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The Songs of Tij: A Genre of Critical Commentary for Women in Nepal

Abstract

The Tij festival in Nepal has been analyzed primarily for Hindu high caste women's performance of rituals that reaffirm patrilineal principles. However, the songs that women, and sometimes men, compose anew each year for this annual festival carry an alternative view of women's position in the family and society. Tij songs—with their critique of domestic relations and wider political and social practices—constitute a genre of critical commentary for Nepalese women. The authors use interviews, multiple observations of Tij, and a collection of over a thousand Tij songs spanning at least sixty-five years to analyze the production, performance, and content of these songs and their role in (re)defining gender identities and relations within changing sociohistorical contexts.

Key words: Tij — songs — women — Nepal — South Asia — ritual

TIJ is a festival and ritual event for women, celebrated on the third day after the new moon in the Nepali month of Bhādra (mid-August to mid-September). It is often referred to in the published literature and by Nepalis themselves as "the women's festival" because on this day all ritual activities are carried out by women and girls. The women adorn themselves in their finest jewelry and clothing and gather together to sing and dance in front of a temple or in an open area. They also maintain a strict fast for the entire day, beginning a series of austere rites culminating in *pūjā* (worship) and ritual bathing on Ṛṣi Pañcamī two days later.

The literature to date on Tij (e.g., ANDERSON 1971, BENNETT 1976, 1983; BISTA 1969, BOUILLIER 1982, GOODMAN 1981) has focused either on the women's festive dancing or on their ritual austerities. BENNETT 1983 (218–34), the best-known account of the Tij-Ṛṣi Pañcamī complex, portrays the ritual activities as the exclusive province of the women of the Bāhun and Chetrī castes (the two highest castes in the Nepalese hierarchy and the only two that are "twice-born") and interprets the activities in accordance with Hindu texts and stories. The fasting on Tij is described as a reenactment of the fast undergone by Pārvatī in order to gain Śiva as her husband (an event known to village women primarily through the Nepali version of this Saivite story, the *Swasthānī Vrata Kathā*). The dancing—not accounted for in the texts or myths—is viewed by BENNETT as a "virtual seduction of Shiva" (1983, 223–24), and the songs, it is implied (though no examples are cited), are flirtatious and erotic like the dancing they accompany. The ritual bathing on Ṛṣi Pañcamī is said to symbolize the efforts of the wives of the Ṛṣi to atone for their sins—the bath is said to cleanse women of the sin they incur by inadvertently polluting men during menstruation.

Because of this focus on the public rituals, the literature leaves us with the impression that Tij and Ṛṣi Pañcamī reaffirm patrilineal principles and that the women happily perform the rituals for the benefit of their present, past, or future husbands and for redemption from the

sin of menstruation. Tij is thus presented as a ritual that reinforces the gender relations of Hindu religious ideology and helps produce women who willingly and compliantly accept the constraints of this patriarchal system.

Tij is far more complex and multivocal than this. To portray the rituals and texts as unchanging entities misrepresents the festival and obscures the dynamics that make it a forum for an increasingly strident social and political commentary. Present interpretations also overlook the participation in Tij of people other than Bāhun and Chetrī women. Part of the problem is that Tij songs have been left out of consideration in the literature—authors simply mention that women sing as they dance. What little commentary exists on the characteristics of Tij songs describes them, without supporting evidence, as the "innombrables chansons d'amour du folklore népalais" (BOUILLIER 1982, 103).[1] This lack of attention to the songs is unfortunate, because our research into their content and into the sociohistorical context of their creation and performance reveals that they are neither love songs, thematic complements to the dancing, nor songs of sexuality and eroticism. Nor are the vast majority of them religious songs of devotion congruent with the austere rites of fasting and ritual bathing. Most of the examples we have collected are, in fact, songs of social and political commentary. This type of critical Tij song has been used for many years to call into question the very gender ideology that the women's ritual observances are thought to endorse.

Thus women are doing something very interesting in Tij. On the one hand they are performing rituals that endorse the ideology of male privilege, while on the other they are voicing, through the lyrics that they compose each year, a critical commentary on gender relations and on the wider political situation that has dominated them both as females and as poor villagers. The content and tone of the compositions are, in other words, incongruent with the rituals that bracket their performance. Recently composed Tij songs build on this tradition of critical commentary and increasingly call for political action. This genre, which finds its fullest development and expression in rural Nepal, has been recognized by urban-based political and feminist groups as a promising medium for demanding equal rights for women and the poor.

This article presents a sampling of approximately sixty-five years of Tij songs and examines them as vehicles of women's social commentary on women's lives and male privilege in Hindu society. The creation and performance of recent Tij songs as observed in Naudada (a mixed-caste Hindu community in the hills of central Nepal) are investigated to

reveal the dynamics and cultural production of meanings that occur in Tij and to place these productions in their wider sociohistorical context.

Our descriptions and analyses are based on our collection of over a thousand Tij songs, on interviews conducted in Naudada in 1986, 1990, and 1991, and on observations of Tij there during these same three years.[2] We also interviewed, in 1991, members of the political and feminist groups producing Tij songbooks in a number of urban centers. The overall purpose of our investigations was to find out more about how Tij songs are produced and performed, how they have changed over time, and why this genre has recently been appropriated by political organizations; we have addressed several of these issues in more depth elsewhere (HOLLAND and SKINNER, in press, in preparation; SKINNER and HOLLAND, 1992), but here we focus on examining how Tij songs have long served as a medium for women's social commentary. We begin by briefly describing Naudada, the production of the songs, and their performance at Tij.

TIJ SONG CREATION AND PERFORMANCE

Naudada is the name we have given to ten loosely integrated *gāũ* (gaons or hamlets) that lie along a series of intersecting mountain ridges in central Nepal. With few exceptions, the inhabitants of a single gaon belong to the same caste/ethnic group (*jāt*). In thought and practice, Naudadans divide themselves into several *jāt*s: the "high" castes of Bāhun and Chetrī; the "lower" occupational castes of Damāī (tailors, musicians), Sunār (goldsmiths), Kāmī (blacksmiths), and Sārkī (leatherworkers); and the ethnic groups of the Newār and Magar, which fit into the "middle" of the caste hierarchy. Almost everyone is engaged in farming, though some members of the lower castes practice their traditional occupations.

As mentioned above, the literature on Tij ties the rituals of fasting and dancing to the tradition of Śiva and Pārvatī. Among the Naudadans we interviewed, however, only one priest and none of the women made this connection.[3] What is emphasized by the participants is not the rituals but the songs and their production. Nor is interest in the festival limited to the performances on the day of Tij itself: the creation and practice of songs in the weeks before the festival are just as much a focus of attention.

