



## **Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Nepal: Exploring Indigenous Research**

### **Procedures in Shamanism**

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#### **Abstract**

By presenting Shamanism as a form and tradition of indigenous knowledge, this paper aims to reduce the uncertainties attached to the concept in common approaches to indigenous research. Most indigenist researchers, who are working to blend western and non-western ways of knowing, have inadequately explored indigenous research procedures. In order to understand indigenous research procedures in the Nepali multi-cultural context, using interpretive, critical and postmodern research paradigms, the authors engaged with indigenous elders and traditional healers, and observed cultural events like shamanic performances. This paper reveals how achieving a profound understanding of indigenous knowledge traditions will be an integral part of how researchers approach indigenous communities in future studies.

## **INTRODUCTION**

There has been a division and critical discussions between western educated and indigenist grounded researchers about how to approach multiple ways of knowing in diverse societies. Theorists and researchers in the study of decolonization have outlined indigenous and western knowledge as conflicting binaries. Smith (2005) criticized the west for disrupting traditional ways of knowing including stifling the “methodologies and approaches to research that privileged indigenous knowledge, voices and experiences” (p. 87). Similarly, Bantu researcher Chilisa (2012) expressed her dissatisfaction over Eurocentric research processes that disconnected her from the rich experiences of the cultural context to which she belonged. Some researchers further argued that indigenous communities are presented as objects of curiosity and

(passive) subjects of research that are displayed, to be seen but not asked, heard or respected (Martin, 2003).

Often, the west is blamed for continuing to colonize indigenous peoples and degrade indigenous ways of knowing. Colonialism also continues to be perpetuated by non-western scholars and professionals who remain influenced by western paradigms. On this, Chinn (2007) provides an example of Asian teachers who view indigenous knowledge as inferior to American knowledge. The ongoing critical debates about the dichotomy between western and indigenous ways of knowing have worked to expand the space for indigenous knowledge in international research communities. These research approaches have furthered discussion on the contribution of indigenous ways of knowing to research both with indigenous communities and towards decolonization. Even as this literature builds, it is still unclear how researchers can approach multifaceted and multidirectional indigenous communities.

Major aims of the existing research on decolonization include: making western researchers responsible to their native contexts (Lincoln & Gonzalez, 2008); putting indigenous people at the centre of research (Smith 1999); using critical methodologies that respect indigenous culture (Chinn, 2007); transforming and transcending our debate on decolonization research (Barth, 1995); and developing indigenous research paradigms (Hart, 2010). Many researchers in this field are further contributing to bridge the gap between indigenous and western science (Chiang & Lee, 2015); blending western and indigenous knowledge systems (Goulding, Steels & McGarty, 2016); and considering ontological divergence while integrating western and indigenous knowledge (Ludwig, 2016). These narratives have created vibrant research spaces representing western, blended (*west-indigenist*) and indigenous ways of knowing. At present, this type of blending or collaboration of western and indigenous research approaches is prominent in the ongoing discussions in the field.

Realizing the need for social justice in research, western researchers have also started thinking about democratic and collaborative processes that affect research collaboration (Lincoln & González, 2008). This research approach aims to increase credibility and to make research culturally appropriate and meaningful for indigenous participants. In addition to this, indigenous researchers are opting for critical dialogue between western and non-western cultures (Timalshina, 2014); dialogue between indigenous and critical researchers (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008); and re-valuing

local knowledge systems (Chinn, 2007). Similarly, Rowe (2014) has described how indigenous ways of knowing can be used for healing, decolonizing and resurgence.

The ongoing debate to blend western and indigenous knowledge is useful. However, it has also diverted indigenous researchers' focus away from thoroughly exploring the depths of the indigenous worldviews and knowledge systems. So far, much literature uses indigenous epistemologies with the aim of 'blending better with the west', which does not support the better interest of the indigenous knowledge discourse as a whole.

The blending efforts are also initiated by the indigenous researchers who have been exploring non-western ways of knowing that might sufficiently represent indigenous culture and civilizations (Chinn, 2007; Gautam & Luitel, 2013; Hart, 2010; Hartman, 1990; Smith, 1999). Indigenous researchers are arguing that indigenous research can offer unique and dependable ways of knowing where western science is often weak (Alessa, 2014) and can contribute to establishing a common repertoire of "culturally responsive research" (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005).

