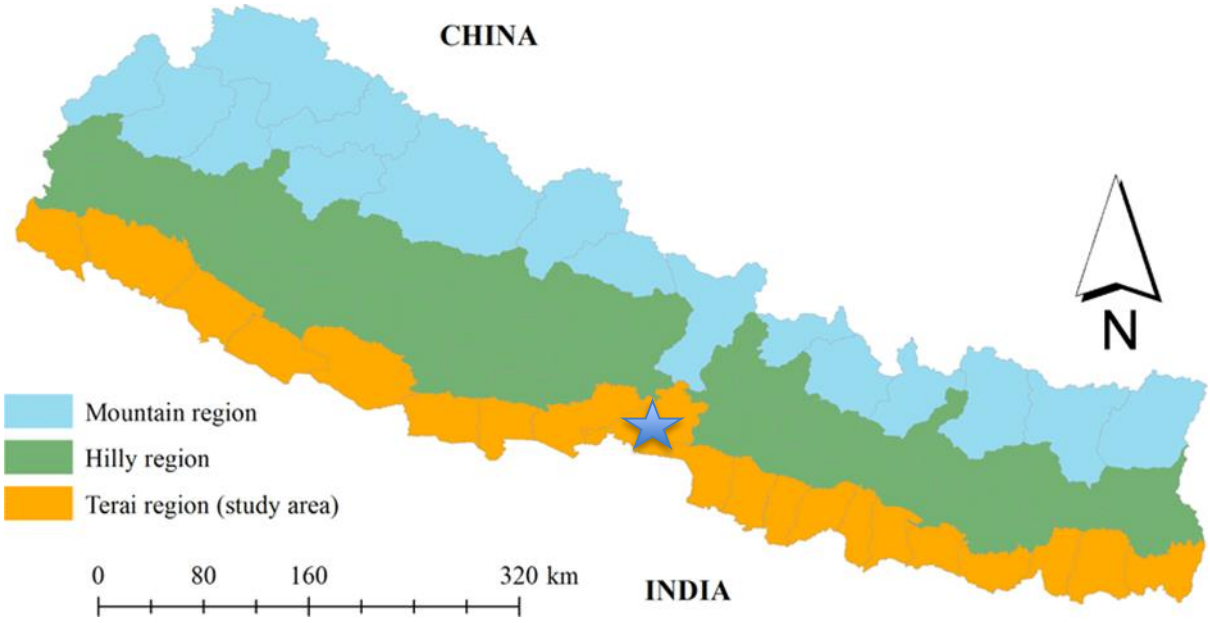

Figure 1:The map of Nepal showing three geographical regions.

(The map of Nepal with three geographical regions: Mountain Region, Hilly Region and Terai Region. The yellow colored Terai region is the main area of Tharu people's inhabitation. The study area of this project is marked with a blue colored star.) **Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Geographic-map-of-Nepal-showing-study-area-Terai-region_fig1_327455364.**

2.1 Who are Tharu People?

Tharus are indigenous peoples of the Southern low land, Terai, in Nepal. They represent 6.6% (1.7 million) of the total population (approx. 30 million) of Nepal (Nepal Population Report, 2011). Nepal is a common home of more than 125 ethnicities/castes. 'On the basis of various indicators, the government of Nepal has classified 59 indigenous nationalities into five major categories: endangered, highly marginalized, marginalized, disadvantaged, and advantaged (advanced) groups. Tharu is kept under one of the marginalized indigenous groups' (Sapkota, 2014, 17). Among the 59 ethnic nationalities, Tharu comprises the second-largest indigenous group (Nepal Population Report, 2011). Though they regard themselves as one clan, "there are many subgroups, broadly distinguished by the territories they occupy and their cultural and linguistic differences" (Maslak, 2003, 17). Arjun Guneratne (2002), an anthropologist, describes Tharu society as:

> differing from each other in language and cultural practices and in the extent of their cultural assimilation into Hindu caste society. Each group is localized in a particular area, and some groups are referred to by a term derived from the name of their area: thus, the Dangaura is such a name because the main centre of their population is in the Dang Valley. (Guneratne, 2002, 42)

There is still a debate about the origin of the Tharus. Drone P. Rajaure (1981) states that "the greater part of their population resides in Nepal, although some Tharus are also scattered in the adjacent Indian districts of Champaran, Gorakhpur, Basti, Gonda and Nainital" (Rajaure, 1981, 155). There are several endogamous sub-groups of Tharus, such as 'Rana, Kathari, Dangura, Kochila, Mech, Nawalpure, and Chitwania' (Rajaure, 1981, 155). The Tharus, especially who live in two of the far western districts of Terai, Kailali and Kanchanpur, "claim that they are migrated with Rajputs [son of the king] of Rajasthan [India] by blood" (Verma, 2010, 182).

However, according to Arjun Guneratne (1998), regarding their origin and cultural history, neither the Tharu people themselves nor the government/state have detailed information. It is believed that they inhabited the Terai region from the ancient time of the Nepalese civilization. Etymologically, the word 'Tharu' denotes the 'son of the forest' in both the Tharu and Nepali languages (Guneratne, 1998). "The Tharus then are closely identified with the Tarai and treated today as its indigenes. But this association cannot, in and of itself, account for the development of an ethnic consciousness among them or the political articulation of an ethnic identity" (Guneratne, 1998, 757).

Nevertheless, when the Tharus had been in contact with the other ethnic groups they had been marginalized and suppressed for centuries because they were always forced into the periphery rather than included in socio-political and cultural institutions. Agriculture, livestock and fishing were/are their main occupations. However, in the 20th century, with little infrastructural development in the Terai, and malaria eradication in, the hilly migrants began migrating to their land. The immediate consequence of malarial eradication to the Tharu community was that they lost their land (Guneratne, 1998, 759). At the same time, the government started taxing the land and livestock. As a result, the Tharus became slowly and

gradually indebted to lords/landlords and eventually lost their lands, becoming enslaved to households and fields (Guneratne, 2002). They would know as *Kamaiya*[4], or bonded laborer.

2.2 A Brief History of the Tharu before the 2000s.

Since the early 19th century, the Tharu people experienced the harsh nationalism-driven assimilation and the practice of the bonded laborer. The indebted Tharu families had to serve the elite feudal landlords' families receiving any pay. Jung Bahadur Rana, the then Nepalese Prime Minister, enforced *the Muluki Ain* (The General Code of 1854) which legalized the prejudiced caste system in Nepal (Koirala, 2016). It divided the Nepali society into two categories; "the wearers of the sacred thread, the Tagadhari, on the one side, who were the elite of the society, and the rest, known as the Matwali, or alcohol-consuming classes" (Gellner, 2007, 1823). Moreover, "the subordinated groups [the Matwali] were themselves divided into enslaveable and non-enslaveable categories, and into "clean" castes and "untouchables". All the present-day "tribal" minorities were in the Matwali, . . . some were enslaveable and others were not" (Gellner, 2007, 1823). The Tharu people were categorized as a touchable and enslaveable group of people together with many other national minorities. As a result, the already established bonded labor system in that area further increased massively especially in the western Terai. They were basically forced to be household and farm workers for the feudal lords in Terai.

The 1950s would become a more stigmatized period as the bonded labor system was expanded extensively throughout the communities. Most of the Tharu families used to live near forest areas where they suffered badly from malarial diseases. In the late 1950s, the government eradicated 'malaria' from the central Terai. The result became counterproductive for the Tharu

---

[4] ***Kamaiya*:** A person who worked as a bonded labour for certain periods of time or sometimes even the next generations to pay his or his family's debt. The Kamaiya had to work in the house and the fields as an agricultural worker. The Kamaiya system is largely practiced in the Tharu communities, especially in the western Terai. It was developed as a system in which the labourers made verbal contract with the landlords at least for one year. If the family ends up with vicious cycle of poverty and in debts the next generation should also work as a bonded laborer for the lords (Giri, 2009).

Source: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0021909609343414.

communities. “The most immediate consequence to Tharus throughout Terai of the malaria eradication program was that they lost their lands. The situation was particularly devastating . . . where much of the land formerly controlled by Tharus passed into the hands of immigrants, . . . from the hills” (Guneratne,1998, 759).

According to an archive in the Tharu Cultural Museum at Chitwan, the migrant population increased up to 150,000, within 15 years, where the local Tharu population remained at about 25,000. As a result, “thousands of Tharu peasants forced into bonded labour and delve into the debt, and later, they turned out to be bonded laborers for their new landlords” (Cox, 1990, 9-11). It caused severe threats such as the loss of Tharu identity, culture, arts and architects, costumes and heritage.

Nonetheless, David N. Gellner (1997), in his studies on ethnicity, nationalism, and contemporary socio-political systems in Nepal, remarks that before the 1990s, the Nepalese socio-political discourse was one-sided as “the dominant political discourse marks the English words ‘nationalism’ as entirely positive and the terms ‘tribe’ and ‘communalism’ as negative” (Gellner, 1997, 10). According to him, those who “take an interest in minorities or ‘tribes’ are often suspected of encouraging backwards-looking allegiances” (Gellner, 1997, 10).

Gellner (1997) remarks further that the then Nepali political situation was not in favor of the national minority groups of peoples. The political parties (neither communist party nor the democratic party) could go against the three ‘mantras’; ‘nationalism (*Rastriyata*)’, ‘democracy (*Prajatantra*)’, and ‘development (*Bikas*)’ and raise the minority voices in the national political level (Gellner, 1997, 10). As Gellner (1997) observes the issues of minorities were neglected by the national politics and the minority representation was seemed to be impossible.

Between the Tharus and non-Tharus, such events, incidents, national politics, prejudiced and legal provisions created a vast social-cultural differentiation. As a result, they had to suffer from the tragic loss of their cultures, languages, identity, traditions, indigenous knowledge, and ways of living. It created an intergenerational trauma in the Tharu community as many of them were bonded laborers until the government outlawed it in 2000.

However, the cultural resistance from the minorities and marginalized indigenous groups of people became slightly significant in the local level after the 1990s (Gellner, 1997). During the 1950s a few elites from the Tharu community initiated a cultural movement and

established themselves an organization called Tharu Welfare Society, although it came into public recognition only after the 1990s (Koirala, 2016). The Gurung[5] (one of the indigenous groups of Nepal) activists held a conference in Pokhara[6] and passed three resolutions claiming that they were subjugated and marginalized by the dominant groups of Nepali peoples (Brahmin, Chhetri, and Thakuri). Following the Gurung's example, many of the marginalized groups of peoples, including the Tharus, united against the state policies and authorities (Gellner, 1997).

Pratyoush Onta (2006) states that in 2002 the indigenous movement was recognized by the state though a collective organization called Nepal Federation of Nationalities (NEFEN)[7] which had already been established in 1991. In 2002, the state finally recognized their movements and was ready to pass and give a royal seal to the bill proposed by their foundation (Onta, 2006). Hereafter, the recently passed bill called the National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) Act, 2002 has defined Nepalese indigenous nationalities for the first time as "a tribe or community as mentioned in the schedule having its own mother tongue and traditional rites and customs, distinct cultural identity, distinct social structure and written or unwritten history" (NFDIN, 2003, 32).

---

[5] **The Gurung**: the Gurung is one of the indigenous groups of peoples among the recognized 59 indigenous nationalities in Nepal. The Gurung people inhabit mostly in the hilly areas scattering throughout the country. They are also internationally recognized as Gurkhas (Wegner, 1995).

Source:

https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA16984724&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=abs&issn=00274380&p=AONE&sw=w.

[6] **Pokhara**: is a metropolitan city and the capital of Gandaki province in Nepal. Most of the Gurung population inhabits Pokhara and the surrounding areas of it.

[7] **Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities** (**NEFIN**), is a national level umbrella organization of indigenous peoples/nationalities in Nepal founded in 1991 as the **Nepal Federation of Nationalities** (**NEFEN**). In 2003, the organization was renamed as the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities. **Source:** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal_Federation_of_Indigenous_Nationalities.

2.3 The First Decade of 2000: The Decade of Tharu Cultural Revitalization

During early 2000s, several indigenous movements in Nepal raised their voices against the age-long discriminatory politics and policies. National minorities and indigenous groups fought for their cultural identity, inclusion into majority society and equal access to socio-political and cultural rights including policymaking processes in the community and the national level. The NFDIN Act, 2002, turned out to be a milestone for cultural preservation and resurgence or many indigenous nationalities in Nepal (Sapkota, 2014).

It was a decade of cultural awareness. With that acknowledgement, Tharu people embarked on the process of revitalizing their culture and ethnic identity from the local community level to the national one. The concept of the cultural museum emerged from the local level as a first step to revitalize their Tharu indigeneity. As a result, in 2005, the Tharu Cultural Museum was inaugurated by the local youths of Bachheuli Village, Sauraha, Chitwan. Four years later in 2009, and with the same objectives, the local Tharu people inaugurated another Tharu Museum in Amaltari village, at Nawalpur, a neighboring district to Chitwan. Nowadays, both museums function as Tharu cultural museums and cultural contact zones.

Nonetheless, the legacy of the late 19th century nationalism-driven assimilationist policies, kingships, the monarchy, and the unitary governmental system continued until 2006. The centuries-long autocratic monolithic Hindu kingdom was obliterated by the public protests throughout the country in April 2006. Paul Routledge (2010) remarks, "the movement was successful in toppling the King's direct rule of the country, forging the way for the reinstatement of political parties in the political life of Nepal, the establishment of an interim government and the holding of national elections" (Routledge, 2010, 1279-80). Along with these political changes, the minority's cultural movements had also apparently been visible after the success of the People's Movement II[8] in 2006 (Sapkota, 2014). Hence, the Interim

[8] **Peoples Movement II:** '*The Jana Andolan II* (People's Movement II, named after the first **people's movement** of 1990) demanded a return to democracy, the establishment of a lasting peace in Nepal and more political and economic inclusion for the various ethnic and caste groups historically marginalised in Nepali society' (Routledge, 2010, 1279). The public protest and strikes including political parties and revolutionary party: -CPN Maoist, against the monarchy was taken place throughout the country for 19 days in April 2006, though the focus was in the capital city, Kathmandu. It was successful to abolish the monarchy, restore the earlier political parties, house

Constitution of Nepal, 2007, was promulgated by the political leaders. It tried to address the current sociopolitical issues, indigenous people's issues, issues of the margins and most importantly, the issues raised by a decade-long Civil War (1995/6-2005/6) and the national minorities. For the first time ever in Nepali history, it introduced the word 'indigenous tribes.'

The present constitution, the Constitution of Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, 2015, has also tried to address the issues of ethnic identity, indigeneity and national minority, declaring the nation as a "multiethnic, multilingual, multi-religious, multicultural, sovereign, secular, inclusive, democratic, socialism-oriented, federal democratic republican state" (The Constitution of Nepal, 2015, Article 3&4). The constitution not only recognizes the national minorities as indigenous groups of the country but also paves a path to indigenous cultural understanding and awareness building among and within the communities. They got control over their traditions and culture (Onta, 2006). As a result, the process of cultural resilience is further strengthened in order to revitalize the seemingly lost cultures, languages, indigenous knowledge systems, and works of art with the help of cultural museums and other institutions among all the indigenous and national minority groups. It has been ostensible in the cases of the Tharu museums in the Chitwan, Nawalpur, Dang, and Bardiya districts since all the Tharu cultural museums were established after 2005/2006 with their own community control over the museum collections, presentations, and interpretations. These community museums, in this regard, are the results of cultural consciousness and awareness through the politico-cultural movements for their cultural identity and indigeneity.