For several weeks before Tij young women and girls prepare by getting together with their friends in the evenings to select or compose the songs to be performed, and to hold practice sessions. Adolescent girls and women in their twenties form the nucleus of those who produce

and sing the new songs. Females are generally confined to their homes after dark, since to venture out after nightfall might cause others to think that they are sexually loose or domestically deficient. During the time before Tij, however, they are allowed (indeed, expected) to meet at friends' houses and sing until late in the evening. It is a time of license and levity.

Tij songs are created in a variety of ways. In one mode of production, predominant in the past and still in existence today, verses are composed primarily by groups of young unmarried and married women at work in the fields during the day or at their nightly gatherings prior to the festival. One woman suggests an idea for a song, then she and the others in the group think about it individually for a few days. The group later collaborates in joining (*jorne*) or piecing together (*gãsne*) the words and lines of each stanza. They may pick out (*ṭipnu*) lines they have heard before in other songs and use them again. They go over the verses several times, substituting words or rhymes to make the song smooth and flowing, to fill it out, and to unify its theme. Until recently, songs produced by this method were preserved only in memory since the members of the groups were illiterate.

Another mode of production—more common today and associated with those who are more educated—is that in which a lone composer writes the song and distributes it to a group of women to sing. This composer need not be female nor need he or she belong to the Bāhun or Chetrī caste: in Naudada, novel Tij songs have been produced by Newār women (who traditionally do not celebrate Tij) and by Damāī men. Also, some women now select compositions from the numerous Tij songbooks that are published in regional centers and distributed in the local bazaar towns. These songs too may be composed by either males or females.[4]

As SRIVASTAVA notes for women's songs in North India (1991, 272), Tij songs in either their oral or written versions should not be thought of as fixed texts. Authorship is not emphasized nor is the composer acknowledged during the performance. Singers are free to alter songs by changing lines or adding novel verses. Tij songs are thus always in process. They may differ slightly in content from one practice session to another and may vary greatly from one year to the next. Even the songs taken from print are subject to change as groups omit, revise, and add lines to fit their emotional mood or political orientation.

With the approch of Tij the fun and joy mount as daughters-in-law prepare to return to their natal homes to celebrate the occasion and as out-married women come back to Naudada. These returning

women often bring Tij songs that have been composed in their *ghar* (husband's home) to share with their friends and perhaps to sing on Tij day.

The night before the performance, girls and their mothers gather with their friends for the final rehearsal. Upon their return home they feast and indulge themselves with the richest food available,[5] for on the following day the married women must undertake a strict fast dedicated to their husband's health and longevity.[6]

On Tij the women and older girls spend most of the morning bathing and making themselves their most beautiful. They put on their best saris, preferably of red or pink (colors associated with auspiciousness and fertility), and adorn themselves with jewelry and make-up. The married women wear all the markers of that status: the red vermilion powder (*sīdur*) in the part of their hair, a red hair braid, red glass bangles, and a style of necklace (*tilharī*) worn only by married women. They then gather at the political and religious center of the local administrative unit,[7] where there is a flat area called the *ṭãṛi* (gathering place) big enough to accommodate the large number of people attending the festival.

The women constituting the core of the performing group sometimes parade in as a team. They may spend a few minutes listening to other singers who have already established themselves at the *ṭãṛi* along with their entourages. The new group then situates its members in the best space left and begins to sing and dance. One female from each group dances in the center while her friends sing and clap along with her. Other women and girls surround the core groups and support their efforts by joining in the verses and clapping. Since each line is repeated twice, onlooking women can sing the repeated verse even if they have not heard the song before. Contemporary songs are all sung to the same tune and cadence, and the movements and gestures of the dancer evoke the meaning of the lyrics. Several groups are usually performing simultaneously at any one time.

Though it is said that on Tij day all women must dance, there are certain women who are excluded from participation.[8] Not all Naudadan women are part of a core group that sings on the day of Tij. Although women from all castes surround the singing nucleus and sometimes sing along, the performing has traditionally been the province of Bāhun and Chetrī women. Women from the middle and lower ranges of the caste hierarchy do indeed compose and sing songs in their own gaons prior to Tij (and this participation is significant), but they do not attempt to perform as groups representing their gaons on Tij day.[9] Even certain of the Bāhun and Chetrī gaons do not have

representative groups—the explanation given by the young women of such gaons is that they lack a sufficient number of female residents skilled at composing the numerous novel songs needed for the hours of singing. Recently a new group has emerged that is not based on gaon membership: in 1991, for the first time, schoolgirls formed a group that cut across caste lines, and claimed space at the *ṭāṛi*. This group included both Chetrī and Newār girls who sang pro-Congress as well as the *dukha* (hardship) songs described below.[10]

People of all ages and castes come from the surrounding hamlets to view the performance. Men encircle the women's groups or stand on the periphery of the entire crowd, watching, listening, and sometimes tape-recording the songs. They comment on the beauty of the women and evaluate the quality of the songs. Each group of women competes for audience attention and hopes that its singing and dancing will draw the largest crowd, a sign that their lyrics have been judged the best. The songs of sadness, hardship, and suffering (*dukha* songs) are especially moving. Women both young and old become transfixed by the words that recall their own experiences. They nod their heads and exclaim in assent with the sentiments expressed by the singer, and sometimes even weep as the images evoke memories of sad events in their lives or in the lives of their friends. A woman who became visibly agitated while listening to Song No. 15 (see Appendix) told us later that her *man* (heart/mind, seat of emotions) started churning when she heard the verses because they brought back vivid memories of her own husband coming home drunk late at night and beating her. She remembered how she would have to hide in the rice terraces, baby at her breast, until he fell asleep.

The singing on Tij begins in the early afternoon and continues until dusk, when the groups of women are displaced by men who begin their own style of singing and dancing. All women, with the exception of some Damāī girls, leave the *ṭāṛi* and return home, where they sometimes continue singing. The Damāī girls, whose gaon is next to the *ṭāṛi*, seize the opportunity to perform their own Tij songs at this nighttime gathering.

Let us now examine the form and content of the songs more closely.