Blending western and indigenous research approaches is useful for indigenous peoples but this process is not well embedded within local worldviews (Gautam & Luitel, 2013). Research methodologies that are based on indigenous worldviews and cosmologies that use context specific indigenous research procedures can contribute to reduce the above-mentioned gaps. Nepali Shamanism, the Shamanism practiced in indigenous Nepali communities, is one of the living indigenous knowledge traditions of Nepal. Through the use of non-positivist, interpretive and critical research paradigms, this paper explores indigenist research procedures in one of the indigenous knowledge systems of Nepal, Nepali Shamanism, to share insight into the state of indigenous research procedures.

## **INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN NEPAL**

Landlocked in between India and China, Nepal has over 26.5 million inhabitants of 125 caste/ethnic groups speaking 123 languages (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Out of the total inhabitants, about 40% of people belong to the indigenous ethnic groups while the other remaining 60% belong to the Hindu Varna system, mainly Chhetri (16.6%), Hill-Brahmin (12.2%), and Kami (4.8%). Out of these groups, the government of Nepal (2002) has identified 59 groups as Adibasi/Janajati (indigenous nationalities). In Nepal, the indigenous nationality refers

to, “a tribe or community who has its own mother tongue and traditional culture and yet does not fall under the conventional fourfold Varna of Hindu hierarchical caste structure,” (Government of Nepal 2002, p.170). Of the 40% of the indigenous populations, Magar (7.1%), Tharu (6.6%) and Tamang (5.8%) are the three largest groups. Most of the Nepali indigenous communities are believed to have migrated from the northern highlands with Mongolian origin. Similarly, large Tharu indigenous groups residing in Nepal’s Southern plain region including other small communities have their historical roots in the Northern Indian region. Defining indigenous people, Vanisttart (1896) argued that, “the aboriginal stock of Nepal is most undoubtedly Mongolian, which can be observed through their faces, forms, and languages” (p.56). He found Magars, Gurungs, and Murnis (Tamang) to be the major indigenous groups in Nepal.

These indigenous groups have been residing in three different geographical locations of Nepal– the chain of high snow mountains in the north, the high hills, in the valleys in the middle, and in the southern plain. These indigenous communities have different cultural practices. This cultural diversity provides an important ground for indigenist research. However, many of these groups have moved out of their native territories as their livelihoods have been threatened in their ancestral lands. Similarly, indigenous cultural patterns and ways of living and lifestyles are gradually declining and young people are adopting dominant Hindu traditions. In addition to this decline, unfavorable state policies are contributing to the subjugation of their traditional knowledge and ways of knowing (Upreti & Adhikari, 2006). However, since the 1990s, political movements and the rise of ethnic politics in Nepal (Hangen, 2010) have increased the participation of indigenous communities in social and political arenas. Despite these challenges, a large majority of indigenous people including Shamanas, reside in their ancestral areas with their own distinctive language, culture, and ways of knowing. The next section outlines how Nepali Shamanism and indigenous knowledge has contributed to the expanding the knowledge base of indigenous research procedures.

## **METHODS: ENGAGING WITH INDIGENOUS PARTICIPANTS**

Indigenous worldviews and cosmologies in general can be explored by applying precise epistemic approaches. Hart (2010) broadly suggested considering the influence of spiritual means; incorporating subjective insights; including ceremonies

as means of developing insights; relying on elders as key informants; maintaining values that reflect indigenous worldviews; and including participants' understandings of the context, while carrying out indigenous research (p.11). This paper uses Hart's (2010) suggestions as a methodological guideline.