2.4 Summary

This chapter highlighted the background knowledge of the study. In summary, as explained above, the 19th-century assimilationist policies, prejudiced caste-related laws/bills, the General Code, 1854, 1930's international migration policies implemented by the then king Mahendra, the 1950s' massive migration from the hills, centuries-long bonded labour systems etc. are the major causes that forcefully pushed indigenous peoples into the periphery. As a result, they

---

of representative, constitute an interim constitution, and to hold a national election for constitutional assembly (Routledge, 2010).

Source: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0042098009360221.

were deprived of many of the socio-political rights, and policy-making processes in the state. They were subjected to be a voiceless group of people. However, after the political changes in the 1990s and 2000s the policy became more inclusive. Based on changed policies and new constitutional provisions, national minorities and indigenous peoples nowadays are revitalizing their indigeneity and cultural identity with the help of community-based cultural museums, art galleries, cultural centres and community cultural awareness program.

3 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

My aim with this chapter is to discuss some aspects of theoretical perspectives that have evolved from the past to the present in the field of cultural identity, museum exhibition practices, and their interrelationships with the community. This chapter tries to theorize on the relationships between community/cultural museums and society in cultural resurgence and identity creation through self-representation. First, a brief history of the evolution of museums and museum practices will be presented and discussed so that the museology practices of today can be analyzed. This will be done based on historical roots and emerging concepts such as indigenous/community museum practices, revitalization of cultural identity through the museum, self-determination and indigenization etc. The theoretical perspectives discussed in this chapter give insights to analyses and interpretation of the empirical data of the issues collected from the fieldwork.

3.2 Museums and Indigenous Peoples

The concept of a museum is not a recent phenomenon. It is said that its origin dates back at least to the classical age if not beyond. Some argue that the origin of the museum dates to the Ptolemic Mouseion at Alexandria (Vergo, 1989). In premodern times, it was first and foremost a study collection, library, a repository of knowledge, and a place of scholars, philosophers, and historians. In Europe, the 16th century Renaissance saw the museum practices as it is known to be the age of establishment of collection centres of art works, scholarly writings, paintings, fossils, minerals, and antiquities (Vergo, 1989). However, until the late 17th century, museums were individual collection center. In 1683, the word 'Museum' was coined and recorded in the 'Oxford English Dictionary.' Actually, the British Museum is regarded as the oldest museum in the world and was also the private collection of the then rulers. However, by the second half of the nineteenth century, for the first time, public cultural heritage and artifacts also began to be collected and exhibited in the museums (Smith, 1989).

Until the late twentieth century, not only the museological practices but also museology as a discipline was 'an unusual and minority subject' (Macdonald, 2006, 1). Over the decade, the number of research journals, courses, books, articles, events, and conferences in relation to museum practices and museum studies have increased dramatically. As a result, the museums

are considered as a plethora of the social development and human civilization (Macdonald, 2006). For Peter Vergo (1989), one of the great contributors to museology, the museum is a universe, a school of humanity and human civilization which captures and displays every momentum of not only the human endeavors but also the human surroundings. He asserts:

> In reality, since museums are almost, if not quite as old as civilisation itself, and since the plethora of present-day museums embraces virtually every field of human endeavour-not just art, or craft, or science, but entertainment, agriculture, rural life, childhood, fisheries, antiquities, automobiles: the list is endless - it is a field of enquiry so broad as to be a matter of concern to almost everybody. (Vergo, 1989, 1)

As stated by Pieris (2016) more recently, the museum has been regarded as an open, inclusive, and public institution where the exhibits intend to educate irrespective of class, castes, ages, creeds, ethnicities, etc. This idea shows a recent shift in thinking because historically, museums were open only for the elite and the ruling class while the general public had little access to them. They merely played the role of entertaining the elites. Over the ages, the earlier notion of the museum has slowly changed and today museums try to apply inclusive and collaborative approaches in museum management, exhibitions, and representations (Pieris, 2016). According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM):

> The museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment. (ICOM, 21st General Conference in Vienna, Austria, 2007)

The museum, as an institution, conveys information about the history, cultures, arts, architectures, heritage, ethnicity, and indigeneity. A museum is a compact form of diverse cultures, history, ethnography, and anthropology (Macdonald, 2006). After the late 1990s, museum history has seen a significant change in museum philosophy, exhibition, representations, and museum management. With the widespread indigenous and national minorities' movements, the discourse of revitalization, representation and repatriation came into the forefront of discussion in museology, anthropology, and archaeology. Unlike the 'old museology practice,' the 1990s saw significant changes with the conceptual development of 'new museology' with a due focus on 'the purposes' of the museum to the social development rather than 'the methods' of exhibitions (Vergo, 1989, 3, Macdonald, 2006, 2). Hence, museology has seen significant changes and reformations as the issue of minority and minority culture came into public debate in museum studies and methods of museum practices and

exhibitions. As the issue of representation also come into debate in the academy, the issues of representation of the indigenous and national minorities moved one step ahead and established a rubric of cultural museums for their specific purposes of representation of own cultures, artworks, heritages etc. in order to revitalize their identity and indigeneity.

In this regard, after the 1990s the traditional museological practices saw a paradigm shift as it began to represent the 'others' by the 'others' (indigenous and minority people) themselves. Moreover, indigenous museology as a discipline works as a medium for social/cultural reconciliation, recognition, representation, and transmission of messages about indigenous culture, language, artifacts, traditions, rites and rituals and indigenous sovereignty to the wider masses (Simpson, 2009).

3.3 Historical Development of Indigenous Museums and Museology Practices

Indigenous peoples, cultures, and heritages have a long history of interactions with museums. The museum as an institution exhibits both the intangible and tangible heritage of indigenous peoples, ethnic communities and others. Through the exhibition practices, it conveys socio-cultural and historical knowledge to a wider audience. However, indigenous peoples were originally not involved directly or indirectly in the museum works and activities (Wilson, 2008). "Indigenous peoples were for a long time confined to the ethnographic departments, while many ethnic minorities were excluded from the museums altogether" (Kalsås, 2015, 33). However, the decolonizing movements, feminist movements, and other minority movements have influenced the indigenous peoples' movements and indigenous cultural museology practices.

During the 1980s and 90s, a new discipline of museum studies, 'the new museology', emerged in the academy along with post-structuralism and post-colonial studies. As a result, the issues of the minorities and the indigenous peoples got wider space in anthropology and social sciences departments and the indigenous museology and archaeology came into the focus of criticism (Simpson, 2001). Kalsås (2015) remarks that:

> From the 1980s, the ethnographic museums came under increased criticism for displaying indigenous peoples as people without history. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, this critique of the exhibiting practices began to make an impact in museums, and the notion that they should exhibit oppressed and silenced groups in society, and

> thereby act as agents for social change, gradually gained momentum. (Kalsås, 2015, 33)

The increased notion of exhibiting indigenous peoples and the national minorities in the museums in the late 1990s/2000s tried to give space to the marginalized, silenced, and oppressed groups in society in many countries in the world.

In context to Nepal, the national movements of indigenous and national minorities for socio-political inclusion and representation have had an incredible influence on both the socio-political cultural movements and the museums' exhibitions, development, and representation, since many of the indigenous cultural museums were established late, during the decade of 2000. Furthermore, the decade of 2000 is considered a turning point in traditional museology practices as the museum practices after the 2000s focused on minoritized and marginalized ethnic/indigenous values and cultures in the Nepalese contest as well. The issues of self-representation, and cultural recognition of ethnicities and indigenous peoples was raised in the socio-political movements and in the academy also especially after the 1990s[9]. However, the early days of 2000, the indigenous and minority cultures and its stakeholders were recognized legally and constitutionally in Nepal, although many of the issues had already been approved during the 1990s in many of the countries in the world.

George Nicholas (2006) studies indigenous archaeology development in line with the socio-anthropology development and tries to distinguish the key historical elements in the indigenous museums and museology developments dividing it into three different 'waves' along with the goals, events and movements, and the theoretical achievements as presented in the table below (in Carr-Locke, 2015, 18):

[9] **In 1990** there was a historical people's movement-I in Nepal, which reinstated the multiparty democracy and the constitutional monarchical system in the country after seventeen years of party-less kingships in the country. After 1990s' socio-political changes, the ethnic minorities, for the first time, raised their issues of identity and culture.

	Chronology	Goals	Events/Movements	Exhibitions	People
Antecedents	1930s–1960s	Recognizing Native "art"	Tribal art market (Inuit prints, etc.)		Bill Reid (artist)
First Wave	1960s–1970s	Removal of culturally sensitive material; Repatriation of human remains begins; Repatriation of sensitive material begins (e.g., Zuni *Ahayu:da*)	American Indian Movement	New MOA building opens (1976)	Vine Deloria Jr. (critic)
Second Wave	1980s–mid-1990s	Ethical and self-representation; critical theory to look at how museums might reinforce systems of power	"The Spirit Sings" protests (1988) NAGPRA (1990) Post-colonialism New museology Assembly of First Nations/Canadian Museums Association Task Force	"Primitivism" (MOMA) 1984 "Te Maori" (Met) 1984 "Trapline, Lifeline" (PWNHC) "Fluffs and Feathers" (1992) Glenbow Blackfoot exhibit (1990s)	Michael Ames James Clifford (critic) Julia Harrison Bruce Trigger
Third Wave	Late 1990s–2000s & beyond	Participation in decision-making; Collaborative exhibits and collection management; Self-representation; Indigenous methodologies; Inclusion of intangible culture	Participatory research Establishment of cultural centres	CMC Great Hall redesign Various MOA exhibits ROM redesign NMAI opening (2004) RRN (2010)	Moira Simpson Susan Pearce Conal McCarthy Ruth Phillips Gerald Conatay

Key: MOMA = Museum of Modern Art (New York); Met = The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York); NAGPRA = Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act; PWNHC = Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (Yellowknife, Northwest Territories); ROM = Royal Ontario Museum (Toronto, Ontario); AFN/CMA = Assembly of First Nations/Canadian Museums Association; CMC = Canadian Museum of Civilization (Ottawa, Ontario); NMAI = National Museum of the American Indian (Washington, DC); RRN = Reciprocal Research Network (Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver, British Columbia).

Source: Sarah Elizabeth Carr-Locke (2015, 18), link: http://summit.sfu.ca/item/15622.

George Nicholas (2006) distinguishes key historical elements of indigenous museology development from the early history to the present days. From these three different waves shown in the table above, I identified three different approaches of understanding the role of indigenous museums. These approaches are the traditional approach, the bottom-up approach, and the institutional approach in cultural museology practices. Within these approaches, characteristically there are three different visible aspects of cultural museum practices: collection and exhibition, community participation and involvement in museums, and museum as an agent to socio-cultural development and a community centre.

The museological practice until the early 1960s emphasized museums as collection of the objects and the social role of the museum was neglected (Kreps, 2008; Simpson, 2009). Museums as indigenous institutions are vividly discernable in the field of museum practices from the past to the present. Nonetheless, any approach or museological practice principally is based on "cultural matters that cannot be divorced from a specific cultural context" (Kreps, 2008, 38). The sub-headings below try to grasp the three different approaches of museological roles, and their interconnectedness developed through time.

3.3.1 Traditional Approach (before/until the 1960s & 70s)

The early history of the museum practice dates back to the classical age, when the concept of museum emerged in the world (Vergo, 1989; Macdonald, 2006; Nicholas, 2008; Abt, 2006). However, before the seventeenth century, the museums were not accepted and promoted as public property by the government agencies. By the second half of the 19th century it was considered a storehouse for objects such as cultural art works, crafts, and so-called exotic items taken and collected from marginalized ethnic minorities and the colonized countries by the elites, settlers, and the rulers (Smith, 1989).

After the 1930s, the material cultures were viewed more important by anthropologists and researchers. The category arts and artifacts remained contested in anthropology as they tried to define minority and marginalized cultures and artworks from a western point of view. This, in a way, made interactions between indigenous material cultures and the museums more or less close (Vergo, 1989; Smith, 1989). As a result, the earlier notion of the museum as a mere collection centre transformed into an exhibition of objects for the wider mass of the public. This contributed to the rise of public museums everywhere (Vergo, 1989; Smith, 1989).

Nonetheless, national minorities' and indigenous peoples' rights to participate and create museum representations was not recognized until around the 1960s, even though the development of the United Nations Organization (UNO 1945), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR 1948), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO 1945) etc. set the stage for cultural rights for all of the nationalities; irrespective of castes, creeds, cultures, genders, classes, languages, religions etc. In the museum history, indigenous peoples and their cultural artifacts were displayed by 'others'. In the second half of the 20th century, the earlier notion of museology was challenged, and the focus put on the publicly important arts, artifacts, historical objects, and cultural heritage (Smith, 1989). According to Nicholas (2008), the period between the 1930s to 1960s gave importance to 'the native arts', and in the decade of 1960s/70s, the idea of the repatriation of culturally sensitive materials emerged alongside the process of decolonization throughout the post-colonial world (Nicholas, 2008).

In this regard, the traditional approach of museum practice basically remained within the periphery of the act of collection and display. The physical aspects of museums; building construction, collections of objects, exhibition, and conveying knowledge through material forms are in focus (Forgan, 2005). In the 1960s and 70s the process of repatriation, as 'a mechanism for cultural revitalization', began in many countries (Simpson, 2009, 121). Though in post-colonial states repatriation of the human remains and culturally sensitive materials began as a native/indigenous cultural movement, the defining socio-cultural roles and responsibility of the museums remained untouched in the museology discourse (Kreps, 2008). Thus, the models of collections and display of the repatriated materials, culturally and historically sensitive objects, instruments, artworks, crafts etc. can be sees as the traditional material approach of museum roles.

3.3.2 The Bottom-up Approach (the 1980s &mid-90s)

In addition to repatriations, collections, and exhibitions, museology by the 1980s and 1990s, expanded its focus to cultural representation of national minorities and native/indigenous peoples and to the roles of museums in the communities (Nicholas, 2008). In this period, critical thinking were also introduced in museology collections, exhibitions, and representation along with the emergence of post-structuralism, deconstructionism, postcolonial studies, and

minority studies (by the philosophers Jacques Derrida, Roland Barth, Michael Foucault, and many others) in humanities and social anthropology (Carr-Locke, 2015). As a result, community-based museum came into existence and their roles can be seen in light of a bottom-up approach. Adding to the traditional approach, local cultural heritage and community engagement became important for cultural preservation. The focus was put on community participation in collections, exhibitions, and community interpretations with the due motivation of cultural heritage preservation and transformation. According to Kreps (2008), the bottom-up approach is a "community-based approach that combines local knowledge and resources with those of professional museum work to better meet the needs and interests of a particular museum and its community" (Kreps, 2008, 23).