Tij as a Genre of Critical Commentary

The term Tij is used to designate both the festival itself and the type of songs sung on that day (see Bista 1969, 16). Contemporary Tij songs, whether about women's *dukha* (hardship, sadness, trouble, suffering), recent events (*ghaṭanā*), or politics (*rājnīti*), share a meter, rhythm, rhyming structure, and melody that vary only slightly from region to

region.[11] Tij songs as sung and published range in length from a few lines to well over a hundred, but each is made up of a series of rhyming couplets. The words of each line are fitted to a simple stock melody (used exclusively for Tij songs) that in contemporary compositions employs only five different notes. In performance, each line is usually repeated two and sometimes three times before going on to the next line. Another feature that marks a song as part of the Tij genre is use of the meaningless term *barīlāi*, added to the end of some lines as an aid to rhyming. Other common framing devices include beginning a song by stating the date of an event and asking the audience to listen to the description of some incident.

Tij songs share certain images, themes, and moods, and are classified on these bases by singers and composers into the three main subtypes discussed below.

Deutā *Songs*

One subtype that is seldom sung today is the *deutāko gīt*, the "songs about gods." In these songs, women pledge their devotion to a particular god or goddess, or recount tales of the deity's exploits in verse. Versions of the following song that older women remember singing in their youth are still sung on Ṛṣi Pañcamī by groups of women returning from their ritual bath:

Song No. 1[12]

Sixteen hundred *gopīnī*s (cowherds or lovers) of Kṛṣṇa all had gone
For a bath in the Jamuna River.
They put their saris on the river bank.
When they bathed and came out of the water,
They were surprised.
Their clothes were not there.
Sitting in the *kadam* tree, playing the pipe on his lips,
Kṛṣṇa had hidden the saris.
When the sixteen hundred *gopīnī*s looked above,
They saw the same clever Kṛṣṇa.

*Gopīnī*s[13]: "Oh, conniving Kṛṣṇa, you give us our saris,
What have you done?"

Kṛṣṇa: "Put your hands together [Do the *namaste*].
Then I will give the saris to you. [If not, I won't]."

*Gopīnī*s: "Oh, conniving Kṛṣṇa, give us our saris,
We will make you a husband."
All sixteen hundred *gopīnī*s heeded Kṛṣṇa's words,
And he gave the saris to them.

The Naudadan women we interviewed produced variations on or fragments of only nine *deutā* songs (see Song No. 2 in the Appendix for another example); two of these were hybrid forms mixing lines of *deutā* songs with verses more typical of the *dukha* songs described below (see Song No. 3 in Appendix). Only one *deutā* song was sung in practice sessions without our elicitation; no *deutā* songs were sung on the day of Tij itself.

Deutā songs are regarded in Naudada as old-fashioned. Several older Naudadan women told us that *deutā* songs were more prevalent in the past, but now the younger women are not interested in singing about gods. But even though these older informants, aged forty to eighty, recall a few *deutā* songs, they remember the *dukha* songs in far greater number.

Dukha *Songs*

Dukha songs—songs that translate into verse the sadness, hardship, pain, and suffering stored in and flowing forth from one's *man*—have been in the Tij repertoire for as long as any of our informants could remember. No one knows when it was that the Tij festival became an occasion when women could give voice to their problems and criticize those who troubled them, but no one remembers it ever being otherwise.

Dukha songs portray in poignant images the suffering that often accompanies the life path laid out for women in the Hindu religion and normatively assumed in Nepali Hindu culture.[14] Priests, relatives, life-cycle rituals, and public opinion all pressure women to be first good and obedient daughters, then hard-working, respectful daughters-in-law and faithful, devoted wives. *Dukha* songs, however, do not exalt the virtues of traditional womanhood. Instead, they codify in song a voice that is critical of the expected life path and of the adversities and misfortunes that it brings to women. The songs provide a commentary, an alternative perspective, on women's position in society. The verses disclose the problems wives and daughters face, the anguish they feel, the criticisms they have of their malefactors, and the implicit or explicit protests they have against the social system that places them in their powerless and vulnerable position.

Most of these songs analyze the precarious social position of women. Some decry the unequal resources allotted to daughters in comparison with sons. In law as well as in practice, it is only under very limited circumstances that daughters are entitled to a share of their parents' property. Sons are also more likely to be advantaged by education; daughters are frequently taken out of classes in the sixth

grade, when fees for tuition and books become mandatory. They are also expected to contribute more labor around the household and are more likely to be kept home even before the sixth grade if the family is shorthanded.

In the following recent *dukha* song, the composer voices the sadness of daughters who know they are only temporary guests in their natal home (*māita*) and who see the preferential treatment given to the son, who can stay with the parents after marriage.

Song No. 4

Daughter: "I rose in the morning to pick flowers,
But did not pick them because they were covered by dew.
Parents just keep the daughters to do work at home,
But not even a small piece of the courtyard [i.e., land] is given [to daughters]."

Parents: "The small piece of courtyard is needed to dry the paddy,
Go, daughter, to your husband's house to get your property."

Daughter: "We have to go empty-handed [to our husband's home],
The brothers fence in their property.
Brothers' clothes are so many that they rot away in a box,
But when they have to give us a single cloth, tears come to their eyes."

This song expresses a daughter's resentment at lacking the inheritance rights of her brothers. The daughter complains that she works hard all day, doing all the domestic chores, while her brothers are in school or playing with their friends. She is given nice clothes only grudgingly, while her brothers receive so many that they rot away in a box. She is told by her parents that her property and her appropriate place are at her husband's home, where she is to be sent empty-handed and sad-hearted. One can clearly sense the anguish she feels regarding the unequal treatment accorded to sons and daughters in this patriarchal system, where legal codes reinforce traditional inheritance rules.

Dukha songs also express a feeling common among unmarried women: fear of marriage and of possible bad treatment in the husband's household (see BENNETT 1983 and SKINNER 1990a). After marriage, a woman faces an uncertain future in a place filled with strangers. She seldom knows her husband and in-laws before the wedding, nor is she likely to have visited their hamlet. She is usually married to a man who lives hours or even days away from her natal home. Certainly not all girls dread marriage and seek to postpone it, but most are anxious about leaving the natal home for an unknown fate and are angry at

parents who seem so little concerned about what kind of home they are marrying their daughters into. In her husband's residence (*ghar*) a woman often feels as though she is a stranger cut off from the love of her parents and siblings.

The following recent song conveys the growing apprehension of a young woman when she realizes that her marriage has been arranged and she will soon be carried off to her new residence.

