

## **Nepalese Folk Culture**

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## **Singaru Dance of Salyan**

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### **General Background**

Salyan is one of the backward districts out of various districts of Nepal. It is one of the five districts in Rapti Zone. In the world map, Salyan district falls between 28° 26'' and 28° 53'' latitude in the northern hemisphere and between 82° 0'' and 82° 26'' east longitude. (Section Statistic Office, Dang, 2064: 8). The area of this district is 195175 hector and 1951 square kilometer. The altitude is 1536 meter and Khalanga is the district headquarters. It is situated in the tropical zone with an average temperature of maximum 23.3°

C and minimum 14.8<sup>0</sup> C, and rainfall 11.10 mm. The average altitude is 1500 meter (Kupinde, 2065:11)

There are different opinions about the nomenclature of this district. Some say that due to the maximum availability of pine trees (salla), it is named as Salyan, whereas some have a different opinion. This is a peaceful state, ruled previously by the Saitya dynasty. The famous historian H. Milton states it to be one of the poorest districts in Nepal. But before the unification of Nepal, Prithivi Nayan Shah had good relation with the state and thus, he gave his daughter Bishash Kumari to the Ranabhim Shah, the prince of Salyan on Magh 25<sup>th</sup> in 1823 B.S (1766 AD). He even donated the land from Chilli Bijauri to Dang to his daughter. It can be assumed that Salyan was a strong state as Prithivi Narayan Shah continued diplomatic relationship. Therefore, Bhimsen Thapa considered annexing Salyan after he got victory over Palpa. As a result, Salyan was unified only in B.S. 1869 (1812 AD) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of Bhadra, Tuesday. (District Factual Detail, 2064:8)

During the Rana Regime, most parts of the present day Rukum, Rolpa and Dang were under Salyan district. There used to be the posting of the fourth-level officer for administration.

The region consists of a fertile land. We can see Sittalpati, the common center for Hindus as well as Siddha Baba on high altitudes. One can also see the pristine beauty of different lakes in the vicinity. What to talk of its cultural richness; it has been a hub. Singaru Dance is one of the richest cultural artifacts of the district. This article presents various aspects of the dance.

## 1.1 Introduction

Folk literature is orally developed people's literature about civil life. The word 'lok' refers to the parallel word 'folk' in English. This word has specifically been in use since ancient times. The word 'folk' has been accepted in *Rigveda*, *Upanishad*, *Brahmin Granth* and *Sanhitas*. The literature passed orally for ages from one generation to another, popularly known as folk literature, comprises of folk song, folk epic etc. In the Occidental world, folk song also comes from the Latin word 'ballare' which is used as 'ballad' in English (Bandhu, 2061:1). In Nepali folk literature also, different singing and dancing trends are available. One of them is Singaru dance.

The word 'Singaru' is a corrupt form of Sanskrit root 'Shreengar' meaning 'decoration' with a 'u' added as suffix. 'Singaru' is derived from Nepali word 'Singar'—corrupted from Sanskrit 'Shreengar' with 'u' suffix. There can be different forms of the word 'Singar' that comes from Sanskrit. The meaning of the word 'Singar' is to decorate, to beautify the body with

different things like well-done hair, application of different cosmetics and tools (Nepali Encyclopedia, 2052:1267). Among the nine ethos or *rasas* discussed in poetics, 'sringar' rasa is one, and it basically connotes sexual appeals. This *rasa* or etho is often considered as the king of all *rasas*. Explained this way, 'Singaru' is a dance or song involving a lot of sexual exchanges and attraction between the hero and the heroine. Thus, on the basis of word-formation and meaning, the main issue of Singaru dance and song is the sexual act and gesture. Therefore, Singaru dance can be a dance influenced by love and sexual act.

Singaru is especially practised in Salyan, Rukum and Rolpa districts. This is danced in Digre Fair, Shankha Papal Fair, PappiniF, Bhalpuja Fair, Nathigad Fair, Panchpuni Fair, Taksera Fair, Baluwa Fair, Domai Fair, Mairaghor Fair, Panerichaur Fair, Jhinchaur Fair and Kaspokhari Fair of Rukum and Bhumisar Fair, Rani Pokhara Fair, Kumakh Fair, Jangmar Fair, Falyakhorka Fair, Suwakoti Fair, Shivanath Fair, Rolpakot Fair, Chifalya Fair and Leutya Fair of Salyan, and Pati Halne Fair, Chabighat Fair and Lamachavar Fair of Rolpa.

### **1.1.1. Rules and Regulations for Singaru Dance**

As evidenced by the dance in western Nepal, the central theme of Singaru dance is love-making or sexual act. There is no place which is not a source of a cultural artifact. There is no person who doesn't have vocal power. There are a lot of vocal talents in Nepali hearts as there are several rivers like Saptakarnali, Saptagandaki and Saptakoshi flowing from the mountains. Singaru Dance is one of them. There are a lot of rules and regulations for Singaru Dance in different parts of Salyan district. It can have a madal player, a trampoline player and a female (a male disguised as female) dancer. The female wears women's dresses and ornaments.

### **1.1.2. The Songs Sung in Singaru Dance**

#### **1.1.2.1. Love Songs**

*Choyeyai kajyou, choyejai majyou, choyeyai na naram,*

*Nadekhyati bhoute maya dekhyati saram.*

[Bamboo ply, when cut and processed, becomes soft.

When away, mind is restless; when met, it's coy.]

*Deukhuri taraiko ghans katyo kumalaile*

*Mayale royeka aansu puchha rumalai le*

[Kumal gathers fodder from Deukhuri side

When love cries, wipe tears with a handkerchief]

*Kali Ganga bagdai aaigo kunakani kheldai*

*Hajoorako mayajalle aako bayal kheldai*

[Kali Ganga, flooded, flows by rocking nooks and corners

I come elated, drawn by your love.]