Using qualitative approaches, we began our research with respectful and prolonged dialogues with elderly persons who have extensive knowledge of Shamanism. We engaged with a total of seven research participants (3 Shaman practitioners, 2 traditional religious leaders, and 2 women who believe in traditional healing practices as well as modern healing). We carefully listened our participants' views, discussed concepts such as their faith, beliefs, and ritual practices, observed their everyday lifestyles, and carried out in depth interviews. First, we interviewed Kale Rai (also known as *Swami Prapannacharya*) (91), a noted indigenous scholar. In one of the conversations, we asked: What messages do you want to give to the young Nepali indigenous researchers? He responded, "Nepali indigenous culture is rich because it owes thousands of years of knowledge traditions like Animism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Prapannacharya mentioned, "If Nepali indigenous researchers only seek knowledge from outside, it is for sure that we are going to lose their identity" (*Swogrihe Payesam Tektwa, Vikshya Matiti Durgati*). This message inspired us to explore the field of indigenous knowledge, and further, the procedures through which the knowledge is sought. To further this exploration, the first author engaged in a conversation with his father (84) to gain reflective indigenous insights. The first author also engaged in a similar dialogue with a *Bonpo*, a spiritual leader of the Tamang indigenous community of Nepal. Prolonged discussions were carried out about Tamang cosmologies and belief systems with a Tamang monk (64) and his mother (88). This enriched our knowledge base about the spiritual and cultural aspects of Nepali Shamanism.

We explored reflexive and experiential indigenous worldviews through prolonged engagement with Tamang communities of Nepal (the third largest indigenous population in Nepal). In this process, we also shared our experiences in Tamang language, the language of the indigenous Tamang community of Nepal (Assel, 2003, as cited in Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Further, we reviewed related literature on shamanism, decolonization, and Nepali indigenous communities among others. The described methods enabled us to critically assess the colonized Nepali indigenous knowledge systems and also motivated us to explore indigenous research

procedures. A brief note on how Nepali indigenous knowledge has been subjugated from the colonial past will help to set the context of this paper.

### **SUBJUGATION OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN NEPAL**

Until 1950, the west presented Nepal as a simple, shamanic, traditional, hierarchical, caste based, superstitious, and gendered society (Whelpton, 2005). Nepal attracted more westerners after 1950s when the Kings, with the support of political parties and local elites, overthrew the centuries-old Rana oligarchy (1816-1952) and opened up to the wider world. At this time, scholars who came from the west started imposing colonial perspectives and highlighted the feudal characteristics of the Nepali society. *Nepal in Crisis* (Blaikie, Cameron, & Seddon, 1970) and *Nepal: A dangerous racism* (Seddon, 2012), are two examples of works that imposed colonial worldviews on Nepali society. On a positive note, these works exposed Nepal's deeply rooted issues like caste, ethnicity and gender-based discrimination. The local researchers initially contributed to the colonization of Indigenous research procedures but then later were a part of decolonization in Nepal.

One of the local researchers, Dor Bahadur Bista, shares the influence he felt from western scholars, “Prof. Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf was a colonial professor. He maintained a native-versus-western-university-professor kind of attitude,” (Fisher, 1996, p. 351). The influence of western scholars impacted Nepali scholars who started using western ways of thinking. This perpetuated Nepali indigenous community's image as poor, gendered and discriminatory. Similarly, most scholars in Nepal imported colonial research traditions with a lack of consideration to the importance of indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing in Nepal's diverse cultural context. Mingolo (2009) argued that exploring other ways of knowing could work to deconstruct and re-define non-western communities' common conceptions of Nepal as economically and mentally underdeveloped. Though insufficient, exploring indigenous knowledge in Nepal can foster and contribute to ongoing critical decolonial debate.

There are multiple thoughts or belief systems about the philosophical perspectives of epistemic grounds of research. The assumptions of objectivity of realism adopted by post/positivism that fosters the establishment of detached objective relationships with the indigenous peoples may be counter-intuitive to the study of indigenous knowledge and worldviews. For example, to remain congruent

with indigenous worldviews, the study of indigenous knowledges inherently requires relationship building. Here, the hypothetic co-deductive natures of post/positivistic research deny indigenous peoples to be represented in the research as a subject.

Colonial hegemonic research practices compel indigenous researchers to be structured throughout the research process as they marginalize us in our local context. Therefore, more flexible indigenous knowing procedures might help us to overcome the subjugation of structured post/positivistic methodologies of research. Non-positivistic research traditions enable us to generate knowledge through indigenous ways of knowing without ignoring local methodologies of cultural procedures, values, behaviors and ways of knowing. Also, the non-positivistic worldview allows us to disseminate the research results and empower indigenous people in culturally appropriate ways (Smith, 1999).