Song No. 5

They [the guests] have come to ask for her hand in marriage, but she didn't know.
I say, what kind of guests are these?
My parents call me [to meet the guests] saying they've come for some work.
Could it be that my parents' intention is to make me marry?
With these thoughts, I went to the forest.
The whole day, thoughts churned in my *man*.
Returning from the forest [I saw] grains drying [in the courtyard in preparation for a special occasion].
My brothers and sisters began to say we'll eat *kasāro* (sweetmeat served at weddings).
Coming back from the forest, I did my daily work.
My friends began to tease me.
At 4:00 in the afternoon the wedding party came,
This removed my happy look.
My best friends began to gather around me,
They started to cry seeing my face.
At 12:00 noon, I was put in the palanquin.
They nearly dropped me in the Sisa River.
At 6:00 in the evening, we reached the husband's home.
To me, the whole world had become dark.
I gave birth to a son Rajeśwor and a daughter Lakṣmī.
My friends are scattered east and west.
"You come from this side, friends, to the Damaulī gate,
I'll come from this side to meet you."
The friends said, "We'll come," but they had to cross the Sisa River.
I remember my best friends and cried [because I couldn't cross the river].
When the Sisa River rises during the monsoon it seems as big as the Gandaki.
Friends, we've done all we can do; our lives are finished.

This type of *dukha* song, in which daughters criticize their parents for sending them to husbands or families who will cause them hardship, is not new. A remembered fragment from a song at least sixty-

five years old[15] anticipates an early death from a thoughtlessly arranged marriage. In this song, the daughter, Maiya, weeps because the marriage her parents have arranged for her is in the malaria-infested, low-lying jungle region in Nepal called the Tarai,[16] where her life is sure to be short.

Song No. 6

A green meadow and a bright and shining bird,
[People] came to ask for Maiya's hand [in marriage].
Parents: "Why do you sit weeping at the window?
We'll give you a *śirphula* (a golden hairpiece) and dowry."
Daughter: "Why do I need a *śirphula* and dowry?
My life will be short."
Parents: "Why do you say your life will be short?"
Daughter: "You gave a mountain girl to the malaria[-infested Tarai],
I will not have a full life."

The following song, though composed recently, reflects the same resentment toward parents who are not sufficiently concerned about their daughter's welfare to marry her into a hospitable place. The father, taken in by appearances, sends his daughter to an impoverished household where, without resources, her life will be very hard.

Song No. 7

Combing the hair and putting a flower in the hair clip,
Father, don't give your daughter to Baranphat.
Crossing the Bardan River, I have to go to my husband's home,
I have to go there by making my heart as hard as stone.
Carrying a load of grass and walking on the bank of the Bardan River,
Who told you, Father, to give your daughter there?
After crossing the Bardan River, the mango trees are plentiful.
[My father], seeing a boy wearing a Seiko watch and Lee jeans, gave me [to such a house].
Today's fashion is to wear a Seiko watch and Lee jeans.
Father, don't think this boy is rich [just by seeing his possessions].
From outside a tin roof, but inside a curtain [i.e., the outside looks nice, but inside something is hidden].
The Seiko watch was borrowed from others.
A small pot for cooking rice and a *chulo* (traditional wood stove).[17]
Though they are poor, they are great because he wore the Seiko watch.

Some of the songs express this kind of criticism in a different way. In the following composition, at least sixty-five years old, a daughter threatens suicide in order to secure enough goods to command respect in her new home.

Song No. 8

Daughter: "From Patanaka [a town in India], where she has everything,
My co-wife[18] comes from her natal home.
The co-wife brings a hair clip in her dowry,
And she will scold us [she will dominate us because she is from a rich family].
Father, either you give me a hair clip for my dowry,
Or you give me a knife for my dowry [so that I may kill myself]."

Father: "Daughter, you take the hair clip for your dowry,
But I won't give you a knife."

Daughter: "From Patanaka, where she has everything,
My co-wife comes from her natal home.
Father, either you give me a dowry like the one she has brought from Patanaka,
Or, Father, you give me a knife."

Father: "Daughter, you take a dowry like the one she brought from Patanaka,
But I won't give you a knife."

Daughter: "Father, she who has everything has also brought a *tilharī*,[19]
My co-wife comes from her natal home.
Father, either you give me a *tilharī* for my dowry,
Or you give me a knife for my dowry."

Father: "Daughter, you take the *tilharī* for your dowry,
But I won't give you a knife."

Daughter: "Father, she who has everything has also brought a locket,
My co-wife comes from her natal home.
Father, either you give me a locket for my dowry,
Or you give me a knife for my dowry."

Father: "Daughter, you take the locket for your dowry,
But I won't give you a knife."

Daughter: "Father, she who has everything has also brought a copper pot,
My co-wife comes from her natal home.
The co-wife will bring a copper pot in her dowry,
And she will scold us.
Father, either you give me a copper pot for my dowry,
Or you give me a knife for my dowry."

Father: "Daughter, you take the copper pot for your dowry,
But I won't give you a knife."

Although a girl may complain about the preferential treatment her parents give to her brothers, she knows that her life in her *māita* is

much less restricted and laborious than it will be in her *ghar*. There the new wife begins on a low social rung. Her work is directed by her mother-in-law, what little personal property she has can be sold by her husband or father-in-law, and the affection of her husband may come slowly if at all. Only when she has sons does she gain in status. She must, in a sense, work her way up—a process of many years that can be particularly painful if her mother-in-law is unkind, her husband a ne'er-do-well, or the household an impoverished one. Many songs describe the hard life of the new daughter-in-law, the seemingly unending demands of the mother-in-law, and the disregard shown her by other family members. These themes are depicted in the following song:

Song No. 9

The daughter who grew up in her parents' home,
Her mother has been teaching her how to behave in her husband's house.
When it was time to go to her husband's house, her mother told her:

Mother: "You should finish the household tasks before you go to do the fieldwork.
If you have to husk the rice, do it step-by-step [properly].
After you clean the house, then husk the rice.
Clean the door properly.
Do not comb your hair in front of your husband's eldest brother.
Do not open your heart to your elder brother's wife.
Do not talk loudly in front of your father-in-law.
Do not weep in front of your husband [don't show your sadness].
If you do, your household might be in jeopardy.
Do not make mistakes in front of your mother-in-law."

Daughter: "My house is not here, my house is on the other side of Rainas.
Who told my father [that the boy wanted to marry me]?
Crossing nine hills, I have to go to my husband's home.
The mother-in-law scolds me, showing the stick in her hand.
Should I throw away my gift of love or keep it?
When I try to greet her by touching her feet, she hides them.
When I cut the grass and make bundles,
She throws them away, scolding me that the grass is not enough.

On rainy days also, I have to husk the rice grain.
I have to call her *bajyai* (grandmother) even though she hates me."