The 1980s' schools of thoughts in social anthropology influenced museums, museologists, archaeologists, and other academicians. Later on, a trend of decolonization began in the indigenous arts, cultures, museology and museum curatorship (Kreps, 1988; Kreps, 2006). Moreover, the museologists and anthropologists looked critically at museum practices. Indigenous peoples' self-representation, self-interpretations, and preservations of the material cultures through museum practices were reinforced. As a result, a bottom-up approach to cultural representation and museum practices were strengthened to "include[s] the creation of structures or spaces for the collection, storage, display, and preservation of objects, as well as practices related to their use, interpretation, care, and conservation" (Kreps, 2006, 458).

As an example of the bottom-up approach of the museum practices, the National Museum of American Indian Act (1989) acknowledges the rights to cultural representations and self-determinations of the Native American peoples in heritage managements, collections, storage, display/presentation, protection, preservations, and conservations of the material culture through their community-run cultural museums (Carr-Locke, 2015; Kreps, 2006).

Moreover, the 1970/the 80s' theoretical concept of 'new museology' also focused on the critical self-representation of the material cultures and their values in the community/society. Principally, this was influenced by the critical theory of post-structuralism and examined the relationships between the museums and the community (Vergo, 1989). The bottom-up approach, in this way, not only focuses on protection, preservation, and self-representation but also put emphases on the community participation and direct involvement by the ethnic minorities and indigenous groups in the cultural museum practices with due

focuses on the role of museums in the community development. In a nutshell, it is "an effort to refashion professional museum practices and technologies to better fit local cultural contexts and socioeconomic conditions" (Kreps, 2008, 23).

3.3.3 Institutional Approach: Museum as an Institution (After the 1990s)

The International Council of Museums (ICOM)'s 21st General Conference in Vienna, Austria (2007) evidently states that a museum is a public institution that has a public responsibility to develop the respective community, culture, and groups of people. The concept of museum as an institution emphasizes not only the social role of the museum but also the interrelationship between the museum and the relevant community. The notion of indigenous museology was strengthened with a due focus on indigenous cultures, heritage, history, artefacts, archaeology, and ways of living.

Indigenous people's participation in the decision-making process, collaborative exhibition and collection management, self-representation, indigenous methodologies/ways of doing things, equal emphasis on tangible and intangible culture are the concepts that are emphasized in the field of cultural museum practices after the late 1990s (see above mentioned table). These concepts in the field of museums, played a significant role to develop the museums as institutions with responsibilities of cultural safeguard, promotion and transformation of the respective communities and ethnicities.

For Moira Simpson (2009), community-based museums as indigenous cultural institutions in the twenty-first century play a role in indigenous peoples' cultural revitalization and identity creation, encouraging the related communities and the stakeholders in the preservation and continuance of their past traditions, cultures, history, and values (Simpson, 2009). According to her, this offers a positive space in the society and the community where reconnections and reintegration become possible (Simpson, 2009). The recent notions of cultural revitalization, reintegration, cultural preservation, and continuances also directed towards the question of ownerships of the stakeholders of the renewed culture, displayed and presented cultural materials, arts, and artifacts in museum. It is because, in many cases "the cultural maintenance or renewal strategies tied to community concerns in many other aspects of community life, including indigenous education, sovereignty, language renewal, intellectual property rights, land rights, economic development and health and well-being" (Simpson,

2009, 123-24). In this regard, the early 21st-century museology practice, institutionally developed as a socio-cultural process of community-based self-representation, self-determination, self-ownership, and self-interpretation of both tangible and intangible cultural heritages displayed in the community-based museum.

The early museums and ethnographic showcases displayed, represented, and interpreted indigenous peoples and their cultures from the viewpoint of the other - the cultural colonialists' viewpoints (Carr-Locke, 2015). Unlike the earlier museological practices, todays' indigenous cultural museums tend to revive their earlier cultures and present/represent these in a way that could preserve and promote their cultures and create collective cultural identities along with a sense of belongingness and ownerships since they are the stakeholders of their own cultures and cultural presentations. Moreover, museums as institutions, encourage the community/public participations in the decision-making process as a way of self-representation, self-determination and collective cultural identity creation (Carr-Locke, 2015, Simpson, 2001, Simpson, 2009).

As a response to the recent museology development, Moira Simpson (2009) argues that "in recent decades indigenous peoples' voices and interests have contributed to broader understandings of how heritage is defined and its importance for the maintenance of cultural identity" (Simpson, 2009, 121). The contemporary indigenous cultural museology, "has undergone a significant shift, from practices and purposes based on ideas of heritage as evidence of the past - valued for its historical research potential and as the basis for a thriving heritage industry - to recognition of the contemporary value of heritage for living cultures" (Simpson, 2009, 122). According to Simpson, museum practices today emphasize the issue of indigenous cultural identity valuing the past in present with the help of the representation of tangible and intangible heritage.

Collaborative and cross-cultural curatorial practices and heritage management practices are also newly institutionalized ideas in the field of indigenous cultural museology practices and management systems (Kreps, 2006). Museums as a public-cultural institution provide equal access and control over their community based-museums. The conventional practices that are guided by the mainstream societies were gradually challenged and questioned and in response to that collaborative and inclusive model of museological practices came into practice in both mainstream museums (for example, national museums owned by the states) and the

community based cultural museums. As a result, collaborative curatorship and heritage management practices are more inclusive and culturally oriented. It eventually encourages the creative dialogue between cultures and museums as the common platform for community development, social-cultural harmony, cultural enhancement through revival, preservation and conservation of the culture, and the cultural identity creation as a whole (Kreps, 2006).

3.4 Indigenous Community, Museums, and Cultural Identity

The term identity has been always questioned and contested in social theory. There are multiple assumptions within the term to define what identity actually is. For the British scholar, writer, and researcher David Buckingham (2008):

> On the one hand, identity is something unique to each of us that we assume is more or less consistent (and hence the same) over time. . . .[Y]et, on the other hand, identity also implies a relationship with a broader collective or social group of some kind. When we talk about national identity, cultural identity, or gender identity, for example, we imply that our identity is partly a matter of what we share with other people. Here, identity is about *identification* with others whom we assume are similar to us (if not exactly the same), at least in some significant ways. (Buckingham, 2008, 1)

According to Buckingham (2008), identity is something that is unique to each of us, and at the same time, it is relational. This is what we share with a broader collectivity/community and society. Shared collectivity, culture, history, traditions, beliefs, gender, ethnicity, geography etc., for instance, are therefore determining factors of identity.

Stuart Hall (2006), a cultural theorist, also argues that identity is always contingent, contextual, and political, and therefore keeps on changing over time (Hall, S., & Du Gay, P. 2006). Identity, in relation to a community, ethnicity, or social group is relational, contextual, and cultural. Therefore, cultural identities imply, "those aspects of our identities which arise from our 'belonging' to distinctive ethnic**,** racial, linguistic, religious and, above all, national cultures" (Hall, S., & Du Gay, P. 2006, 274).

Identity, in this way, on the one hand is 'a sense of self' as an individual while on the other hand it is 'a sense of belongingness' within a shared collectivity or a group of peoples. It is a feeling of attachment within the shared society and a sense of inclusion. However, "identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty" (Mercer,1990, p.43, quoted in Hall, S., & Du Gay, P. 2006, 275). Since there are multiple numbers of identities, one can seek

personal or collective identity when 'the fixed self' transformed or displaced as per socio-cultural and political changes (Hall, S., & Du Gay, P. 2006). In the indigenous community, therefore, the issue of identity is questioned as they could identify their 'stable collective/cultural self' as displaced, transformed as a result of doubt and uncertainty experienced. In order to regain their cultural self and collective identification, in many countries, national minorities and indigenous communities are trying to regain their culture, traditions, rites and rituals, and belief systems in order to sustain their culture and to preserve their cultural identity. For that purpose, the indigenous museums also try to be defined as an important institution and potent social force (McCarthy, 2011). Thereafter, the indigenous museums developed as they have an ability to become "a catalyst for social regeneration, empowering communities to increase self-determination. . . [and] . . . have the potential to promote tolerance, inter-community respect and to challenge stereotypes" (Sandell, 2003, 45).

In many countries, indigenous museum collections are concrete validations of the cultures they express; they are witnesses to the loss of indigenous culture and the strength of social change. They provide prime means through which multiple socio-cultural and historical expressions can achieve a public presence. This is a journey through which the object itself speaks about the prejudiced history of the past (Stanton, 2011). A community museum is likely to be cultural asset and the contact zone. Through museum practices, it powerfully challenges the prejudiced past history, stereotypes, dominance, and forceful assimilation through explicit formal and aesthetic representations of the implicit spatial strategies (Pieris, 2016).

Unlike national museums, community-based museums prioritize community interests and indigeneity through the spatial renderings of the local indigenous cultural phenomena, both tangible and intangible at the same time (Pieris, 2016; Stanton, 2011; Smith, 2008). The related/respected community owns a sense of ownership and control over their own cultural heritage and artifacts exhibited in their museums. As a result, a sense of commonality, collectiveness, belongingness, and inclusiveness have prevailed among all the peoples in the community (Smith, 2008).

Similarly, for Smith (2008), "cultural identity depends on the social recognition of a community's identity, and on the reproduction of cultural products, such as stories, dance, religious rituals, everyday ways of interacting, and on reproduction of the organization of society as a whole" (Smith, 2008, 1). Cultural identity is rendered through cultures, traditions

and cultural heritage, arts, architects, and history. The productions and reproductions of the cultural phenomena make them accessible for future generations. The indigenous museum exhibition is not a mere exhibition of the cultural artifacts, but also the narratives of the socio-historical scenarios of the past. The cultural heritage, artifacts and artworks have embodied meanings and enduring history of the specific community through museum practices.

Nonetheless, cultural museums prioritize minority and indigenous voices through cultural exhibitions and representations. As Brady (2011) observes the "indigenous ''voice'' has become a key theme in many contemporary exhibits . . . [where] 'voice' allows for different articulations of indigenous identity in relation to place, land, and socio-cultural settings" (Brady, 2011, 203). Therefore, community museum collections articulate the institutionally suppressed 'voice' and identities of national minorities and indigenous peoples.

3.5 Summary

In a nutshell, indigenous peoples throughout the world have long been struggling for self-determination, cultural identification, indigenization and rejuvenation of their cultural heritage, arts, crafts, lost traditions, languages, indigeneity, and indigenous knowledge systems. In other words, indigenous peoples fight for the recognition that they are the stakeholders of their own tangible and intangible cultural heritage. By the 1980s, the number of indigenous cultural museums, art galleries, craft shops etc. increased throughout the world, trying to preserve and promote indigenous cultural assets to create indigenous cultural identity. In these processes, the question of 'who has the right to present, represent, and interpret indigenous cultural heritage?' became an important part of the discussions.

Nonetheless, this chapter gives an overview of cultural museum practices and how they have evolved and flourished side by side with socio-political and academic movements. As a point of departure, the three waves of museology development vividly present an overview of how museum practices developed and changed over time leading me to three approaches of understanding the role of museums. Issues of cultural identity and indigeneity through revitalized past history, traditions, cultures, arts, architectures and festivities are introduced. Moreover, the community cultural awareness and evolving concepts of 'ownerships', 'self-determination', 'self-representation', and 'self-interpretation' during the 1990s and 2000s incredibly inclined the cultural museums to represent the marginalized arts, cultures, history,

and heritage. It gave a pathway to strengthening the marginalized indigenous community culture and identity.

4 METHODOLOGY

INDIGENOUS RESEARCH METHODS, METHODOLOGIES, AND THE PRINCIPLES

4.1 Introduction

This thesis is carried out in the context of an indigenous Tharu community. I conducted this study by employing qualitative research approaches that are informed by the principles of indigenous research methodologies. The indigenous research methods applied in this study are discussed below in detail under different headings; qualitative interviews, field observations, and relevant document analysis as secondary sources of data as well as the sources to back up my primary data collected from the fieldwork.

4.2 Indigenous Research Methodologies: The Principles

The indigenous research methodology is a multidisciplinary research approach. It "combines different methodological approaches and indigenous decolonizing practices" (Smith, 2012, 144). It informs the researcher to be contemplated on how the "diverse cultural groups. . . indigenous people, women, and marginalized communities define their reality and ways of knowing, and values systems are informed by their indigenous knowledge system and shaped by the struggle to resist and survive the assault on their culture" (Chilisa, 2012, 13). It drives the research from the notion of 'researching on' to 'researching with or by' the indigenous community (Saugestad, 1998). Thus, "understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their world, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, 5), were the prime concerns of my fieldworks in the indigenous Tharu community.

Visiting indigenous peoples, interviewing and talking with them, and listening to their stories "is not just gaining knowledge from them, it is like mixing information, gathering, sharing, and analyzing" from their own perspectives (Wilson, 2001, 179). The concerned indigenous research methods, therefore, urges me to draw upon the participants perspectives and building relationships with them. Therefore, "research is not just something that's out there: it's something that you are building [ideas and relationships] for yourself and for the community" (Wilson, 2001, 179).

The indigenous research methods further informed a participatory research approach in which the related community/the subject becomes a research participant rather than being mere informants and performed in line with their cultural values (Smith, 1999, & 2012, Kovach, 2009). A participatory research approach values the indigenous knowledge system and their ways of doing things, and it is informed by indigenous decolonizing techniques. There is a relationship of trust built/a reciprocal relationship between the researcher and the researched community (Smith 1999, Kovach, 2009, Kreps, 2006). For Linda T. Smith (1999), decolonization, a most heard term, in indigenous research methods and methodologies, "does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge. Rather it is about centering our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our [indigenous peoples'] own purposes" (Smith, 1999, 39).

According to Smith (2012), indigenous research methods further "motivates the scholars to think and view the issues and their role as researchers critically" (Smith, 2012, 5), because "there is something deeply rewarding and satisfying about talking to another person for an hour or more in such a way that you come to understand a particular part of their life in-depth" (Liamputton & Ezzy, 2005, 55). In a similar manner, during my research work, my research participants' experiences and life stories invigorated me to build up a close connection between knowing their stories and my research project.

For Kovach (2009), indigenous peoples' experiences and stories are products of their culture, historicity, and ways of living. This is not a neutral form of expression rather it varies according to their cultural variations. A story within a specific community setting expresses how they value and create meaning of their cultures, arts, architects, traditions, and the past historicity (Kovach, 2009). I, as the researcher working with the indigenous community, paid attention to their experiences and the stories related to the origin of the museum and their museum practices.

In respect to the above discussed indigenous research principles, the frameworks of research methods are designed. To accomplish my research objectives, I chose qualitative interviews and field observations as primary methods of data collection. Moreover, the documents related to the Tharu community, cultural museum, and museological practices are the supporting documents. Through the open-ended questions, I was concerned with the Tharu

narratives, their experiences, and responses about the museum and its roles and importance to revive their culture and identity. It helped me to acknowledge the Tharu peoples' past and present experiences concerning the research issue and also motivated me to see and analyze the collected data from their own perspectives. The research sites, participants, and methods of data collection are discussed in detail with the following sub-headings.