The use of non-positivistic research traditions enables us to explore realities regarding relational ties to our own local cultural members and also allows us to use research as an advocacy tool that can be used against subjugation. This is important because without considering the political interest of the indigenous communities, research might not be accepted at the broader level. On this, Ludwig (2016) indicates that without complementing the political notion of ontological self-determination of indigenous communities, integration between indigenous and western knowledge is going to be a failure. Without considering a certain level of self-determination, subjugation of indigenous knowledge will be continued.

We believe that the exploration of indigenous knowledge will be meaningful for subjugated indigenous communities of Nepal as it supports self-determination. In particular, effort must be concentrated on seeking and exploring indigenous knowledge systems that will help us to recognize and appreciate indigenous ways of knowing, and enable us to understand indigenous research procedures. The Nepali multi-cultural context is one such space for exploring indigenous ways of knowing as it relates to research.

### **SPACE FOR INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING**

Strengths of non-positivistic paradigms lay in the fact that they can employ flexible methodologies and indigenous ways of knowing through critical self-reflexive practices. These research beliefs and practices are helpful for entering into the life-world of indigenous peoples. These research traditions enable us to explore realities

from indigenous perspectives through deep engagement in a culturally sensitive manner. Using the foundation of indigenous belief systems or thoughts under multiple paradigms facilitated us to be more congruent with indigenous research traditions and procedures. The use of an interpretive research paradigm supported us to explore this topic with indigenous communities in a more meaningful and non-exploitative manner.

Indigenous peoples in Nepal have their own worldviews shaped by their interactions with nature, their own socio-cultural milieu, and the non-indigenous communities. They have their own experiences, perceptions, beliefs, norms and values that are transmitted down through generations. In order to respectfully engage with participants we were aware of the importance of listening in a non-threatening manner and participating in daily activities and social norms. For example, we ate what they offered to eat and behaved how they behaved among themselves. We carefully listened to their told/untold stories and engaged in persistent observation of their actions, interactions, and behaviors.

We learn our cultures values, beliefs, and traditions through many methods. Engaged conversation, deep question-answer, and many years of engaged and silent observation are some of the ways indigenous peoples engage in and acquire knowledge and experiences, feelings, perceptions, and meaning within relative contexts (McIlveen, 2008). Inter-subjective knowledge construction immersing in the cultural life-world of those peoples through informal interviews, interactions, and informal observations (Taylor & Medina, 2011) helped us to generate the knowledge that they have constructed in the context of their environments.

The concept of criticalism works to understand inequality, power and control. It is another perspective that helps us to understand the unequal power relationships and the subjective constructions of indigenous peoples mediated by such power dynamics (Carspecken, 1996). Shaman also uses a critical approach because during Shamanic performance, the Shaman criticize and confront with negative spirits, but they appreciate the positive spirits that support the human world as well as the spiritual world. It also aids in exposing social and economic exclusion, including loss of cultural capital and cultural identity (Taylor & Medina, 2011). As ignorant commoners, we humbly and respectfully engaged with elderly people and traditional healers like *Shaman (Jhagri)*, and religious leaders like *Lama* and also softly asked some of the critical questions.



In addition to criticalism, post-modernism enabled us to understand the relationship between indigenous peoples and contexts. Post-modernism promotes epistemic pluralism, in which each type of knowledge with the same epistemic status cultivates differences between individuals, contexts and events (Luitel, 2009). When *Jhagri* used logics of ‘bad spirits coming from nearby districts and from India’, we could argue that knowledge is constructed differently in different contexts. The Shaman during his shamanic performance could relate the spirits with places he is familiar with. Besides their spiritual knowledge, the Shaman’s interpretations are also guided from their experience and knowledge.