Once married, a woman is expected to be a good daughter-in-law and wife, working long hours in the house and fields for her husband and his family, comporting herself properly, and showing respect for her in-laws. But in this song the daughter-in-law complains that no matter how much work she does and no matter how hard she tries to please, she is maligned by her mother-in-law and even threatened with a stick. The daughter-in-law is advised to hide her true feelings and show respect through the ritual greeting of touching her forehead to the mother-in-law's feet (*ḍhok dine*) and by calling her by the respectful term for grandmother (*bajyai*).

The *ghar* becomes a married woman's only home. Many of the songs express the married woman's realization that though she may return to her *māita* for Tij and for short visits right after marriage and childbirth, she can never really go home to her parents and siblings. Permanent sanctuary is not available in her *māita*, even if her husband is intolerable. The following song was performed in Naudada in 1986.

Song No. 10

When I sit at the resting place, [I hear] the rustling of the leaves.
Uncle, to whom can I tell my feelings?
Father gave me a day's walk away.
Hey, Mother, it became difficult to know my fate.
I wish I could talk to my father, but my father passed away.
If I talk to my mother, she will start to cry before I speak.
If I talk to my elder brother, his wife will be happy [to hear of my trouble],
She never lets my brother come to get me.
If I talk to my younger brother, his wife scolds us.
When I come to his house for only one or two days, she curses me.
I would talk to my sisters, but they are scattered east, north, and south.
Oh God Śiva, I have nobody in this world.
Because of my heart's sorrows, I have become like one insane. . .

After a girl marries she is no longer the responsibility of her natal family. If a brother tries to help her, his wife resents it and shows her contempt. Her mother can listen to her sorrows but cannot alleviate them, and it grieves her to hear of her daughter's fate at the hands of others. A female cannot talk with her sisters because they may live in far-off villages separated by mountains and rivers.

A song that is at least forty years old makes the same point in a haunting way. It is an eerie tune about a woman who returns to her *māita* because of the bad treatment she received in her *ghar*, but is condemned because she ran away and is denied refuge in her natal home. She is kept from entering the house by various relatives until she is snatched away by a *gurau* (a powerful shaman able to change his form, but here perhaps symbolizing her husband).

Song No. 11[20]

Daughter: "In the dark month of Sāun,
Mother, open the door."
Mother: "You worthless daughter who ran away from your home,
I won't open the door."
Daughter: "With a bundle of wet, stinging nettles,[21]
The mother-in-law would beat me.
The *gurau* has come from the other side [the next village].
Mother, please open the door.
The *gurau* has reached here.
Please open the door."

Encapsulated in the powerful images of the wet bundle of stinging nettles and the *gurau* is a sense of how formidable life can be for a young wife. In the song a woman, no longer able to bear living with a wrathful mother-in-law, seeks shelter in her natal home, but is refused entry first by her mother, then by a succession of other relatives (as the verses are repeated), who accuse her of running away from her rightful place as a wife. In the end the woman is snatched away by the powerful and forbidding figure of the *gurau*.

This song and No. 8 above differ from the newer compositions in that the lines are repeated several times, with the only change being the substitution of a single word with each repetition. This substitution pattern is prevalent in songs at least thirty years old but nonexistent in contemporary compositions. Also, these and many other older songs in our collection are composed in dialogue form. But though the stylistic features have changed, the themes of being sent to one's *ghar* without the resources to command respect, of being powerless against a possibly cruel mother-in-law and uncaring husband, and of longing for one's natal home and yet losing all claim to it, have been carried over from older compositions to those of the present. The precariousness, vulnerability, and powerlessness of women in family life are depicted and, in many songs, questioned as unjust.

Another common theme is the wife's lack of recourse within the husband-wife relationship. *Dukha* songs usually tell of women's ex-

periences in a generic way; they refrain from criticizing specific, named individuals. Nevertheless, a woman may put part of her particular life story into song and, accompanied by her friends, sing it on the day of Tij. Those who hear her know that she is singing of events in her own life, though her words often resonate with their own experiences and stir emotional responses. Song No. 12 was composed by Renu, a woman in her mid-twenties who had never gone to school, but whose parents married her to an educated man. He soon became contemptuous of her, so she returned to her *māita* where she has lived in a somewhat liminal position for the past several years. She begins to cry when she sings of her marriage:

Song No. 12

I worked all day on the flatlands of Salyantar.
On that long road, no one was there.
Though I say no one, my husband was walking with me.
He didn't say a single word on this long road.
I walked ahead and my husband walked behind.
My husband did not scold me.[22]
If he didn't like me, why did he marry me?
If I walk ahead and behind, why did he turn his eyes away from me [why was he angry]?
When I went inside and out, my mother-in-law didn't want to see me.
Though it was a time of drought, my tears created a lake.
You knead flour in a plate and separate oil from water.[23]
If my husband doesn't like me, he will return the vermilion powder.
By fate, you are [as] the brother and I am [as] the sister.
Then I'll say I'm unmarried and go to the river.

Renu's educated husband showed his contempt for her by remaining silent in her presence, not caring to listen to or understand her problems. Her mother-in-law also despised her, and would not even look at her. She worries that her husband will return the *sidur*, the vermilion powder that women wear in the part of their hair as a sign of marriage. If he does so, she threatens to throw herself into the river, a means of suicide carried out by two women in Naudada in the last five years. (For another song about a wife's rejection and mistreatment by her husband, see Song No. 13 in the Appendix.)[24]

Tij songs about the husband-wife relationship describe in poignant detail the misery that can result when the husband "eats" the property through drinking and gambling, and when he is verbally, if not physically, abusive. In 1986, one group sang:

Song No. 14

High schools have opened near the village.
Why doesn't my husband care to study?
These days, we don't want to wear terlin saris,
We won't eat the drunkard husband's leftovers.
Whatever money he has, he takes to the bazaar.
He searches for a place to drink alcohol.
If he has five or ten rupees, he goes to the bazaar.
He forgets his family and household and drinks alcohol.
Waiting in the kitchen, the rice becomes cold,
Waiting for the husband, the night is almost gone.
How much rotten alcohol is there in the Thakali's hotel![25]
The husband came with a stick at midnight.
If I say, "Do not drink alcohol," he threatens to bring a co-wife.
The new wife will give [him wine],
And will give pleasure [instead of me].
And she will give orders, and bring the water to wash his feet.

Raksī (distilled alcohol) is a problem for some families in Naudada. A woman can never be certain that her husband will not turn to drink and engage in the behavior that often accompanies it: selling the property to pay for liquor, gambling with other men who drink, coming home drunk and beating her (see Song No. 15 in the Appendix). Although such behavior is hardly the statistical norm for men, it is not unusual in Naudada and causes great hardship for some families. A man may also bring in a co-wife to compete with the first wife and her children for the husband's emotional and economic support. The following older song shows a bold face to this threat of taking a co-wife.