4.3 Research Sites and Participants

4.3.1 The Research Sites

As I have mentioned earlier in chapter one, I carried out my research in the Tharu community living in the middle of the southern low land, Terai. Geographically, Chitwan district is located at the center of the Terai region from the Eastern to the Western Terai. The Tharu Cultural Museum and Research Centre, located in Chitwan district and the surrounding Tharu community, were my main research sites for the data collections. The museum is situated at the center of the Tharu community in Bachhauli Village near Sauraha. The selected area is the home of the Tharus who were displaced from their original place due to the massive in-migration of peoples from the hilly areas during the 1950s and also due to the then government's decision to include their residential area into the Chitwan National Park[10]. It is the nearest village to the National Park.

4.3.2 The Research Participants

I conducted my fieldwork, in the month of August 2019 for around two weeks, in the Tharu community with the assistance of a friend, who belongs to the same community. For me, he was a door-opener to the community, the museum, and the research field. He helped me with the visit to the museum and introduced me to the Tharu elders living in that area. From the very first meeting with the director of the museum, I found him friendly and helpful. He introduced

[10] **Chitwan National Park:** is the first national park in Nepal situated in the sub-tropical southern low land, the south-central Nepal in Chitwan, Nawalparasi, Parsa, and Makwanpur districts. It was established in 1973. It is the first national park in Nepal. It is a world heritage property as it was recognized by the UNESCO as one of the World Heritage Sites in 1984.
Source: https://www.chitwannationalpark.gov.np.

me to some of the local Tharu youths who had actively participated in the museum opening and construction processes.

I interviewed thirteen (13) participants including the director of the museum, and two museum staff. The museum staff were also from the same Tharu community where the museum is located. The participants were three elderly Tharus, six local youths including two museum staffs and the director of the museum, two youngsters, and two non-Tharu participants. Research participants are more vividly presented in the pie-chart below:

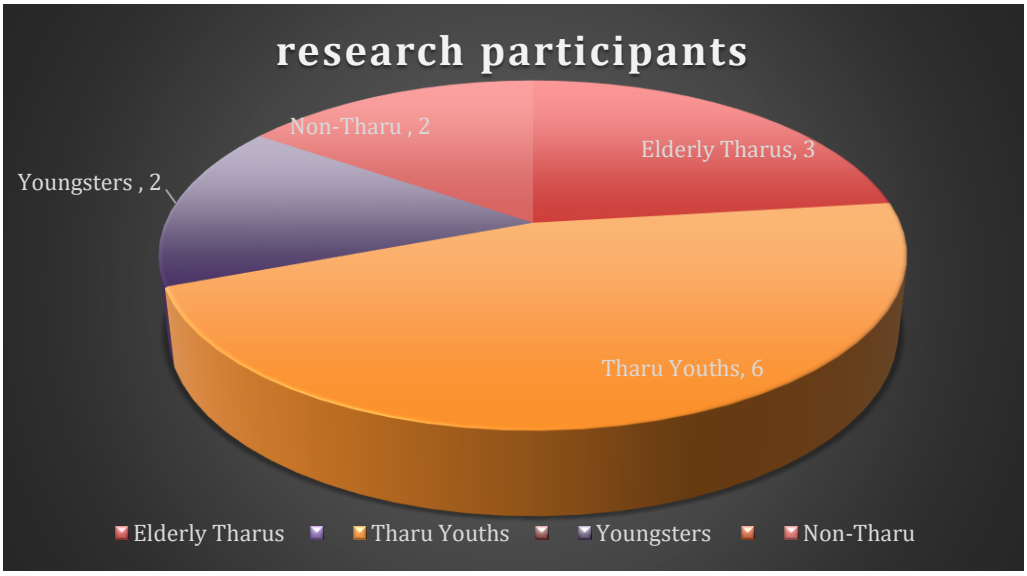

Figure 2: The pie chart showing the categories and number of the research participants

The director of the museum and the staff were deliberately chosen so that I could know about the museum practices and community engagement in it. I focused more on the director of the museum management committee and administrative personnel to gain insight into the role of museum in revitalizing Tharu culture and creating cultural identity. However, the elderly people were also given equal importance since their insights and experience helped me understand the past situations and the essence of building the museum in the locality. In addition to them, I also interviewed the youngsters and the non-Tharu from the same locality in order to have varied perspectives.

4.4 Methods of Data Collection

In indigenous research practices, a number of qualitative data collection methods such as interviews, observation, and document analysis are mainly used. In this project, open-ended

qualitative interviews, field observations, and document analysis as secondary sources of data, were the methods of data collections and interpretation as discussed below.

4.4.1 Observation of the Field

Through field observation, rich information about the subject of the study is obtained from the field. With this method, the researcher looks for ways or strategies for taking part with the subjects or the participants and everyday practices. It enables the researcher to be familiar with the circumstances and to observe everyday practices and performances (Luders, 2004, 222). With this reflection, I came to the research field in the summer of 2019. The village area, the community, and the museum were new to me even though I had already spent a couple of years with the Tharu community in another district. I began my fieldwork with the field observation hoping that it would be helpful for me to identify the key research participants, and to be familiarized with the community settings, peoples, the museum, and the current circumstances.

I walked through the Tharu village, instead of taking a vehicle, directly to the Tharu cultural museum. I wanted to observe the village area, peoples, and the surrounding Tharu community of the museum. In the daytime, I could notice that some of the Tharu men and women were knitting fishing nets and some other wooden instruments that are commonly used in fishing activities and other household purposes. When I reached the museum, the museum staff welcomed me and showed me the museum exhibitions. I also met the director of the museum and other local Tharu peoples during the first day, which opened a door to other community members. The Tharu cultural museum, the museum exhibitions, the local Tharu community, cultural artifacts and heritage were the main concerns of my observation along with creating a relationship with the local people as I was working with them to conduct my research work.

4.4.2 The Interviews

The interviews were the main empirical source of data for this research project. I conducted open-ended qualitative interviews with the participants, since the “interviews provide in-depth information pertaining to participants’ experiences and viewpoints of a particular topic” (Turner III, 2010, 754). The face to face semi-structured open-ended qualitative interview with the Tharu people ‘provided me with an opportunity for a detailed study of their perspectives and an in-depth understanding of the research phenomena for the detailed subject coverage’

(Ritchie, 2003, 36). Interviews provided me in-depth insights to eliminate preconceptions and biases about the Tharu peoples and the community (Turner III, 2010).

I started the interview with conversations about their festivals, celebrations, and other general questions about the community, culture, identity, and traditions. Specifically, the interviews focused more on how local people saw the roles and importance of the community cultural museum to revive their culture, and cultural identity. The interviews were also about the interrelationships between the museum and the community, purposes and inspiration, and its contribution to the transformation of Tharu culture and identity.

Even though the interviews were face to face, the persons interviewed are anonymized with due respect to their right to privacy. Moreover, not only during the data collection processes but also in the data processing, interpretation, and analysis, the participants were anonymized as this project is based on the issues of ethnicity, indigeneity, and cultural identity.

After the first face-to-face interviews, when I was transcribing the data collected from the fieldwork, I contacted some of the participants by email and phone calls for further detailed information about the subjects discussed. It helped me to fill out the information gaps and to generate more information about the issues to reflect upon the collected data and the participants' perspectives in detail.

4.4.3 Document Analysis

Document analysis was another method of data processing of this thesis. I studied books, articles, journals, policy documents, constitutions, and other documents relating to the Tharu culture, historicity, identity, indigeneity, museums, and indigenous museology to back up my primary data and to collect more information about the subject. Utilizing documents as source of information I studied the "existing documents, either to understand their substantive content or to illuminate deeper meanings" of the subject and research area (Ritchie, 2003, 35). This process enabled me to explore a more comprehensive picture of the Tharu culture, social life, indigeneity, and indigenous ways of living. Moreover, it enhanced the conceptual clarity of the subject to identify and answer the research questions with the interviews.

4.5 Summary

This thesis is based on the empirical data collected from fieldwork. Besides that, secondary sources of data are also equally used as one of the tools for both data collection and interpretation. Principally, Linda T. Smith's decolonizing techniques, Chilise Bagale's ideas of indigenous ways of knowing, and Kovach's technique of storytelling about own self, shaped the ways to enter into the processes of data collection employing the participatory approaches of research practices. I tried to employ the notion of researching with and by the research participants rather than taking the participants as mere informants while conducting my fieldworks.

Interviews and field observation served as primary tools for empirical data collection, while document analysis, as a method, implied secondary sources of data processing and interpreting in this project. The Tharu cultural museum and research centre and the surrounding Tharu community at Bachchheuli village in Chitwan district were the focus of the two weeks fieldworks. The interviews incorporated the feelings and responses of the local Tharu peoples on their culture, traditions, arts and architects, festivities, identity, and indigeneity in relation to role and importance of the community museum. The field observations focused more on museum exhibitions and exhibition practices along with the local community circumstances which could enable me to be familiar with the everyday practices and performances of the participants. Moreover, it helped me to look for community settings, peoples, current circumstances and gave a way to enter the community.

The collected data is presented, interpreted, and analyzed in the following chapters drawing on the theoretical insights that are discussed in chapter three. While the background provided knowledge of the historical settings of the community, the next chapter discusses the historical past and present-day scenarios in relation to indigenous community museology development as well as roles and importance to transform and regenerate Tharu cultural identity and indigeneity.

5 FINDINGS

THE DATA PRESENTATION AND DESCRIPTION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data collected from the fieldworks, and the local people's responses regarding the Tharu cultural museum and its efforts in the community development. The data are presented drawing on the theoretical frameworks. Firstly, it deals with the Tharu people's responses on the inspirations and purposes behind opening the museum in this community. What motivated the local youths to revive, safeguard and promote the Tharu culture through museum acts? Secondly, it describes the exhibition practices of this museum. Thirdly, it deals with the museum practices and local peoples' responses regarding its efforts in cultural revitalization, and cultural identity creation through preserving and promoting Tharu indigeneity and indigenous knowledge. Finally, it presents the data on how the museum motivates the community in the process of cultural preservation and transformation.

5.2 Tharu Cultural Museum: The Inspirations and Purposes

Figure 3: The Tharu Cultural Museum and Research Centre. Source: http://www.tharumuseum.org/coverpicture. (10 April 2020).

Culture of a particular community relates to their identity and a sense of belonging. Indigenous peoples regard their cultures, traditions, rites and rituals, festivities, and customs as collective expressions, and means of identification. According to Smith (2008) cultures are "living entities that are transmitted from generation to generation, a continuity of cultural practices, protection and preservation count as the first step for their survival" (Smith, 2008, 1). For that, cultural museums are essential components to fulfil the goals of the community to transmit their cultural past to the present and conserve for the future. The Tharus in Chitwan established the cultural museum to conserve and pass on their indigenous cultures for future generations.

The Tharu Cultural Museum and Research Centre was established in July of 2005. It is situated in the heart of the Tharu community in Bachhauli village, Sauraha, Chitwan. It is a self-funded community-based museum. In the very beginning, it was funded by collecting funds from the local people and the museum's visitors. However now "the museum's funds come from its cultural shows, souvenir and handicraft shop, food festival, and museum fees" (Mahato & Mahato, 2010, 121). In addition to that the "funds were/[are] collected from the performance of cultural dances, particularly the Tharu stick dance, which is very popular in Nepal" (Mahato & Mahato, 2010, 123). The land, where the museum situated, is still on the lease with a little amount of money to pay back. According to the director of the museum, necessary woods and timbers were provided by the Chitwan National Park in association with the local forestry department at Sauraha during the construction process. The buildings were not only made with the community's support in labors and available materials in the village, but also using the Tharu traditional archeological designs.

There are two buildings adjacent to each other. The newly constructed two-story building is designed to be a research centre and library, whereas the next single-story building exhibits Tharu heritage, cultural artefacts, crafts, artworks, daily used materials in the past and present including historical archives, photographs etc. The museum is directed by a board of management committee elected by the local Tharus. The board is composed of eleven members including the director of the museum.

At the very beginning, the primary purpose of the museum was spreading knowledge and awareness about the Tharu culture, traditions, heritage and the Tharu indigeneity as well as educating Tharus and the other neighboring national minorities and indigenous groups. As it was established in the midst of the various cultural movements of the national minorities and

indigenous people, including Tharu in Nepal, the Tharu identity as indigenous was one of the important focuses of the museum. Regarding the earlier mission of the museum, one of the participants remembers the socio-politico-cultural scenarios of the time when they discussed about opening a new cultural museum and states that:

> I can remember that the early decade of the 2000s saw so many political and cultural movements in Nepalese history. The Tharus also participated directly or indirectly in that historical movements to create our Tharu indigeneity and cultural identity. As a result, soon after the 2006s' movement, the interim constitution recognized us as 'indigenous people' for the first time in history. Nevertheless, due to the aged long cultural hegemony, our originality was almost in the state of extinction. Hence, few youths including me, gathered and discussed our culture and our indigeneity and decided to build a cultural museum in which Tharu artworks, textiles, sculptures, and traditionally used cultural assets were decided to exhibit. It was because, we wanted to preserve our culture and educate the Tharu people and other national minorities around us about the importance of culture, tradition, and identity. (Interview 1, 2019, a local Tharu Youth).

The early mission of the museum, according to this participant, was to educate the local Tharu people about the importance of traditions, culture, heritage and Tharu indigeneity through the museum work and to create a socio-cultural awareness in the community. This would ensure the past is preserved, and the present can be promoted for the future generations. It was also a way of self-determination, socio-cultural and political identification of the community since the community itself decides the activities and action plans. In the same manner, one of the local Tharu cultural activists explains:

> Our primary aim was to preserve the traditional Tharu culture and to raise cultural awareness among the Tharu community and our neighbouring national minorities such as Bote, Darai, Musahar, Chepang[11] and the others. We wanted to reveal our past endurances, discriminations, and persecutions to our younger generations and the other non-Tharu visitors. In the beginning, we tried to collect, create and recreate the traditional assets within this community because we had already lost many things from the past. We displayed them in the museum. We, even today, are trying to regenerate our past cultural assets and aspects, beliefs, and narratives from the elderly generations. At the same time, we are spreading our cultural identity, traditions, and knowledge systems through the museum practices. (Interview, 4, 2019, local Tharu woman).

According to her, Tharus wanted to obtain indigeneity because of the nation's assimilationist policies in the past, massive migration during the 1950s, bonded labour systems and various

[11] **The Chepang, Bote, Darai, Musahar** are the groups of national minorities. They are highly marginalized indigenous groups to the Terai. They share more or less same culture with the Tharus in Chitwan.

other historical persecutions against the national minorities. For that, Tharus are trying to rediscover their past traditions with the help of production and reproductions of cultural heritage, arts and artefacts, stories, objects, and images in order to display them in the museum. Similarly, one of the participants, the museum staff, also explained that:

> . . . whatever things we have in the exhibition in this museum are locally produced and reproduced by this community itself. Local people and the board of the museum management community collectively choose the objects, artefacts, archival, paintings etc. as per the historical and cultural values on them and decides to collect and display them. (Interview, 2, 2019, a museum staff, A)

Since the museum was established in the periods when the national minority groups in the country were ardent in vitalizing their traditions and cultures socially and politically, the promotion of Tharu cultural identity and self-determination were also the aims of this museum. The exhibition and safeguarding the material objects and the cultural antiquities in the museum value the social recognition of the Tharu culture and identity. Social anthropologist, Sharon Macdonald (2006) opines that:

> In many ways, the museum is an institution of recognition and identity *par excellence*. It selects certain cultural products for official safe-keeping, for posterity and public display – a process which recognizes and affirms some identities . . . this is typically presented in a language spoken through architecture, spatial arrangements, and forms of the display as well as in discursive commentary of fact, objectivity, superior taste, and authoritative knowledge. (4)

As Macdonald (2006) remarks, the exhibition of culturally valued objects, architects, artifacts, and customary community products are always in priority of the cultural museums. In relation to the Tharu Cultural Museum being a community-based institution, the safeguarding of the Tharu pasts, and conserve it for the future are the priority issues. Additionally, encouraging the community and other marginalized neighboring indigenous minorities in social participation, museums have now been playing a vital role in community culture development.