### **SHAMANISM OR *JHAGRIVIDYA*: AN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM**

There are a large number of local knowledges in Nepal. Holmberg and March (1999) demonstrated how Tamang Indigenous communities’ knowledge is relevant for producing a social history of Nepal. There are many local alternative specialists like oracles (*dhami*), Brahmin priests (*pandit*), astrologers (*Jaisi or Jyotish*), counselors (*prakil*), pulse readers/fortune tellers (*parki*), and Tibetan priest (*lama*) in Nepal (Maskarinec, 1995). The Shamanic knowledge, known as *Jhagrividya*, is one of the knowledge systems of indigenous peoples in Nepal (Maskarinec, 1995; March, 1999). Bennett (2016), who explored traditional healing systems in Indonesia, demonstrates that Shamanism is practiced as a healing system in other communities. The knowers and performers of *Jhagrividya* are called *Jhagri* or Shamana. Shamanism is mainly practiced in the Northern highlands and mountains of Nepal, primarily among the communities with Mongolian roots. Under the broader framework of indigenous research, Shamanism or *Jhagrividya* is selected as an example of indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing.

*Jhagrividya* is practiced for different purposes. It is the major traditional healing system in Nepal that is primarily used among indigenous communities and has also expanded to non-indigenous communities. However, the Shamanic practices, performances and materials used vary among indigenous communities. In his work, Bumochir (2014) concluded that the discourse is usually between Mongols and non-Mongols, where Mongols claim ‘shamanism’ and ‘shamanic religion’ is a civilized and sophisticated religion equivalent to other world religions while others demote shamans and their activities as ancient and primitive. This clearly shows that the

present practice of *Jhagrividya* among Tamangs has some historical connection with Mongolian Shamanism. Shamanism is practiced by Buddhist, Hindu and Christian traditions (Maskarinec, 1995).

#### JHAGRIVIDYA FOR COLLECTIVE PROSPERITY

The *Jhagrividya*, a local knowledge system, aims to reduce trouble that is coming to the people from the external spiritual world and to protect the indigenous lifeworld from negative spirits. The main purpose is to ensure that a community has physical and mental well-being including protection of property and life. Maskarinec (1995) in his concluding remarks of an ethnographic note identified that a Shaman or *Jhagri* helps people to deal with fundamental causes of ontological conditions that permit illness and by making sense of people's world by playing a language game. *Jhagri* provides hope to people who are suffering. Similarly, the purpose of *Jhagrividya* is to increase harmony between the spiritual, natural, and human world. This is a strong example of how indigenous knowledge collectively contributes to the prosperity of indigenous lifeworld, including natural and animal world.

Understanding collective prosperity, which is enshrined in *Jhagrividya*, could be a research agenda for indigenous researchers. In addition, traditional healing knowledge embedded in *Jhagrividya* demonstrates its usefulness among indigenous lifeworld and would be a valuable exploration for indigenous researchers.

#### JHAGRIVIDYA: A TRADITIONAL HEALING KNOWLEDGE

Traditional knowledge systems cannot be viewed in isolation. Lagematt (2015) argued that the native form of knowledge will be empowering and meaningful for locals in many ways. *Jhagrividya* is widely used traditional healing knowledge in Nepal as it empowers sick people by bringing them from unknown reasons of their illness to the meaningful terms. For this, *Jhagri* helps the ill person to connect with their spiritual world (Maskarinec, 1995). Moreover, indigenous research contributes to the research participants' healing process (Starks, Vakalahi, Comer, & Ortiz-Hendricks, 2010). Responding to a question on how they realize spiritual power, a *Jhagri* responded,

I did not know that the shamanic power existing in my body allowing me to link human with divinities. When I was 14, my uncle told me that I am chosen to be *Jhagri* as I sneezed continuously while carrying out shamanic activities together with

him. The capacity to recognize who is truly chosen by divine power to be a *Jhagri* is given by senior *Jhagri*. (Maaila/A., field notes, December 2014)

A potential candidate for future *Jhagri* is decided by senior *Jhagri* based on the candidate's personal conduct and character. Based on specific characteristics like behavior with elders, willingness to learn, faith and the family he is born into, a senior *Jhagri* accepts a new person as an assistant *Jhagri*. The assistant *Jhagri* remains an assistant until he 'sneezes' in a particular way during his Shamanic performance. The senior *Jhagri* declares the assistant *Jhagri* as a 'Jhagri' from the day he sneezes in a particular way. The capacity to recognize a certain way of "sneezing" is transferred over generations. The Shaman is responsible to maintain peace between people and spiritual power in the community as defined by the senior *Jhagri*. A *Jhagri* argues that their knowledge is based on their faith towards their deities and god, devotion, imagination, intuition and memory. Maaila, A. shared,