Song No. 16

Wife: "People say that Tij has brought happiness.
Give me a *śirphula* (golden hairpiece)."
Husband: "Woman, you are too dark,
A *śirphula* would not suit you."
Wife: "The Veda script is black,
So don't read the book [since it too is black]."
Husband: "Woman, you have spoken such things?
I will have a second marriage."
Wife: "If you have a second marriage,
You won't get such a woman as us [black-skinned women].
You may get a beautiful and skillful woman,
But you won't get a woman as skilled as us."

The threat of having to contend with a co-wife is also expressed in Song No. 17 in the Appendix, a song that is at least sixty-five years old.

The following contemporary song is an autobiographical composition by a twenty-year-old woman, Nima, who had been married off two years before. Her husband had scolded and beaten her in periods of drunkenness, and she had returned to her *māita* with her one-year-old son to escape the bad treatment. Both Nima and her mother are in a strained economic condition at this time because her father, who has moved away, has taken a co-wife. This wife has borne him his only son, and he no longer supports Nima and her mother. Nima also says that her husband has not come to take her back and has threatened that he, too, will take another wife. Nima told us that she composed this song from her *man* while she was alone weeding the rice. She cried as she sang:

Song No. 18

Let us grow maize in the field,
Listen, oh sisters, to my heart's lamentations.
My best friends are studying in the tenth grade,
Seeing my friends, I fainted.
Even though I have a desire to study further,
My mother married me off to the Karlung hills.
I have to go cut grass in the Karlung hills,
How much sorrow and sadness are in my heart.
When I heard I was going to the Karlung hills, how sad my heart became,
But no one was there to support me or listen [to my troubles].
My lifeblood is eaten by the leeches in the forest.
My father's brother did not oppose my marriage.
My second uncle was at home and my father was in Pokhara.
At that time, nobody was there who could speak for me.
When I heard I was being married in the Karlung hills, how my heart felt.
My mother's only daughter, I became completely worthless.

This song also touches on an issue that is quite sensitive for many Naudadan women: that of education. Before her marriage, Nima had been a good student enrolled in the ninth grade. Her desire to finish school had been strong, but she had been prevented from carrying out her wish.[26] She feels sad when she sees her friends going to class while she herself has to stay home to look after her son and work in the fields. Many girls in Naudada have to drop out of school though they wish desperately to continue their education, which is seen as providing prospects for a brighter future and alternatives to dependence on an

impoverished husband (see SKINNER 1990a, 1990b). Song No. 19, recorded in 1991, vividly expresses the anger girls feel toward the fate that prohibits them from going to school:

Song No. 19 "The Lamentations of an Uneducated Daughter"
Far from here there is rice and corn and mustard in the garden,
Listen to the lamentations of a daughter.
I was very eager to go to school,
I cried because I could not go to school.
God, you Fate (Bhābī),[27] you visited this sin on me,
You caused me to be born in a poor family.
My peers go to school, carrying books.
It is difficult for me to even recognize the letter *ka*.
When my peers go to school,
I feel that I am unlucky.
When my friends carry books and notebooks, they become happy,
But I have to carry heavy loads.
Unlucky people are not free from carrying heavy loads.
I will spend my life wanting to study,
But my life will be spent enslaved.
How much shall I say about the suffering of my poor heart!
There has been no sunlight in my life,[28]
My desire to study could not be fulfilled.
Bhābī gave us [such a] birth because he was a sinner.
I have cried so much, I have no more tears to shed.

Dukha songs have for many years provided a window on the lives of women as daughters and young wives. They have become emblematic of the time in a woman's life when she is growing up and making the transition from daughter, unequally treated in comparison with her brothers, to young married woman, without socially given power or resources in an alien family.[29] These songs provide not only a reflective objectification of the socially disadvantaged position of young wives and the vulnerability of all wives to drunken husbands, co-wives, and the impoverishment of widowhood, but also identify the roots of this disadvantage as lying in unequal access to two of the major sources of well-being in Nepal: property and education.

Ghaṭanā *Songs*

The third main type of Tij song is the *ghaṭanā*, or "incident song." *Ghaṭanā* songs describe in vivid detail various dramatic or uncommon events that occurred during the past year. The subject material may be incidents known to everyone or news brought back by returning

married daughters from the area in which they live. Topics for recent *ghaṭanā* songs have included a brother and sister who lived together as husband and wife, a tragic minibus accident, plane crashes, a woman's suicide, the building of schools and a hydroelectric plant, and recent political developments. Older *ghaṭanā* songs that were described to us told of untimely deaths and of natural disasters such as hail, locust plagues, or landslides that destroyed crops and left famine in their wake (see Songs Nos. 20–21 in the Appendix).

Although some degree of evaluation of the incident and the actors is found in most *ghaṭanā* songs, one type of *ghaṭanā* song is more explicitly critical: the *rājnīti*, or political song. *Rājnīti* songs chronicle the abuses of those in power, the exploitation of women and the poor, and the foibles and treacheries of the opposing political parties. Our informants remembered songs from the Rana regime (1846–1951) and the panchayat period (1951–1990), with especially vivid recollections from 1979–1980, during which years numerous student demonstrations for political reform forced a national referendum.[30] Political songs have been increasing in number since that time, although it has only been considered safe to sing them openly since the time of Nepal's successful pro-democracy movement in the spring of 1990. With the overthrow of the panchayat system and the advent of democracy, free speech, and a multiparty system, *rājnīti* Tij songs have become numerous; they were sung openly in many regions of Nepal in 1991.[31] The majority of Tij songs composed before 1991 in our collection are *dukha* songs. In 1991, political songs predominated.

Although most new political songs are created by local composers from the villages, some songs are taken from the Tij songbooks that have found their way into Naudada since 1991. One example is the following composition from a pro-Communist songbook, performed in Naudada by a pro-Communist group of women. It is a satirical composition, critical of the ruling Nepali Congress Party that had won a majority of seats in the election held in May 1991, four months before Tij:

Song No. 22 "Why Congress is Necessary"

Sisters of Nepal, we need Congress.
We can say that rivers and countries are common [to India and Nepal].
You can cheat the people.
If you want to be rich, you need Congress.
Businessmen can sell goods at a high price,
Therefore, Congress is needed in Nepal.
You can smuggle and murder.
If you want a job, you need Congress.

You can fire Communist people from their jobs.
Poor people who have nothing need Congress.
You can rape the women freely,
Therefore sisters, we need Congress.
You can terrify, murder, and loot.
Therefore all people need Congress.
We faced up to any type of foes,
Best wishes for Tij 2048.