Elizabeth Crooke (2006), in relation to the roles of museums, states that ". . . [the] museums have now become a means to reach some of the goals of community development, such as encouraging participation of the marginalized and excluded, promotion of opportunities for self-help, and a means to bring about changes that can lead to greater social equality" (179). The Tharu cultural museum, in this regard, not only aims at creating and recreating cultural values and meanings through material display, but also aims at obtaining socially recognized Tharu cultural identity and affirming the greater social cultural equality in the country.

5.3 Museum Exhibitions

This museum contains objects associated with the Tharu people who inhabited the southern low land from the East to the West of the country and in particular the Chitwania Tharus. The displays contain the historical past, the early situation of their inhabitation around/in the dense forest in the Terai (the lowland). Tharu lives before and after the Chitwan National Park (estd.1973 AD), the 19th century's nationalist driven assimilationist policies, and the Malarial period (until the late 1950s) in the Terai region, have also been visualized in the exhibitions and the archives in the museum. Moreover, the exhibitions contain the 1950s' massive migration of the hill people and its adverse effects to their descent lands as soon as the endemic malaria came into control, including deforestations, displacement and dislocation due to making Chitwan National Park including their residential areas and the local people's transcribed endurances. The exhibition contains the varieties of textiles/costumes, wooden and stone inscriptions, stone and wooden tools, baskets made of bamboo, fishing nets and other livelihood material objects including the traditional artworks.

This museum also represents the Tharu culture, identity, indigenous knowledge systems, and ways of living, exhibiting cultural heritage, arts and architects including occasional cultural performances. The different thematic aspects of the museum exhibitions can be classified in lifestyles, architecture, costumes and ornaments, beliefs and festivities, and photography and archival. A traditionally architected shed with a traditional rice beater (called *Dhiki*) inside it and a wooden wheeled bull cart next to a pigeon cage at the entrance of the museum, welcome the visitors. The main building designed in traditional engineering of Tharu architect is colorfully painted and decorated in traditional Tharu styles of house painting. According to one of the staff of the museum it has a great meaning to Tharus. They continue painting the houses for both decorative as well as religious purposes. The staff states, "the Tharus believe that the God of Prosperity (*Lakshmi*) loves the house with the paintings. Tharus also traditionally believe that in the houses without paintings, a half kg of rice is lost every day" (Interview, 2, 2019, museum staff/curator 'A'). She further explains that:

> . . . most often we use locally available materials such as different colours of clay, instruments, and other colours that are locally available for the paintings. We paint the houses throughout the year but mainly during the festive seasons. Especially during the

> Tharu festival, *Soharai*[12] [also called Tihar] these activities are done in our community. Tharus believe that it brings prosperity in the family and saves the houses from something bad. We are always living near the jungle and the Chitwan National Park is next to us. I don't know the scientific meaning behind it, but some Tharus also believe that it helps to save the houses from the wild animals as well. (Interview, 2, 2019, museum staff 'A')

Figure 4: An example of traditional house painting in the Tharu community. (Picture by the author, 2019)

Along with architectural practices prevalent in the community, the entrance of the museum exhibits a colorful design of house paintings. Moreover, the exhibition of the instruments that are used in fishing activities, photography of contemporary time and leisure activities, paintings of cultural ceremonies symbolize the Tharu ways of living and their lifestyles. Moreover, the musical instruments, wooden and stone carvings, ceramics and pottery, traditional cheese making vessels, and grinding mills made up of stone etc. exhibit the traditional art, material culture, food culture, and lifestyles.

[12] ***Soharai*** is one of the main festivals in the Tharu community. It is also called Tihar, a popular Hindu festival in Nepal. The Tharus celebrate this festival during the month of September/October. They decorate their houses and pray the God of prosperity, *Lakshmi* for fortunes, and the personal and family prosperity. (Koirala, 2016).

Figure 5: Traditional pottery and ceramics. (Picture by the author, 2019)

(Traditionally used ceramics, pottery, and cheesemaking wooden vessels, and the vessels that are used for keeping water.)

This museum is also rich in textile collections. Among other things, the various ornaments and jewelries especially used by the Tharu women, textiles, clothing, traditionally used ceremonial costumes are on display. Instruments that are used in traditional worship practices, and medicinal practices based on shamanism and wild plants and vegetations represents traditional Tharu beliefs, ceremonies, and practices. A detailed explanation of cultural practices and festivities with photography and the Tharu art works inside the museum exemplifies the essence, interest, and eagerness of the Tharu community in tradition, culture, indigeneity, and identity.

Figure 6: A woman sculpture in the Tharu cultural costume and ornaments. (Picture taken by the author, 2019)

For the local community, the museum is a cultural monument itself. Among other things it displays the Tharu costumes, livelihood tools, handicrafts, artefacts, photography, and archival. Tharu beliefs and ceremonies, festivals and festivities are represented by those material objects in the museum. With those exhibiting museum practices, the Tharu culture, traditions, heritage, indigenous knowledge system, cultural identity and indigeneity as a whole is trying to preserve, protect and promote. One of the research participants from the same community articulates that:

> It is our museum; it is for us and about us. Every Tharu people from this community take ownership of it because they have active participation in every events and occasions that are concerned with this museum. This museum contains our cultural heritage, traditional cultural arts, daily used instruments, past lifestyles, cultural dresses etc. It is helping us to preserve and promote our culture. Our future generation will also know about their socio-cultural past from the museum and continue our culture, identity and indigeneity for a long. They will also take ownership of it and contribute more to the Tharu culture. You know, when I enter the museum premises, I feel homely. I believe, for all of us, the museum is a cultural monument and to be preserved. (Interview, 3, 2019, a local Tharu youth).

This research participant was from the same community and was also one of the members of the very first museum management and housing construction committee. According to the participant, since the museum exhibits and displays their cultural heritage for the wider audience/visitors, it is a way of representing the Tharu culture, their indigenous ways of living as well as the narrations of the past from their own community perspectives. For this community, the museum is one of the most powerful means not only to represent the Tharu culture to a wider mass but also to preserve and promote their indigeneity and indigenous knowledge system.

5.4 Tharu Indigeneity and Indigenous Knowledge Systems

The Tharu community is rich in cultures, traditions, and heritage. Besides, organizing cultural performances and festivities, the museum, exhibiting traditional Tharu artworks and daily used household materials for example; textiles, baskets, sickles, fishing nets, *Janto* (traditional grinding mill/machine), *Dhiki* (a traditional rice beater), *Khatiya* (traditional bed), etc., displays the Tharu ways of living. For this community, the cultural museum has been a centre for community mobilization in cultural conservation activities to enhance their cultures, traditions, and indigeneity into the broader mass of people. One of my participants highlights the roles of this museum on conservation and transformation of their indigenous knowledge systems, and remarks that:

> . . . we know that, without our traditions, cultures, and ways of living, cannot identify ourselves as Tharus. Thus, the museum, since its inception, is prioritizing the reproduction of cultural artefacts, artworks, handicrafts, and other daily used materials. There are three different sub-groups under the elected board of management of the museum, for instance, cultural unit, technology/indigenous knowledge unit, and health unit. (Interview, 3, 2019, a Tharu Youth)

The participant further explains about the assigned roles and responsibilities of the three sub-groups/units and states that the cultural unit basically focuses on cultural performances, festivities, and celebrations, whereas the technology unit enhances the community participation in the reproduction of the traditional technology, for example, fishing nets, architecture, reproducing handicrafts, and others. Moreover, the health unit is constantly working on reviving traditional Tharu ways of treatment and herbal vegetation and plantations within the community. ". . . the control over the Malaria disease within the community using locally

available medicinal herbs and therapeutic techniques applied by the Tharu Guraus[13] [the traditional Tharu healers] before the government took action during the 1950s against it is, I think, one of the best examples to prove our traditional ways of healing practice" (Interview, 3, 2019, a local Tharu youth).

Figure 7: An instrument used in the traditional healing practices (picture by the author, 2019)

(An instrument that is used by both the Tharu folk dancers and the traditional healers, the Guraus or Guruwas.)

According to the director of the museum, during the major Tharu festivals, every year, the Tharus gather in the museum premises and make traditional Tharu foods and share them with each other. Non-Tharu locals are also invited to the festivities and other cultural programs. Cultural programs and performances are sometimes organized by the museum and not only on

[13] ***Guraus:*** *Guraus*, also known as *Guruwas*, are the traditional shamanic, spiritual, and faith healers. They practice the traditional therapeutic techniques. The medicinal herbs and especially the wild plants are used as medicine along with spiritual mantras. They also perform customary priestly roles and pray for the wellbeing of an individuals, and the family (Subedi, 2019).

Source:https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338227144_Medical_Pluralism_among_the_Tharus_of_Nepal_Legitimacy_Hierarchy_and_State_Policy.

the museum premises but also outside in the village and the Tharu cultural centers located within the community. One of the non-Tharu participants responds that "we are also informed and invited occasionally as guests or audiences in the Tharu cultural programs and performances. For me, it's an impressive step of the Tharus to promote their cultures and indigeneity harmonizing such a multicultural society like ours" (Interview, 10, a non-Tharu villager).

The traditional healing practice is very popular not only in the Tharu community but also in the other nearby communities. The specific role of the health unit of the museum is to conserve the *Gurau* Clinics and planting the medicinal plants and herbs used in the clinic. However, the new generation is sceptic towards the traditional healing practices popular mostly among the elderly generations. The director of the museum states:

> It was one of the major challenges to keep alive and transform the traditional healing practices to the next generations as indigenous knowledge. Therefore, from the beginning, we made a health unit and researched it locally and trained others who showed interest in it with the elderly *Guraus*. Now we are happy that it is in practice, though at a minimal level, in this Tharu community (Interview, 6, 2019, director of the museum).

The museum in this sense is a portrayal of the respective communities themselves, their cultures, histories, indigenous knowledge systems, and eventually the indigeneity within and outside the community. As the above-mentioned participant's remark, the Tharu Cultural Museum as a community institution exhibits Tharu cultures, traditions, and customary practices through the collected and re-generated collections from the local community.

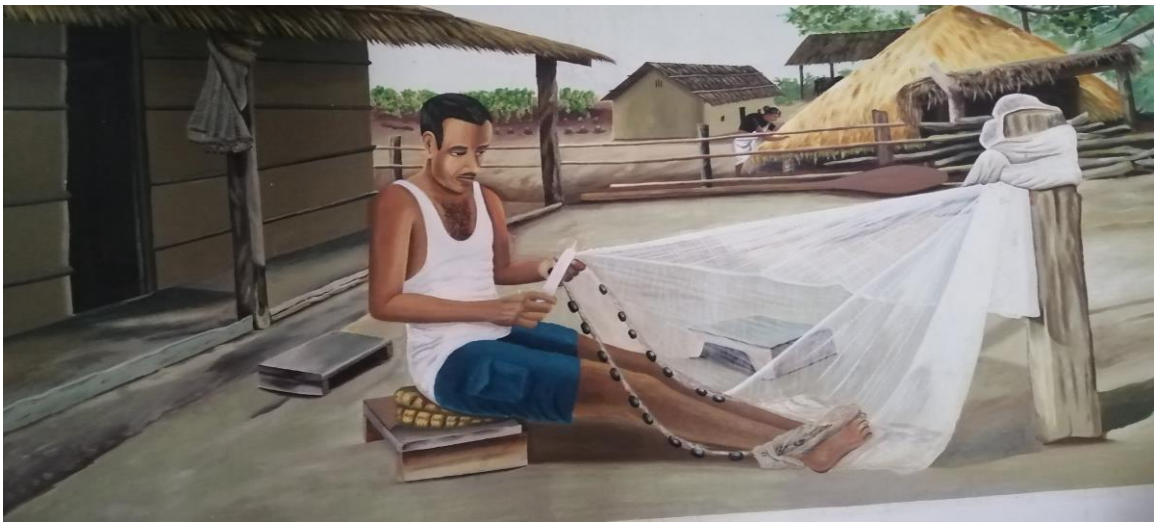

Figure 8: A man knitting fishing net (Picture by the author, 2019)

(It is a painting that was hanging on the wall of the museum, where a Tharu man is making/knitting a fishing net at home. Fishing is the traditional occupation of the Tharus.)

5.5 The Community Participation

"The community participation is an incredible characteristic and admirable part of the Tharu museum" (Interview, 10, 2019, a non-Tharu participant).

As a community-based museum, it's inclined to achieve the collective sense of self-respect, cultural identity, indigeneity, and self-determination through museum practices by ensuring collective participation in decision-making processes, festivities, production and reproduction of traditional cultural artifacts, heritage, and other day-to-day used materials. One of the non-Tharu research participants admires that,

> The managing body of the museum is successful enough to unite the Tharu community in their cultural conservation processes. The entire community participates in the cultural performances, festivities, artworks, and art competitions that are organized by the museum. Even the youngsters seem to be interested in cultural programs and performances. I have seen so many school students participated in Tharu stick dance, art and drawing competitions including other cultural performances" (Interview, 11, 2019, a non-Tharu villager).

He, further as an answer to my question about the motivation of the community to take part in such programs, states that:

> . . . the raising cultural awareness among the national minority groups in the country especially after the Peoples' Movement-II (2005/2006) is one of the inspiring factors for the community participations. Especially in context to this community and the museum, this museum has undoubtedly a vital role in community mobilization in community development through cultural conservation processes. (Interview, 11, 2019, a non-Tharu villager).

In the same vein, according to a local Tharu youth, this museum, as community property, from the very beginning, focused more on community participation in policy formation and its implementation in relation to community development through museum practices. "Apart from organizing festivals collectively on the museum premises, it also conducts regular cultural performances with Stick dance especially for the tourists in the cultural centers in the village, Sauraha" (Interview,1, 2019, a local Tharu villager). The director of the museum adds that, "these cultural performances, in one hand, help us to collect some revenue for the museum and, on the other hand, encourage the community especially the young generations to participate in cultural programs and performances" (Interview, 6, 2019, director of the museum). The director further remarks that, ". . . to engage the entire community and to promote traditional

ways of living, quite later, after opening this museum, decided to divide the villagers into three different groups (technology unit, health unit, and cultural unit) and assigned them to work accordingly on it " (Interview, 6, 2019, director of the museum). One of the youngsters from the community, responding my curiosity about the young generations' participation in museum activities, also remarks that, "me including my school friends often take part in cultural performances. Especially, I use to be participated in the Stick-Dance performance. Though it is difficult to learn, it is really interesting and popular among the young generations as well. Sometimes, other friends also take part in drawing competition, and art competition in the museum" (Interview, 13, 2019, a Tharu youngster). In this way, the Tharu Cultural Museum, tried to mobilize, participate, and make the community engaged in cultural conservation processes through the museum practices.