Proper sneezing is only possible when I sense that it is proper. It is happening to me, when I am deeply influenced by my mind, body as well as good spirit (*Shyihbda*) and bad spirit (*Shyingmardung*). I know my assistant *Jhagri*'s position, and recognize his situation when spiritual power affects his mind and body. At that moment, he starts sneezing in certain ways and also starts speaking shamanic hymns. (Field note, December 8, 2014)

*Jhagri* provides hope to those who are suffering from different diseases, unaware about the reasons of suffering, and uncertain about their lifeworld. *Jhagri* also gives some ways to overcome their suffering by mediating the lifeworld and the spiritual world. In Nepal, primarily in the indigenous world, *Jhagri* is believed to be a mediator of human and spiritual power. Rowe (2014) argued that dreaming helps people to understand about their self by introducing their connection with their spiritual world. *Jhagri* uses their multiple acts and ways including dreaming, meditation, shamanic performance, recitation of mantra, and magical acts for healing.

In this way, *Jhagrividya* is used by non-indigenous people who are experiencing uncertainties in their lives, suffering from multiple challenges, and who are willing to avoid a negative fate. This application of this knowledge system provides hope for well-being and gives a sense of protection from bad spirits. This further highlights the importance of researchers possessing a deep understanding of how to acquire indigenous knowledge that can allow them to contribute collective prosperity and wellbeing of indigenous communities.

## PROCEDURES OF ACQUIRING *JHAGRIVIDYA*

Indigenous communities like the Tamang use a number of ways to know *Jhagrividya*. *Jhagri* learn *Jhagrividya* through deep listening, engaged conversation, sincere observation, and use of instincts, intuition, memory, faith, emotion, sensation and reading. They use recitation and tenacity, their deep faith and belief in shamanism, their capacity to articulate shamanic messages to the people through storytelling, and their sensation and experiencing. Moreover, a shaman - *Jhagri* -uses such performances to solve everyday problems and to get answers to spiritual-world related questions. Among different knowing procedures, recitation and tenacity are the most practiced procedures among Nepali indigenous Shamans.

## RECITATION AND TENACITY

Recitation of mantra or religious texts is an important indigenous way of knowing in which certain words or phrases or texts are recited number of times. The method of tenacity considers that knowledge which is known between an individual and a group is true (Huitt, 1998). Such knowledge is rooted in our indigenous language, symbols and traditions. If we ask who is familiar with spiritual healing in Nepal, one will get an obvious answer, *Jhagri* – a traditional healer. When a *Jhagri* starts shamanic performance, people do not question whether the shaman is really communicating with spirits or if he is just acting like a *Jhagri*. In the healing process, belief and trust of *Jhagri's* shamanic performance and his ability to deal with spirit deeply affects the individual who seeks help from *Jhagri*. Mutual trust between *Jhagri* and the person seeking help is very important in the healing process. *Jhagri* gains trust and confidence by reciting mantras, making different sounds, and using different musical instruments like drums during Shamanic performance.

*Jhagri* learns these Shamanic procedures through continuous practice of recitation and tenacity. For this, they spend many days and nights practicing shamanic performance using their energy reading and re-reading religious texts. The first author experienced that it is difficult to recite the mantras without having minimum respect and faith for the recited mantras. Hence, like recitation and tenacity, faith and belief are equally important to acquire *Jhagrividya*.

## BELIEF, VALUE AND FAITH ON HUMAN AND SPIRITUAL WORLDS

The terms ‘belief’ and ‘faith’ are mostly used in religion. A individual’s faith and belief regarding certain powers or superpowers is generally not debated because it is about individual belief, values and faith. *Jhagrividya* is believed as ‘internal matters’ among indigenous communities and are followed by community members based on their rooted belief, value and faith.