This song portrays Congress as the party responsible for virtually giving away Nepal's hydroelectric power to India, for failing to control the rapidly rising price of subsistence goods, for discriminating in hiring and promotion practices, and for exploiting women. There are literally hundreds of these songs that advocate one party over another and vividly depict their opponents' misdeeds, including their disregard for women and women's rights.

In the contemporary political climate with its stress on human rights, Tij song composers (especially pro-Communists) have taken up the cause of women's rights as a matter for redress by the government. Their songs call for an end to widely practiced abuses and to the discrimination that relegates women to second-class status. These Tij songs have moved beyond criticism, exhorting their listeners to fight for equal rights, justice, and social change in order to better the lives of women. The following song was sung in Naudada in 1986:

Song No. 23
Listen, oh brother and sister,
Understand and take into your *man*.
This motherland is not only for sons.
"We are the daughters," said the Himal.
You compel the daughter to work hard.
How can we abolish this exploitation?
When the daughter is educated, they call her "prostitute."
They believe such matters.
Our society won't allow women to be educated.
When we think of this, it makes us angry.
They not only select the husband,
And donate us to him like the gift of a cow.
We have no right to select a boy whom we like.
No money is in our hand to spend.
Even when we are sick, we women have to work.
They say we are lazy and trying to cheat them.
A minor mistake, they blow out of proportion.
We women have to live like animals.

How long can we tolerate this kind of custom?
We must become determined to abolish this condition!

The verses and themes of this Tij song are similar to those of a *dukha* song, but the overall tone is different. Although accounts of injustices and inequalities are incorporated as in older Tij songs, the talk of exploitation is more explicit and the call to action is new. They demonstrate that women as a group are demanding an end to the injustices they face.

In 1991 another group of women in Naudada combined some lines from a published Tij song with those they had written themselves to create a song comparing their status as Nepalese women with that of other women in the world:

Song No. 24 "Tij Is Our Festival"
Tij is our festival, Tij is celebrated in a gathering,
This is the time to tell our heart's happiness and sadness (*sukha*/*dukha*).
This happiness and sadness are pressing fully on our hearts,
I have to stay with my eyes full of tears.
Other countries' women have accomplished so much,
Our country's women are involved in dancing.
We only do household work.
Why did you *pañcā*s (officials of the former government) walk about wearing wristwatches [displaying your wealth]?
Women have reached the moon and climbed Mt. Everest.
What have women not done in this world!
They go to school and also to the battlefield,
If they get the chance women can do anything.
The girl child grows by mother's love,
Another child cries upstairs [and must also be taken care of].
Until the mother's love goes to the daughter,
This heart won't have any peace.

This song recognizes that Tij is a time when women can sing about their heartfelt feelings. But instead of focusing on domestic problems and relationships, it orients its performers toward the national and international arena of economic development and takes up the question of women's roles in this broader world. Nepal's women want the opportunity to advance like women of other countries, and they rail against the patriarchal and political systems that relegate them to household work and child care.

Songs Nos. 25 and 26, while not sung in Naudada, were widely distributed via published songbooks. These songs are interesting in that they penetrate and explicitly challenge the ideology that underlies

Tij and the life path expected of Hindu women. In "Not Written by the Fate-Writer," the notion that one's fate is predetermined by past lives is portrayed as a mystification perpetrated by evil men who wish to deceive and enslave women:

Song No. 25 "Not Written by the Fate-Writer"
Women, what has been earned in past life?
We are dominated in this present life.
Fate is written on our foreheads.
Everyone can live if they have luck.
When will we have fate?[32]
We sit in the corner with hands on our foreheads [we don't have fate].
Who is going to write on our foreheads?
Fate wrote on women's foreheads.
Where does this great writer live?
How does he write on our foreheads?
What is the pen like that writes our fate?
Who gave him the pen to write our fate?
We women aren't the ones who ruin our fate.[33]
The evil one has put us in a dark well.
People say that for Bhābī everyone is the same,
He writes on everyone's foreheads.
By making us blind, he pushes us in the well.
This was all planned by the evil tyrant [exploiter].
This present fate does not come from previous lives' earnings.
Fate wrote on our foreheads.
This custom [of attributing a bad lot in life to Bhābī] is nothing [of substance].
It is to deceive us and to make us slaves.

In these lines the belief that past actions determine one's present life is assailed. The composer calls for women to reject the notion that their present bad circumstances are of their own making or result from their own past evil deeds. Women should recognize that their position is not due to fate, but to social and political constructions.

Song No. 26 rejects the patrifocal and textual reading of Tij as a ritual performed to win a good husband and to ensure his welfare. It claims Tij instead as a day of women's liberation.

Song No. 26 "Tij—Why and How?"
Doing worship to Śiva and Pārvatī,
We come to celebrate Tij by fasting.
This fasting is just a pretense,
It is our desire to live as equals of men.

Household work never leaves us,
Our bodies are weathered by the hot sun.
Sometimes we stir the rice, sometimes we stir the burning wood,
Mother always has to comfort the children.
Our life goes round like a sari being put on,
Who kept us in this narrow enclosure?
Who gave us this kitchen work as part of our inheritance?
When did our world become separate [from men]?
We women should have to lift this world [to be like men],
But we always have to carry bundles of grass.
There is no difference between us and men,
But men are higher than us.
With one mouth [men say] god, with another mouth, slave.
We have to kill the kind of scoundrel who says these things.
Let's throw this black insect into the dirty sewer.
For doing this, let's celebrate Tij.
Once a year Tij comes around.
So we ought to dance devoutly, kissing the ground,
Tij falls on the third day of the bright lunar fortnight.
Let's sing, forgetting all our bad feelings.
Let's celebrate women's liberation on Tij day,
Now we will make women conscious.

This published song dismisses the traditional ritual meaning of Tij and presents it instead as a time to enumerate the injustices resulting from the unequal treatment of women.[34] Attacking the system that confines women to the narrow world of the home, the composer calls for women to rid the world of those who propagate such inequalities, and for Tij to be redefined as a place for raising women's political consciousness and freeing them from their constraints.

On the basis of the hundreds of songs we examined, we can assume that Tij songs were probably never homogeneous in content, nor did they emerge from a single antecedent form of the genre.[35] But, old and new, they share a perspective on the lives of women that differs from that promoted by Brahmanical texts and rituals. Certainly the recent Tij songs of the *rājnīti* type contain biting and critical commentary on the political and social system of Nepal, but, as we have shown, *dukha* songs too have for many years offered an alternative analysis of women's lives, one that questions the patriarchal ideology and those laws and practices that make life difficult for women.