5.6 Summary

According to the participants above, they not only have their own communal cultural values and stories on the exhibited objects in the museum, but also have collective control over their cultural phenomena, self-esteem, self-respect, and the shared ownership. As a result, the common aim of self-governance, self-determination, and self-representation of the community can be obtained at the community level through the cultural museum practice. These components, at the same time, are the keys to individual and collective identity creation and cultural continuance.

Moreover, the cultural museum articulates indigenous peoples' perceptions about their cultural past and the present since it directly involves in production and reproduction of cultural heritages and their representation and interpretation along with the past narratives from their own perspectives. "The exhibitions [are] an exercise in community autobiography: the community select[s] its own stories, chose the objects and images to place on display, and provide[s] its own interpretation of past events and experiences" (Crooke, 2006, 176).

6 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the presented data is analyzed and interpreted drawing on the insights derived from 'the theoretical framework.' The concepts of 'community-based cultural museum practices', 'cultural revitalization', and 'cultural identity' are used to interpret the data from the fieldwork. The three different approaches of cultural museum practices- the traditional approach, the bottom-up approach, and the institutional approach, presented in the theory section of this project, serve as a theoretical framework. The literature related to the Tharu people, cultures, identity, and community museum practices back up the empirical data.

Since this project focuses on the roles and impacts of the cultural museum in the Tharu community, I have highlighted the Tharu people's stories and experiences. Tharu community and the local responses concerning it, have been assessed with the help of the interviews. The collected data have been analyzed and interpreted in different thematic sections to objectify the goals of the project and to answer the research questions.

6.2 The Tharu Museum as a Cultural Collection Centre

The collection, preservation, and display are the fundamental principles of museum practices (Macdonald, 2006 b). The act of collecting material objects was a basic characteristic of museums in the past. Also, today's collection practices in the museums evolve with the accumulation and collection activities of human civilization (Macdonald, 2006 b). From the earlier personal and private collection centres of the extractors, colonizers, elites, lords and the rulers, museums have evolved to play an important role in institutionalizing the concept of collection by recontextualizing the original contexts in the 'new context of the collection' (Mcdonald, 2006 b, 82). With the modern rise of the concept of community/cultural museums, the museums have taken control of the community's treasures, artworks, sculptures, heritage, and history and are thus representing public narratives from the community's perspective (Arinze, 1999). Similarly, Fiona McLean (1998) argues that:

> . . . museums generate representations and attribute value and meaning in line with certain perspectives or classificatory schemas which are historically specific. Thus, museums classify and constitute cultural difference systematically and coherently in accordance with a particular view of the world that emerges in a specific place, at a

> distinct historical moment and within a specific body of knowledge. (McLean, 1998, 247)

The museum collections and exhibitions, therefore, in specific cultural settings, are fundamentally connected to the meaning-making processes, since "the meaning of the object . . . is culturally constructed and changes from one historical context to another" (McLean, 1998, 247).

"Museum collections contain cultural materials [that] provide an invaluable educational resource through which people can learn about the values, practices, beliefs and traditions of their own and other cultures" (Simpson, 2009, 128). The Tharu Cultural Museum, as a community-owned indigenous cultural museum, not only displays the collected and regenerated material objects but also tries to find certain relations between the things and the community. For example, photography and translated scripts of the elderly Tharus' experiences on the exhibition are not solely objects but the powerful means of conveying the past for the future generations. A school student from the Tharu community remembers his experiences of visiting this museum and narrates that:

> I had been there several times especially on the occasions of festivals and other programs. Normally I didn't go inside, but once I went there with my school friends and a teacher. That day, I came to know many things about the Tharu culture. There are so many things which I had not seen before. There are also paintings and photographs. There are so many pictures about the migration, constructions of roads and houses, deforestation and cultivating lands etc. The stories and descriptions below and next to the pictures helped us to know about the past time. The artifacts, paintings and sculpture inside the museum are very beautiful. (Interview, 5, 2019, a Tharu youngster)

Even though, this museum has not moved so far from the exhibiting practices of the traditional museology, it has displayed various Tharu cultural materials collected from and revived by the community and educated the visitors about the Tharu culture and the past. As the above-mentioned school student remarks, the museum collections are the sources of educating history and understanding cultures. The museum itself represents the traditional architecture of the Tharus. By the exhibition practices, it values the things and objects on display and identifies them in a certain cultural setting. In this sense, the objects displayed in this museum do not remain as mere objects, but rather they represent the Tharu community, culture, heritage, traditions, ways of living as well as their past and present.

The museum exhibition is a powerful tool to recall the past where the stories are told and the layers of shared memories are uncovered (Crooke, 2006). "The museum exhibition draws

on nostalgia for past lives and harnesses this sentiment as a vehicle for political change" (Crooke, 2006, 175). As Crooke (2006) states, a community museum revisits the past and exhibits it in a new context of meaning creation within and outside the community. It fulfils the community interests of representation, identity creation, and cultural rejuvenation through the objects on display. For instance, the Tharu Cultural Museum reflects the marginalized historical past of the Tharus, massive migrations of the 1950s and its consequences, indigenous ways of living through the material objects, paintings, archives, and photographs.

In other ways, this museum itself is an example of the community taking control over their own presentations and interpretations since the museum curators and the management body both are from the same Tharu community. In this sense, the museum exhibition, for the community, provides a collective sense of pride, the value of identity, and encourages the community bindings for self-esteem and collective empowerment (Crooke, 2006). The museum no longer remains as a place where cultural materials are gathered, rather it provides meanings to the objects in relation to the Tharu culture, history, and ways of living.

6.3 Interrelationships between the Museum and the Tharu Community

The cultural museums today, unlike the traditional aspects of museum practices, no longer remain as mere collection centres, but pursue interconnections between the community, peoples' culture and the museum. The cultural museums emphasize the interconnectedness between the community and the museums with due focus on the social roles of the museum. Museums and communities are inseparable components since the mission of cultural museums is community development and identity creation through culture in an autonomous community setting (Fuller, 1992). However, Simpson (2009) observes the challenges that occurred in the cultural museum practices and highlights the role of the museums and the museum staffs in the community cultural development, and state that:

> In the twenty-first century museums can play a new role in supporting and contributing to processes of cultural renewal. This involves serious consideration of why we preserve things and for whom. It requires museum staff to look beyond the walls of their own institutions and the local community and recognize the values and needs of source communities, and to consider the contribution that museums can make to society as a whole, not just to museum visitors and the academic community. (Simpson, 2009, 128).

The Tharu Cultural Museum and Research Centre, as a community-owned indigenous cultural museum, is concerned with the Tharu culture, and the community locally inhabited in Sauraha Chitwan. It has grown up as a symbol of the Tharu culture and indigeneity since it has tried to collect and display the discriminatory past events, incidents, and historiography through the cultural artefacts, inscriptions, and archives collected and regenerated from the community. The curator of the museum, in line with the above argument, insists:

> . . . this museum displays the collected material objects from the village. Some of the materials are made by the elderly people from our community. The photographs and the captions or short stories behind them are collected and researched by the museum itself. The pottery, sculptures, and textiles are also made by the villagers. There are few Tharus who can work with ceramics, pottery and made sculptures. There are so many pictures about the migrations, and deforestation in our areas. You know that these things help us to revisit our past. The material objects symbolize our culture, and traditions. It gives us a sense of collective belongings. When someone visits this museum, they also know about Tharus, and Tharu culture, traditions, and painful days of our parents and grandparents. It also unites the Tharus together to rediscover, preserve and promote the Tharu culture, traditions, and artworks, which were under threat of gradually losing in the past and even today. (Interview, 7, 2019, museum staff 'B').

According to this museum staff, the museum shares the collective past of the Tharus and expresses a sense of collective belonging. In this manner, the cultural museum itself creates a community that shares the same sorts of socio-historical and cultural past in the socio-political history of a particular geographical location and the ways of livings (Crooke, 2006). This museum, thus, symbolizes not only the Tharu culture of Chitwan district but also the other Tharus who inhabit in other districts throughout the southern low land, Terai.

This museum as a community-based indigenous cultural museum combines local knowledge and resources in its collection management, exhibition practices, and their interpretations. Community participation in each and every events and decision-making process motivates both the community and the museum in cultural preservations and continuance. It has tried to cover all the cultural and traditions, heritage, lifestyle, and Tharu narratives in its exhibitions. The director of the museum remarks that:

> It encourages our community to participate in every decision-making processes and cultural productions and reproductions including the selection of the cultural artefacts and objects collectively to display in the museum. The management body is always trying to motivate the community to participate in cultural conservation process and museum activities often organizing food festivals and folk songs and folk dance. To encourage the youngsters and even the elderly people, we make art works competition and handicrafts competition between the women. The winner is rewarded. We are doing

> these activities because, we want active community participation, self-esteem, and cultural pride among us. (Interview, 6, 2019, director of the museum).

According to him, establishing and developing a cultural museum in a specific area is an opportunity to recapture the community spirit of the area in cultural promotion, protection, and transformation for future generations. It is possible with the community participation in creating and re-recreating the seemingly lost cultural past of the community.

This museum was established in the midst of the pacification of ten years long Maoist's insurgency (1994/5 to 2005/6) in the country. Related to this, it is important to see the essence and importance of establishing a cultural museum in the Tharu community. During 2005/2006, the cultural movements from every part of the country emerged and so did the Tharu people from the Terai region in order to recreate their cultural identity and indigenous heritage which was threatened already before than the 19th century. After the assimilationist policy of the late 19th century, the nationalist movement during the 20th century affected more on the loss of their indigeneity since they have been categorized as a slave-able caste and endured bonded slavery until the decade of 2000s.

The 1950s' massive migration forced Tharus to be displaced from the original places. "Now the Tharu in the Chitwan region have become a minority in their own land owing to the migration of hill people after the apparent eradication of malaria. This demographic transformation has dramatically influenced their traditions" (McLean, 1999, 39). Due to multiple reasons, they had to lose their traditionality and indigenous knowledge system. The development of the museum, therefore, has become a common ground to recall the past and to revitalize the cultural identity through cultural revival, preservation, protection, and promotion among the wider mass of audience. As the bottom-up approach principally focuses, this museum performs as a collective symbol of the Tharu culture of the community where the past endurances can be uncovered, and history can be revisited.

Regarding community museums and their relationship with that specific community, cultural anthropologist Crooke (2006), remarks that "the public and shared recollection of events in a museum space empowers and changes how that past is understood. What caused people to feel shame now evokes pride; closed memories have now become open and shared; and a fragile people are becoming a stronger community" (175). In line with this argument, one of my research participants states that:

> This museum has been commonplace to gather, recall and share our collective past to the young generations. The elderly people share their past life experiences, we transcribe them into different archives and place them in the museum. It an opportunity for the younger generations to know about our past and present, and to understand the importance of culture and cultural identity. Besides, it encourages our community to sustain our culture and cultural history for today and tomorrow. (Interview, 8, 2019, an adult local Tharu)

The Tharu cultural museum has been a location where local people can be reminded of the past and feel comfortable in the present. As Crooke (2006) remarks, a community in a local level context is based on only a few certain shared collective characteristics, cultures, and ways of livings where the museums, heritage, and monuments symbolize the community and express a sense of collective belongings. Moreover, it reminds us of the potential of museums and the museum's collections in 'community construction and consolidation' (Crooke, 2006, 174). In this sense, the community builds a museum, and the museum creates an empowered and stronger community that can speak against the prejudices, negligence, and discriminations against them, and creates a collective identity through the shared memories, memorials, and heritages. Moreover, the community itself have been actively participated in cultural activities that enhances the cultural learning with the creative articulation of the respective culture, arts, festivities, and traditions through museum practices.

6.4 The Role of the Tharu Cultural Museum in Cultural Revitalization and Identity Creation

Figure 9: Tharu cultural dance. Source: https://samratgroup.org/blog/tag/chitwan.

A cultural museum, as an agent to social change, acts as a community contact zone and knowledge center since it represents the past in the present and aims to unite the shared cultural community (Fuller, 1992). Unlike the traditional aspects of museology practices, a museum, as an indigenous community cultural institution, concerns issues of community cultural development, social reintegration, the process of cultural revitalization, preservation, promotion and continuation to create a share communal-cultural identity (Simpson, 2009). Especially in indigenous cultural settings, a community-based museum has its own responsibilities towards the society and the community in conservation, promotion, revival, and continuity of the culture and heritage to provide the meaning of community identity and indigeneity. Cultural revitalization as a process through museology practices is possible with community participation, collaboration, and self-representation in which the past is seen from the community cultural perspective.

The concept of cultural revitalization is widened further after the 1960s/70s since research within anthropology, sociology, and museology began to look upon the marginalized issues and incidents and revisited the past from the minority perspectives. It has emerged as a movement that brings significant changes in a culture in a community that shared the same socio-historical, cultural past. "A revitalization movement is defined as a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture" (Wallace 1956, 265). From the socio-cultural perspective, revitalization implies significant changes in socio-cultural institutions and the social recognitions regarding the cultural history and rejuvenated social present. It is necessarily not a rupture but rather a mode of revisiting the past and continuance of the cultural past systematically and deliberately. Cultural continuance can deliberately be achieved through the process of revitalization.

Museums in general and community-based cultural museums in particular, remained at the core of cultural revitalization, preservation, and continuance, since the museum collections, their presentations, and interpretations inseparably linked to the formation of communal identity (McLean, 1998). The community-based museum often tends to demonstrate traditions, ethnic historiographies, and ways of life in contemporary societies. The representation of indigenous identity through culture is a dominant theme in such community museums (Sunaga, 2018). Cultural museums and collection centers have been perceived as cultural 'contact

zones', collective grounds for peoples, ideas, arts and artefacts, and cultural heritages (Pieris, 2016).

The community-controlled indigenous museum as a social and cultural institution is not merely concerned about the exhibition and preservation of the cultural collections but also have some sort of responsibilities for the community. The Tharu Cultural Museum performs certain roles to the community in an organized way. Compared to the worldwide indigenous cultural movements and development of indigenous cultural museums, this museum has been established distinctively late, though it is one of the pioneer indigenous cultural museums in Nepal. However, it is determined to guarantee public participation in cultural productions, selections and exhibition of the cultural artefacts, heritage, and traditions.

