

Nepalese Folk Culture **A Compilation of Research Journals**

Original Title: **Nepalese Folk Culture (First Edition, 2017)**

Publisher:

Nepal Music Center Trust
Pingalasthan, Kathmandu

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Different Aspects of Bhuo Festival Celebrated in Kali-Karnali Region

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If there is any confusion about the meaning of any word used by a typical group, it is always good for us to rely on the meaning propounded by several experts in the dictionary instead of assuming the meaning on our own.

Bhuo festival, celebrated in the Kali-Karnali region on the basis of 'tithi' or the count of days in a fortnight based on the moon's position, can be called an occasional celebration, song, festival, game or fiesta, but the question

‘what name, in written, should this festival be given’ is an intellectual challenge for all of us.

Of the five categories projected above, it seems best to call it a ‘parva’ or a festival according to the lunar motion in a month. This suits best, because in spite of small variations across the region on its date and month, what commonly underlines the festival is that people count ‘tithi’ or days based on lunar motion, and so ‘parva’ is the best label for this celebration. Based on the mode of celebration, some people even call it ‘Bhuo khel’ or Bhuo game. In the light of these realities, I have named this write-up “Different Aspects of Bhuo Festival Celebrated in Kali-Karnali Region,” wherein, by festival I mean ‘parva’ or a special day in the month, counted according to the motion of the moon.

There are dozens of articles about Bhuo celebrated in Kali-Karnali region, but there is no uniformity in the writings. The writers have mentioned Bhuo in different terms like Bhuo, Bhuvo, Bho, Bhwa, Bhuva, Bhuwa etc. Does Bhuo have no concrete word? Maybe it might have taken different forms with differences in places. *Brihat Nepali Sabdakosh* (Dictionary) defines ‘Bhuo’ (N) as “A festival celebrated by males and females by dancing on the new moon night. 2. A song used in folk drama in ancient time.”

The author of this article has defined Bhuo as follows in his article “Bhuo: An Interesting Festival” published in *Rooprekha*, Year 15 vol 12, 162, 2032 B.S. Baishakh (April 1975 AD):

- a. Bhuo+a; ‘Bhuo’ means ‘dew’ and ‘a’ means ‘arrival’. It means a festival celebrated on the arrival of winter season.
- b. Bhuo+a; ‘Bhuodev’ or the festival celebrated on the arrival of Lord Shiva on the earth.
- c. ‘Bhuo’ means ‘earth’, Bhuva - hell, swa – heaven.

In the hymns of Bhuo festival or game celebrated in Karnali zone, there mainly is the explanation of earth and hell. The Sanskrit word ‘Bhuo’ (earth) as used by various languages users like Doteli, experienced gradual shift in pronunciation, and changed to Bhuo, Bhuvo, Bhuwa, Bhuwoo, Bhvaa, Bho etc. Even if we link the word ‘Bhuo’ with earth or hell, it links with the serpents living in hell and their worship.

- d. The word ‘Bhuova’ denotes living creatures, ghosts and spirits. In this festival they offer black flags and sesame grains in Bhuakhada so that the evil spirits would run away from here at midnight. On the day of new moon in the month of Poush (mid-December to mid-January), people offer foods and grains at road junctions. Thus, this festival is also celebrated in the name of evil spirits.

- e. Bhuo/Bhoovo – There is a belief that on the particular night, Lord Shiva came to the earth, took a round and went back to heaven and thus, taking it as the blessing of the Lord, they celebrate it.
- f. In Karnali zone, the two letter word is pronounced Bhuo or Bhoovo. In this zone, the word Bhoova has been linked with different topics:
 1. Bhoova – Bud (the hill is an area where wheat, millet grow)
 2. Bhoovo – Khado (The place of making fire at night on the new moon of Poush)
 3. Bhoovao – Bharat (uncontrollable situations)
 4. Bhoov o – Bhailo (A festival celebrated in the month of Poush– Bhailo during the day, and Bhuvo game at night.)
 5. Bhoovao – Crops (like barley, wheat, corn, millet, buck wheat, potato, been etc.)

The word 'Bhuo' is popular as Bho and Bhwa in Doteli language. In Seti Zone it is also called Bho, Bhwa, Bhuwa, Bhuo, Bhoova etc. In Dailekh District of Bheri Zone, and in Jajarkot district the words Bhovo, Bhuva and Bhuo are pronounced 'Bhuwa'.

It's appropriate to present some Bhuo hymns here to get the contents of the hymn. Thus, some parts of Bhuo have been presented here. At first the Bhuvo popular in Bheri zone as collected by by Purna Prakash Nepal, has been presented herewith:

Ha hairyo ha hariyo ha hariyo Bhosi

[Oh green! Oh green! Oh green!]

Bhuo gadneko matho dubole bhariyo ”

[Those who buried Bhuo got forehead filled with green.]

Shristima bhyo kaha pugyo? ”

Where did Bhuo reach in creation?

Shristhtima Bhuo kailash thiyo? ”

[In creation was Bhuo on Mount Kailash?]

Kailashko Bhuo kahathi bhaigyo? ”

[Where did Bhuo go from Kailash?]
Tahadekhi Bhuo haat chadyo? ”

[Since then Bhuo climbed on the hand.]
Haatko Bhuo kahathi baigyo? ”

[Where did Bhuo go from hand?]
Haatko Bhuo rukah chadyo ”

[Bhuo in hand climbed the tree]
Rukhko Bhuo kahathi baigyo? ”

[Where did Bhuo go from the tree?]
Rukhko Bhuo Raant baigyo ”

[Bhuo from the tree went to Raant.]
Tahadekhi Bhuo Taktalkhar ”

[Therefrom Bhuo went to Taklakhar]
Taklakharka Jaathema Maramar ”

[There was bloodshed among Jathe of Kaklakhar]
Tadekhi Bhuo kaha gayo?

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