The first author’s father (84), who also performs shamanic activities during some of the rituals shares, “Shamanic performance does not happen anytime and anyplace. The Shamanic activity simply happens in special occasions. The Shamanic performance helps me to communicate with my ancestors,” (personal communication, November 2014). *Jhagrividya* can be acquired by connecting individuals to the spiritual power. Internal spiritual belief and faith among indigenous communities about the spiritual and human world is prerequisite for *Jhagrividya*. During the healing process *Jhakri* mediates the problems and misunderstandings between human world and the spiritual world. A *Jhagri* shares,

I need to be selected by a Senior Jhakri, a Guru, for this task. Then, I need to work with Guru for a number of years and prove myself as a capable learner, and a good believer. From certain kind of sneezing during the shamanic activity, our Guru recognizes whether we are prepared to work as Jhagri or not. After the training, we can communicate with local spirits. However, sometime we have to deal with powerful bad spirit coming from nearby districts, Indian or Chinese borders. If we fail to deal with them, they can make us sick as well. (Tamang, D., personal communication, December 12, 2014)

Belief and faith in the spiritual world is related with place, people and their problems. The ways of knowing *Jhagrividya* is not exactly the same as other methods of knowing. Martin (2003) argued that indigenous people know by watching, waiting, sharing, observing, engaging, modeling, assessing, conceptualizing, and reading among others. For *Jhagri*, the knowing process starts from watching and listening that gradually advances towards internalizing, believing, valuing and following what his Guru does and says. While learning *Jhagrividya*, one has to gain the trust of the *Guru* (*that who shows the right path to the followers*), to learn to communicate with Spirits through Shamanic performances, and internalize shamanism as valuable knowledge for his community. In addition to internal belief and faith on spiritual and human worlds, storytelling, listening and sensation are other important procedures to acquire *Jhagrividya*.

## STORYTELLING, LISTENING AND SENSATION

Storytelling and active, engaged listening have been important ways of transferring knowledge for generations before us. *Jhagri* also uses stories during Shamanic performances (Maskarinec, 1995) to connect the human and spiritual world. Because we cannot verify and see or feel, the shamanic stories are imaginary for the audience like us, but the Shaman connects human to our imaginary world. Shamans often mix local languages with other distinct languages or words that cannot be understood by others. Shamans tell stories in the form of songs with certain hymns, and they also mix such hymns with music of drums or other local instruments, at times using household utensils like steel plates and stick for music.

Modern technologies are entering into local and indigenous lifeworlds. *Jhagris* are modifying traditional healing practices to adapt with this shift. Shamans are learning and incorporating new ideas from modern technologies like radios, televisions, cell phones, and through access to the internet. They are aware of increased access to modern education among indigenous communities and have also incorporated modern means of learning such as sensation, (knowing by experiencing the physical world that we can see, touch, taste, or hear). A *Jhagri* shared, “I learn many things by reading religious texts and listening, radio and television. I do not blame others for witchcraft and involve in giving punishment them. God will punish them if they are bad,” (Field note, January 2015). Using modern technologies, *Jhagris* are aware of possible legal, health, and economic consequences of use/misuse of the Shamanic performance as traditional healing systems. Hence, most of the *Jhagris* teach their new followers not to misuse their knowledge. In Nepal, Shamanism is also criticized because some people misuse Shamanic knowledge to deal with critical health problems, identify and punish witchcraft, and make money.

## CONCLUSION

The ongoing discussion within decolonizing research has focused on indigenous research procedures and how they can be used to enrich indigenist ways of knowing in research. A number of researchers have explored indigenous research procedures with most of them blending western and indigenous research and using a combination of methods. The multi-directional nature of the existing indigenist research does not provide a clear framework through which indigenous lifeworlds can be approached. Having over 125 indigenous communities with 123 languages and

cultures, the Nepali multi-cultural context presents a useful ground to explore indigenous research procedures. Interpretive, critical and postmodern research paradigms provide space for exploring indigenous research procedures in this diverse context. This paper has described *Jhagrividya* as an indigenous knowledge practice and way of knowing to explore indigenous research procedures. Tamang indigenous communities in Nepal acquire *Jhagrividya* (*Shamanic knowledge*) primarily through recitation and tenacity; belief, value and faith; storytelling and listening. Similarly, with the increasing exposure with modern world and technologies, *Jhagris* are also learning from sensation and experience. These knowing procedures can be a useful reference for the researchers who are interested in indigenous research as it helps them to understand human and spiritual lifeworld of Nepali indigenous communities.

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