The institutional approach highlights issues of collaborative exhibitions and collection management, self-representation, and community participation in the decision-making process. Referring to the Native American culture museum and Lenape identity, David J. Minderhout & Andrea T. Frantz (2008) state that:

> By the 1980s, there was a trend toward building museums around 'indigenous knowledge', which purported to capture the 'real lives' of other cultures as opposed to Western stereotypes. Museums sought to educate the viewing public about other cultures using what were thought to be less ethnocentric perspectives. Museums increasingly turned to outreach programs to take their message of the appreciation of cultural diversity into classrooms and other settings. (128)

In the same vein, the Tharu Cultural Museum was also established to enhance the social and cultural issues and ideas of the indigenous Tharu community through the exhibitions of the Tharu indigenous knowledge system and socio-cultural past and present. With the help of the materials on display, it further explores the enduring prejudiced and marginalized past of the Tharus to the wider audiences. The archives, photographs, and paintings on display in the museum reflect the real lives of the Tharus during the periods of assimilation, migrations, and displacement from their original place of living. These exhibitions enforced the visitors to revisit the past and acknowledge the Tharu endurances and, at the same time, it urges to be critical about the othering stereotypical perspectives of the majority that was in practice in the past. As a result, it incredibly leads us/the viewers to the state of appreciation of the cultural diversity (David J. Minderhout & Andrea T. Frantz 2008). In this point, the cultural exhibitions in the museum not only give community perspectives about the Tharu historical past at present but also dismantles the othering stereotypes of the majority.

As highlighted earlier, the concept of the community-based museum management has endorsed the local community participation in every events, incidents, and decision that are related to the museum and the community. One of my research participants from the same community remarks that:

> The Tharu Cultural Museum and Research Centre, from the very beginning, has successfully united the Tharu community emotionally, culturally, and socially. There is a museum management committee elected by the community and two staffs are working to facilitate visitors at the museum and taking care of the exhibitions. Most of the exhibitions are collected, recreated, reformed by the community itself. It is in our own land. The local Thraus decide themselves what to do and what not to do for the community and the museum. (Interview, 8, 2019, an adult local Tharu)

As this participant says, the Tharu community is self-decisive about their cultural productions, reproductions, and continuance for the future. Since the country is committed to republican democracy, they are strong enough to have their socio-cultural life within and beyond the community. The Tharu cultural museum seems to encourage more consciousness about public participation and community engagement. It not only has ensured community participation in the museum works and decision making but also given space for continuous development of the Tharu culture.

The Tharu peoples are rich in culture, traditions, and festivities. They recognized that the traditions, rites, rituals, costumes, and festivities are the sources of cultural identity. Cultural resilience and revitalization as some of the most important objectives that the Tharu cultural museum from its very beginning try to organize cultural performances occasionally. According to the director of the museum:

> … most often during the major Tharu festivals such as Jitiya Parba , Maghi Parba , Soharai Parba and Phaguwa Parba the museum organizes some cultural dances such as Stick Dance, Rasdhari dance, Tharu folk songs, folk music, and other cultural performances. We wear cultural costumes, ornaments, and jewelry during the festivities. We also serve our traditional cultural food items, for example, ghongi, chitcher and other food items, on that day (Interview, 6, 2019, director of the museum).

Through these festivities and cultural performances, the museum unites the community and spreads a message that culture is important as it is one of the identity markers among the younger generations. It is important to engage the younger generation in such cultural events in order to preserve and continue traditions, festivities and Tharu culture as a whole. An elderly Tharu cultural activist who was skeptical about the perceptions and participation of the younger generations in cultural activities and traditional practices remarks that,

> …our grandchildren, you know, the school children, are not so much interested in traditional practices, festivals, rites and rituals. A few years back this situation was more vulnerable. Many of the younger children didn't even prefer the Tharu language at their home. Tharu costumes, ritual practices, and festivities were also not in priority. But recently after 2006/7, our community started organizing cultural activities in an organized way. The local youths actively took part. Cultural organizations for example the museum, cultural centres also encouraged local people in cultural programs. But now I have seen that even the school children show interest in cultural performances like Tharu dances, folk songs, and some other art activities. (Interview, 12, 2019, an elderly Tharu)

According to him, the cultural museum and cultural centres established and developed in the community are crucial enough to spread cultural awareness within the community among the people of all generations. As he remarks, during the first decade of 2000, the community participation in social-cultural activities has significantly increased. Many cultural institutions such as museums, cultural centres, souvenir shops etc. were also significantly increased in the indigenous national minority groups and the communities throughout the country. It creates a sense of belonging and more importantly, a strong sense of ownership in such cultural institutions like museums and cultural centres. This ultimately leads the community towards the cultural continuance and resilience of the discriminatory past. An elderly Tharu from the same community articulates that,

> This cultural museum is an example of our community effort to safeguard our cultural products and bringing back the Tharu culture through the production and reproductions of the cultural assets. We believe that, if we do not save our culture, art-works, and heritages, we will definitely lose our culture, we lose our identity, and after few decades there will be no single who identifies himself as a Tharu" (Interview, 9, an elderly Tharu, 2019).

The elderly Tharu is seemingly worried about the transformation of their culture and cultural identity in future generations. He focuses more on the preservation, protection, and regeneration of their cultural heritage with the help of community awareness and a sense of ownership among the people in the community. He believes this is possible through the multiple cultural programs that have been organized by the museum and the museum exhibitions.

According to the research participants discussed above, besides representing the community collections of arts, objects, traditional instruments, daily used materials, and many more, this museum itself has been engaged with other cultural programs and performances. It has continuously been organizing artworks, festivities, cultural dance, traditional food

festivals, and occasional cultural performances within and outside the museum premises from its early days of opening. Birendra Mahato and Sanjay Mahato (2010), the leading members of the museum, also remark that:

> The museum is most successful in the regular presentation of the Tharu stick dance, which is performed every night for the tourists who visit the Chitwan National Park. The continuation of the performances has contributed to the preservation of the objects used in the dance such as *dholak*, *danphu*, stick, *khanzari*, etc. . . . the dance collects a substantial amount of funds for community development and has made the artists financially self-reliant. (Mahato & Mahato, 2010, 124)

Evidently, this shows a close tie between the community and the museum. Moreover, these events and performances are remarkable efforts not only to conserve community collections but also Tharu indigeneity and indigenous knowledge systems. In this sense, this museum is helpful enough to revive their traditions, cultures, heritages, sense of indigeneity, and the Tharu identity.

6.5 Summary

This chapter discussed the roles of a community-based cultural museum in cultural revival, conservation and promotion in historically marginalized indigenous Tharu people. I argued that the Tharu cultural museum for this community is a conduit for harnessing their past and creating cultural identity through museum practices. This museum was not established in a vacuum rather there were multiple events especially before the 2000s, which had forced the Tharu community into marginalization, dispossession, and displacement. Among other events I discussed the severe effects on Tharu traditions and cultures caused by the centuries long assimilationist policies and practices, discriminatory bonded labour system, the 1950s massive migrations, and the endemic malarial period.

In discussing the roles of the museum in Tharu cultural revitalization and identity creation I highlighted the three different aspects of museology practices. The first section dealt with the traditional aspect of museum as an avenue for cultural exhibition. However, I highlighted the role of the display/exhibition of this museum in cultural promotion and transformation. The museum exhibition does not remain in displaying material objects from the past rather it re-discovers the past where the stories are told, and the collective memories are rediscovered. Moreover, it revisits and redefines the past from the community perspectives.

It harnesses the Tharu cultural identity through reviving the Tharu traditions, customs, artworks, paintings among other things by the exhibition practices in the museum.

In the second section I highlighted the bottom-up approach of the cultural museum practices to discuss interrelationships between the Tharu museum and the community. I argued that museum and community are inseparable components since a cultural museum works 'for', 'in' and 'with' the community. With the help of the museum practices, a cultural museum creates a sense of collectivity or a small community with common shared history and memories. The Tharu cultural museum working with the Tharu community in Chitwan not only shared the stories of the Chitwania Tharus but also the entire Tharu communities scattered throughout the southern low land in the country as they faced the same historicity in the past. The sense of collectivity motivates the community participation in both museum practices and the museum in community development.

Finally, I discussed the roles of the Tharu cultural museum as a cultural institution. I argued that this museum for this community is a community contact zone, a collective ground for ides, peoples, culture, and heritage. Moreover, this museum as a cultural institution healed the communal trauma, challenged the negative stereotypes that were associated to the Tharus revisiting and re-interpreting the past through museum practices. Gaining community supports and active participation in every events and occasions that the museum conducted, it revitalizes and safeguards the Tharu traditions, and cultures, and promotes for the future generations. In this way, the museum itself has been a cultural asset, and center for Tharu cultural activities. In addition to this, as a cultural institution, this museum is an inspiration for the other adjacent ethnicities and indigenous groups of peoples in the country for their cultural conservation and transformation, which is possible through community initiation, and involvement as in this museum.

7 CONCLUSION

This research endeavor has attempted to address the main research question of which ways does the Tharu Cultural Museum and Research Centre, as a community-based museum, negotiate and revitalize meanings of the Tharu cultural identity. I have tried to address the main research question by foregrounding the history of marginalization, dispossession, and dislocation of Tharus in the past. In addition to this, I have assessed the ways and efforts that the museum has made possible the remaking a specific community cultural identity through protecting and reproducing its treasured stories/histories, artifacts, costumes, traditions, and heritage as community museological practices. Additionally, I sketch out why they lost many of their indigenous traditions, arts and architects, language, and cultures. This thesis, further has focused on how the museum helps the community to preserve, protect, and transmit the Tharu culture and identity for future generations. The brief plotline of the socio-political and cultural history in the background chapter, with the focus on the issue of the marginalization of the Tharus, showed the reasons of how their indigeneity had/has been severely threated by historic assimilation, dispossession and dislocation.

Until 2000, as previously mentioned, Nepali politics ignored national minorities and indigenous groups (Gellner, 2007). The legacy of the hegemonic and autocratic Rana Regime (1846-1951) and centuries long assimilationist policies still continued until the abolition of the monarchy in 2006. The Ranas ruled the country by orthodox Hindu notions making the caste-based civil and criminal law, the General Legal Code of 1854, categorize the Nepali society into two categories; the enslavable and non-slaveable caste (Gellner, 2007; Onta, 2006). Tharus were dubbed to be an enslaveable group of people, among other national minorities. As a result, the bonded labour system began legally in the Terai regions and lasted all the way up until April 2000. Moreover, the 1950's malaria eradication program in Terai invited a massive migration from the hill to their land. As a result, the Tharus from the Chitwan area were displaced "in some cases whole villages of Tharus moved further on, to the far west Terai of Nepal, for example, where there was still virgin forest" (Gellner, 2007, 1824). Adding to this, in 1973 the government established the Chitwan National Park in their original areas of residence, and they were forcefully dislocated. Eventually, the consequences ended up with the stigmatized intergenerational trauma and severely threatened of their originality, indigeneity,

traditional cultures, and heritage on the one hand and their social cultural and political rights and representations on the other.

Indeed, in the decade of 2000 Nepal witnessed a great political and cultural movement and it ended up obliterating the centuries-long autocratic monolithic Hindu monarch reinforcing the democratic multi-party political system in the country. With the People's Movement-II, the restored house of representative promulgated the Interim Constitution of Nepal and declared the country as a Federal Democratic Republic. Hence, all the Nepali nationalities got equal rights to take part in politics and rule the nation for the first time in history. Additionally, the nation had also been declared as a secular and multiethnic, multicultural, and multireligious country. As a result, socially, culturally, politically suppressed, marginalized, and neglected national minorities and indigenous groups of people, including Tharus, came up with their issue of cultural identity, revitalization along with the issue of their socio-political rights, recognition, and representation. Along with these previous socio-political achievements, the Tharu community also got rid of the centuries-long bonded labour system as the government outlawed the system in 2000.

Consequently, with the affirmations of the socio-political changes in the early decade of 2000, many of the indigenous nationalities came to realize that they had to conserve their seemingly lost traditions, cultures, heritages and revitalize the meanings of cultural identity for the future generations through conservation and restoration practices. In the context of the Tharu community in central Terai, their involvement in other socio-political activities at community, regional, and national levels for their cultural rights and representations, they became equally involved in cultural restoration, regeneration, and conservation practices. At the same time, the community leaders and social-cultural activists realized the essence of community awareness about their social, cultural and political rights, identity, cultures, and heritage. As a result, many of the local Tharu youths from the community gathered and decided to build a community cultural museum so that they could preserve, protect and revive their Tharu indigeneity through museum practices such as exhibition/display, interpretations, promotions, and spread cultural awareness among the community through festivities, cultural celebrations and performances, artworks and competitions. Initiated by local youth, the Tharu Cultural Museum and Research Centre was established in 2005 at the core of the Tharu village, Bachchheuli, Sauraha, Chitwan.

As discussed in the preceding paragraphs, the affirmative social and political changes motivated the marginalized groups of people, national minorities and indigenous people to raise the issues of cultural identity, social and political rights, recognition, and inclusive representation. In the midst of these events and circumstances the local community built this museum. A main purpose of the museum was to spread knowledge and awareness about the Tharu culture, traditions, heritage and the Tharu indigeneity, and educating the Tharu community. Additionally, as a community-based cultural museum, the main goal was not only to educate the community about their culture and identity but also to create an inclusive community engagement and participation in every museum activity. This led to cultural empowerment and self-reliance, as pressing concerns in an indigenous community, through reproducing and reviving cultural stories, artifacts, traditions, and heritage was also the major concerns of the museum.

To assess the community goals of cultural protection, continuation, and revitalization of the meaning of the Tharu cultural identity of this museum, I have chosen three analytical approaches of cultural museology practices. These approaches are the traditional exhibition approach, bottom-up approach or a community-based practice, and institutional approach focusing on the role of a museum as a cultural institution. I chose these because they helped me to shed light on the development of the museum. This museum, for example, displays the community products of traditional cultural material objects arts, paintings, and photographs collected, created and rediscovered with the community involvement to enhance their cultures and traditions and eventually Tharu identity and indigeneity. Understanding museums as avenue for cultural material conservation, this museum further tries to preserve and promote the Tharu culture through displaying cultural material objects and the various cultural programs and performances, for instance, occasional Tharu stick-dance, traditional art workshops, and competitions between the locals, including the other festival-based cultural programs and performances.

Traditions and traditional cultures, indigenous ways of doing things, customary practices, cultural heritage, festivities, arts, and architectures etc. are of course valued as common defining features of the indigenous community. With the exhibition practices, as a community-based indigenous museum, it mediates spreading Tharu indigeneity through the various cultural exhibitions, artworks and artifacts, customary and livelihood objects. It helps

the community to bring up the public attention towards their distinct cultures, heritage and the Tharu indigeneity as a whole, as "it is often implicitly assumed that indigeneity refers to characteristics attributable to indigenous peoples" (Merlan, 2009, 319).

Similarly, collective participation is another exemplary feature of this museum. From its inception, the local community has always been a subject of priority. The management body and the museum curators are also from the same community. Additionally, to ensure community ownership among the community members, and to conserve traditions and traditional knowledge, the museum has developed the three different units that focus on culture, technology, and health, and the community work on it. According to the research participants, more than fifty community members have been engaged in these three units. On the one hand, it creates a close tie between the museum and the community, and on the other, it preserves, protects, revives, and transforms the traditional cultural knowledge of the Tharu people and the community to the next generations.

The museums can also be seen as "empowering institutions that have provided the people of the area with a renewed and positive sense of identity and improved self-esteem" (Crooke, 2006, 176-77). This museum, as an indigenous cultural institution, occasionally organizes the Tharu festivities, art and drawing competitions, cultural performances on the museum premises. It not only gathers/invites the local Tharus but also the non-Tharus residing in the same locality. Such practices create a social harmony in community, society and the nation, which could be a building block of the nation buildings in such a culturally diversified country. It further motivates both the community and the museum to help each other in the Tharu cultural preservation, promotion, continuance, and in the process of revitalizing meanings of the Tharu cultural identity. This museum, thus, as an empowering institution to the community, stimulates cultural awareness and provides a positive sense of self-esteem and cultural empowerment.

Since the museum was established along with the hearth of the social cultural and political movements in the early years of the decade of 2000 in the country, Tharu identity, through cultural promotion and revitalization, was undoubtedly the prime concern. Nonetheless, cultural transformation was another equally important issue that the museum wanted to accomplish with involvement of the Tharu youths and youngsters. According to the

director of the museum, the youngsters were the targeted groups among the community for two reasons. First, they can potentially play a role to make a bridge between traditional culture and modernity, since the young generation is influenced more by modernity, urbanization, and technology. Secondly, they can act as potential agents for long run cultural development and social changes. Even though it was challenging to engage the youngsters in cultural preservation process, the museum successfully engaged them by organizing various cultural performances, artworks and competitions, festivities, and the heritage management activities. For example, in the Tharu stick-dance, a very popular group dance in the locality, many of the dancers are the school students/the youngsters these days who have continuously been trained by the museum. Additionally, the museum encourages the youngsters to take part in cultural performances that are performed and organized on the museum premises as a participant or as a performer. Through the occasional cultural artworks, and painting competitions among the school students, this museum it successfully able to guarantee the youngsters' active engagement and involvement in the process of cultural conservation. This museum is able to, through these activities of educating the young generation, transmit the Tharu cultural knowledges and the essence and importance of cultural preservation and continuance for their identity and indigeneity in the days to come.

In conclusion, the Tharu Cultural Museum and Research Centre, for the community, serves as an excellent example of the community efforts to preserve, promote and transmit cultures and traditions for the next generations. In other words, it is perceived as a community centre, and a contact zone for the community as it is successful enough to unite the entire community bestowing a sense of collective empowerment, community self-determination, self-respect, and community cultural identity. It can also be seen as a more inclusive gathering place for the community since the elderly, adults, youths, and youngsters are actively engaged and participate. Additionally, this museum has revisited and re-interpreted the formerly marginalized history of cultural dissolution, dispossession, and displacement through the exhibition, interpretations, and institutionalization of the Tharu culture, traditions, tangible and intangible heritage, artworks, paintings, photographs, and archives. In this regard, this museum contributes to remaking, negotiating, and revitalizing of the meaning of the Tharu cultural identity through museology practices.

However, since it is understood as a community-based cultural museum, and the fund is collected within the community, it is economically challenging to continue all those activities in future. At the same time, the infrastructures inside the museum also seemed to be reformed and renovated. Even though this museum is succeeding in community participation, cultural revitalization, promotion and conservation, I could recommend that the museum would play a significant role in preservation and promotion of the Tharu language. Moreover, I recommend the local governing body and education commission to include the indigenous issues, cultures, stories and concerns in the school curriculum system, so that the young generation can be educated and encouraged to be stakeholders and to control over their indigenous culture, heritage, and resources. Moreover, how the museum adopts modernity, and utilizes the modern techniques and technologies and encourages the young generation along with non-Tharu communities in collaborative museological practices, are the questions for further study.

LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Oral Interviews conducted in Bachahhauli, Chitwan.

Interview 1. An oral interview with a Tharu young man (August 2019).

Interview 2. An oral interview with a museum staff ‘A’ at the Tharu cultural museum (August 2019).

Interview 3. An oral interview with a local Tharu youth (August 2019).

Interview 4. An oral interview with a Tharu young woman (August 2019).

Interview 5. An oral interview with a Tharu youngster (August 2019).

Interview 6. An oral interview with the director of the museum at the museum (August 2019).

Interview 7. An oral interview with a museum staff ‘B’ at the Tharu cultural museum (August 2019).

Interview 8. An oral interview with a local Tharu adult (August 2019).

Interview 9. An oral interview with an elderly Tharu man (August 2019).

Interview 10. An oral interview with a non-Tharu villager (August 2019).

Interview 11. An oral interview with a non-Tharu villager (August 2019).

Interview 12. An oral interview with an elderly Tharu woman (August 2019).

Interview 13. An oral interview with a Tharu youngster (August 2019).

REFERENCES

Abt, J. (2006). The Origins of the Public Museum. *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Sharon MacDonald, ed., Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd,115-134.

Arinze, E. N. (1999). The Role of the Museum in Society. *President, Commonwealth Association of Museums.* Public lecture at the National Museum, Georgetown, Guyana, Monday, May 17.

Brady, M. J. (2011). Mediating Indigenous Voice in the Museum: Narratives of Place, Land, and Environment in New Exhibition Practice. *Environmental Communication*, Vol. 5, No. 2, June, 202-220.

Buckingham, D. (2008). *Introducing identity*. MacArthur Foundation Digital Media and Learning Initiative.

Carr-Locke, S.E. (2015). Indigenous Heritage and Public Museums: Exploring Collaboration and Exhibition in Canada and the United States. Simon Fraser University Institutional Repository. http://summit.sfu.ca/item/15622.

Chilisa, B. (2012). *Indigenous Research Methodologies*. London: Sage Publications.

Cox, T. (1990). Land Rights and Ethnic Conflict in Nepal. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25, 1318-20.

Crooke, E. (2006). Museums and Community. *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Ed. Sharon Macdonald. Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 170-185.

David J. Minderhout & Andrea T. Frantz (2008). The museum of Indian Culture and Lenape Identity. *Museum Management and Curatorship.* Vol 23.2, 119-133.

Forgan, S. (2005). Building the museum: Knowledge, conflict, and the power of place. *Isis, 96*(4), 572-585.

Fuller, N. J. (1992). The Museum as a Vehicle for Community Empowerment: The Ak-Chin Indian Community Ecomuseum Project. S.Watson, ed., *Museums and their Communities*. London and New York: Routledge, 327-365.

Ganga, K. C. (2019). Maghi: The Festival Among the Tharus: Celebration of New Year. *Patan Pragya*, *5*(1), 84-92.

Gellner, D. N. (1997). Ethnicity and nationalism in the world's only Hindu state. *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom: The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Nepal*. Eds. D. Gellner, J. Pfaff-Czarnecka, J. Whelpton. London & New York, Routledge, 3-32. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203059616.

Gellner, D. N. (2007). Caste, ethnicity and inequality in Nepal. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1823-1828.

Giri, B. (2009). The bonded labour system in Nepal: perspectives of Haliya and Kamaiya child workers. *Journal of Asian and African studies, 44*(6), 599-623.

Guneratne, A. (1998). Modernization, the State, and the Construction of a Tharu Identity in Nepal. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 57. 3 (August), 749-773.

Guneratne, A. (2002). Many Tongues, One People: The Making of Tharu Identity in Nepal. Ithaca & New York: Cornell University Press.

Hall, S., & Du Gay, P. (2006). *Questions of cultural identity*: Crane Resource Centre.

ICOM. (2007). The International Council of Museum Statutes (ICOM), adopted during the 21st General Conference in Vienna, Austria, 2007. http://icom.museum/thevision/museumdefinition.

Kalsås, Vidar F. (2015). Minority History in Museums between Ethnopolitics and Museology. *Nordisk Museologi*, 2, 33-48.

Koirala, I. (2016). *Indigenous cultural tourism in Chitwan, Nepal: obtaining sustainability in Tharu culture and tourism* (Master's thesis, UiT The Arctic University of Norway).

Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. Toronto: Toronto University Press.

Kreps, C. (1988). Decolonizing anthropology museums: the Tropen museum, Amsterdam. *Museum Studies Journal*, *3*(2), 56-63.

Kreps, C. (2006). Non-western models of museums and curation in cross-cultural perspective. *A companion to museum studies*, 457 - 472.

Kreps, C. (2008). Appropriate museology in theory and practice. *Museum Management and Curatorship*, *23*(1), 23-41.

Liamputtong, P. & Ezzy, D. (2005). *Qualitative Research Methods*. London: Oxford Publication.

Luders, C. (2004). Field observation and ethnography. *A companion to qualitative research*. Eds. Uwe Flick, Ernst von Kardorf and Ines Steinke. London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 222-229.

Macdonald, S. (2006 a). Expanding Museum Studies: An Introduction. *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Sharon Macdonald, ed., Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 1-13.,

Macdonald, S. (2006 b). Collecting Practices. *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Sharon Macdonald, ed., Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 81-97.

Mahato, S. & Mahato. B. (2010). Tharu Cultural Museum. *Community-Based Approach to Museum Development in Asia and the Pacific for Culture and Sustainable Developmen*t. Ed., Nao Hayashi Denis. UNESCO, Paris.

Maslak, M. A. (2003). *Daughters of the Tharu: Gender, Ethnicity, Religion, and the Education of Nepali Girls.* New York: Routledge Falmer.

McCarthy, M. (2011). Museums and Maritime Archaeology. *The Oxford Handbook of Maritime Archaeology*, ed. Alexis Catsambis, Ben Ford, and Donny L. Hamilton. Oxford: Oxford University Press,1032-1054.

McLean, F. (1998). Museums and the construction of national identity: a review. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 3(4), 244-252.

McLean, J. (1999). Conservation and the impact of relocation on the Tharus of Chitwan, Nepal. *HIMALAYA, the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies*, *19*(2), 8.

Merlan, F. (2009). Indigeneity: Global and Local. *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (June 2009), 303-333.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation.* 2nd ed, San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons. https://books.google.no/books?id=tvFICrgcuSIC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0.

Nepal Population Report (2011). Government of Nepal Ministry of Health and Population. Population Division Ramshahpath, Kathmandu, Nepal. http://www.nhssp.org.np/NHSSP_Archives/monitoring/Nepal_Population_Report_2011.pdf.

Nepal, A. (2021). Context of museology in social entrepreneurship IBS study in Nepal and Sandal Private Museum. *Access Journal, 2*(1), 5-16.

Neupane, D. P. (2019). *Impact of Tourism in Traditional Life Style: A Case study of Tharu Village in Nawalparasi, Nepal* (Master's thesis, Nord universitet).

NFDIN. (2003). *National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) An Introduction*. Kathmandu: NFDIN.

Nicholas, G. P. (2006). Second and Third Wave Indigenous Archaeology. *Paper presented at the Canadian Archaeological Association Annual Conference*, Toronto.

Nicholas, G. P. (2008). Native Peoples and Archaeology. *Encyclopedia of Archaeology*, Vol. 3. Editor, Deborah M. Pearsall. Elsevier: Oxford, University Press, 1660-1669.

Olsen, Trojer A. (2016). Responsibility, reciprocity and respect: On the ethics of (self-) representation and advocacy in Indigenous studies. *Ethics in Indigenous Research: Past experiences–Future Challenges.* Ed. Anna-Lill Drugge. Vaartoe–Centre for Sami Research. Umeå Universitet, 25-44.

Onta, P. (2006). The Growth of the Adivasi Janajati Movement in Nepal after 1990: The Non-political Institutional Agents. *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, *11*(2), 303-354.

Pieris, A. (2016). *Indigenous cultural centers and museums: An illustrated international survey*. Lanham, Boulder, New York & London: Rowman & Littlefield.

Rajaure, D. P. (1981). Tharus of Dang: The people and the social context. *Kailash*, 8, 155–181.

Ritchie, J. (2003). The Applications of Qualitative Methods of Social Research. *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. Eds. Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis. London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 24-46.

Routledge, P. (2010). Nineteen days in April: Urban protest and democracy in Nepal. *Urban Studies*, *47*(6), 1279-1299.

Sandell, R. (2003). Social inclusion, the museum, and the dynamics of sectoral change. *Museum and Society* 1, 45-62.

Sapkota, M. (2014). Contested identity politics in Nepal: implications from Tharu movement. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, *19*(7), 16-25.

Saugestad, S. (1998). Research on, with and by indigenous peoples. Reflections on the insider and the outsider perspectives in anthropology, with examples from the University of Tromso and the University of Botswana. *CHAGS*, Osaka, October, 1-8.

Simpson, M. (2001). *Making Representations: Museums in the Post-colonial Era*. London: Routledge.

Simpson, M. (2009). Museums and Restorative Justice: Heritage, Repatriation and Cultural Education. *Museum International* 61(1), 121-129.

Smith, C. (2008). The Survival of Indigenous Cultures. *Mundos Tribales: una visión etnoarqueológica. Eds.* J. Salazar, I. Domingo, J. Azkárraga, and H. Bonet. Valencia: Servicio de Publicaciones, 92-107.

Smith, Charles S. (1989). Museums, Artefacts, and Meanings. *The New Museology*. Ed. Peter Vergo. London: Reketion Books, 6-22.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies, Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Zed Books, New York.

Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing Methodologies, Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Zed Books, New York.

Stanton, J. E. (2011). Ethnographic Museums and Collections: from the Past into the Future. *Understanding Museums: Australian Museums and Museology*. Des Griffin and Leon Paroissien (eds). National Museum of Australia. https://nma.gov.au/research/understandingmuseums/JStanton_2011.

Subedi, B. (2019). Medical Pluralism among the Tharus of Nepal: Legitimacy, Hierarchy and State Policy. *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, *13*, 58-66.

Sunaga, K. (2018). Revitalization of Indigenous Culture and Community Museum: A Case Study of the Indigenous Ainu in Hokkaido, Japan. *Asian Journal of Tourism Research*, *3*(2), 45-65.

Teague, K. (1995). Tourism, Anthropology and Museums: Representations of Nepalese Reality. *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, (7), 41-62.

The Constitution of Nepal (2015). https://www.lawcommission.gov.np/en/archives/category/documents/prevailing-law/constitution/constitution-of-nepal.

The National Museum of Nepal (2020). http://www.nationalmuseum.gov.np/content.php?id=31.

Turner III, D. W. (2010). Qualitative interview design: A practical guide for novice investigators. *The qualitative report*, *15*(3), 754-760.

http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR15-3/qid.pdf.

Vergo, P. (1989). *The New Museology*. London: Reketon Books.

Verma, S. C. (2010). The Eco-friendly Tharu Tribe: A Study in Socio-cultural Dynamics. *Journal of Asia Pacific Studies*, *1*(2).

Wallace, Anthony F. C. (1956). Revitalization Movements. *American Anthropologist*, Apr. 1956, New Series, Vol. 58, No. 2, 264-281.

Walter, P. (2020). Community-based ecotourism projects as living museums. *Journal of Ecotourism*, *19*(3), 233-247.

Wegner, G. M. (1995). Cultural Cognition in Music: Continuity and Change in the Gurung Music of Nepal. *Notes, 51*(3), 964-966.

Wilson, S. (2001). What is an Indigenous research methodology? *Canadian journal of native education, 25*(2), 175-179.

Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is Ceremony.* Fernwood, Black Point, NS.