There are in fact many points of convergence between the *dukha* songs and those *rājnīti* songs that advocate women's rights. The *rājnīti* songs not only continue the generic form (the melody, rhyme, and rhythm) of the *dukha* songs, but they also analyze women's situa-

tions in ways that clearly utilize the themes of the latter type. They are also practiced and performed in similar ways (at least in Naudada). Although *dukha* songs tend to use more affective imagery and fewer slogan-like lines, they as well as the *rājnīti* songs depict and deplore the situation of women in Hindu society and give analyses of the social and economic oppression of Nepalese women.

As is also evident from the examples given above, multivocality obtains in single songs and in the genre as a whole. A *dukha* song may contain lines from different "voices" (see AHEARN 1991), such as the voices of tradition and authority in contest with counter-hegemonic challenges and critiques. We have chosen here to emphasize the strongest voice expressed in Tij songs: the one that questions the dominant, male-privileged Brahmanical ideology of gender relations, and increasingly, the politics that keep women and the poor in relatively powerless positions. This voice is an important commentary on all the others that encourage compliance with the expected life path. The sentiments and stories in the *dukha* songs express blame and present images of the difficulties of a woman's life. They criticize the mother-in-law who scorns and beats the young wife; the husband who gets drunk, hits his wife, squanders the household assets, and brings in a co-wife; and the parents who are eager to marry their daughters off, regardless of the worth of the match. The songs express not only pain but also a sense of unfairness, and they condemn the system that routinely produces such abuses.[36]

In the Tij festival, women who have observed or experienced the problems associated with being daughters, daughters-in-law, and wives, and who have strong feelings about these problems, join together to compose and sing songs that censure the people who create their difficulties. Their sentiments are shared and sanctioned by all the women of the community, at least in the context of Tij. Their criticisms are, in part, a rejection of the world as defined by the dominant ideology; their words call into question the morality and sometimes the authority of those in power. *Dukha* songs are less explicitly critical than political songs, but they generalize the troubles that come to women both in their *māita* and in their *ghar*, and depict them as unfair.

Elsewhere we have argued that girls who are now learning to sing and compose these newer types of songs are forming a different set of emotions and ideas about being female than that of their mothers (HOLLAND and SKINNER, in press; SKINNER 1990a). These girls have more opportunities for education and political participation than their mothers did. But they continue to use Tij songs in the same way as earlier generations of women: as a means to redefine both themselves and the

broader cultural meanings of what it is to be female. Today their criticism, and even that of the older women, is no longer a ritual event confined to Tij. In 1991, a women's procession in Naudada shouted demands that men stop drinking and gambling and that women be given equal rights. Some of the women later threatened a man who was a perpetual drunk and wife-beater. Although the ideas of fair treatment and equality are also encouraged in other arenas (especially the newly permitted arena of political activity), their acceptance has surely been facilitated by their being encoded in a recognized song genre that women have long used to express and interpret their life situation.

Conclusion

Songs similar in theme to the *dukha* songs described above are often analyzed from a functionalist point of view. Thus women's songs of North India have been described as a "safety valve" that allows women to express opinions and emotions that may not be displayed in other arenas of social life.[37] Functionalist analyses interpret rituals such as Tij as controlled periods of inversion, reversal, or rebellion that serve to release tensions or pent-up emotions in a manner that preserves the status quo. Tij songs seem to fit such a pattern because they have until recently been restricted to the time of the festival. Women are permitted to sing Tij songs through to the day of Ṛṣi Pañcamī, but Naudadan women say that after this day the songs must not be sung until the next year's practice sessions. To do so is a sin.[38]

More recent theories of social and cultural reproduction direct attention to cultural production, to the appropriation of sites and spaces for alternative voices, and to practices of resistance (see Holland and Skinner, in press). Tij songs are created anew each year. The continual process of creation combines with the yearly periods of practice and performance to provide women (and girls who are watching and learning to participate) with a resource to redefine meanings of gender identities and gender relationships within changing sociohistorical and political contexts. Even though Tij songs are banned from public performance except during the festival, the women told us that they keep the words of the songs in their hearts throughout the year (Renu, the composer of Song No. 12, told us that she would often sing Tij songs as she worked alone in the fields). In her fieldwork of 1985–86, Skinner was led to focus closely on Tij because she found that girls were expressing some sense of their lives and self-understandings through Tij songs (1990a).

What has been interpreted as a traditional festival in which women

demonstrate their piety toward patriarchal ideas through the performance of certain rites turns out, on closer view, to be more complex. The rituals of which Tij is a part do not determine the content of the songs. In Tij, women construct and enact the group's experiential sense of and critical commentary on being female. In Naudada, at least, Tij is a site of dynamic activity in which women have for a long time expressed an alternative and critical perspective on their lives and have voiced their dissent and resistance to patriarchal systems of gender and power relations. With the advent of political songs that call for direct action and with the spread of the public expression of women's critical voice beyond the bounds of the festival period, this dissent has become even more explicit. Tij is and has been an important site of critical commentary about the position of women in Nepal; Tij songs are and have been a significant genre of women's critical analysis.

NOTES

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1. Recent work by AHEARN (1991) and ENSLIN (1992) does mention the presence of critical Tij songs near Tansen and in Chitwan. Enslin also describes women's critical voices in other activities.

2. Kusumahar Nepaune, a Nepalese folklorist, described to us a similar collection he had made, and Govinda Sharma, a Tij songwriter, shared his collection with us. This latter compilation came from districts to the west of Naudada. In both of these collections *deutā* songs, *dukha* songs, and *ghaṭanā* songs are all present, with *deutā* songs few and *dukha* songs abundant (see p. 265 of this article for definitions of these terms). A close scrutiny of Sharma's songs showed no major differences from our own, notwithstanding the more westerly area of his collection.

3. In Naudada, the women we interviewed were adamant that their fasting on Tij was related to Kṛṣṇa, and had nothing to do with Śiva and Pārvatī. One Bāhun priest told us that the women sang and danced for fun and to celebrate the birth of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This notion may have come about because Tij falls on Kṛṣṇa *nuwāran*, eleven days after Kṛṣṇa's birthday, and *pūjā* (worship) is done to Kṛṣṇa by the fasting women on the evening of Tij. Another Bāhun, who was recognized as the most knowledgeable priest in the community, explained that Tij is indeed connected to the Śiva-Pārvatī story, but that the women and some of the other priests have become confused and now believe it is done for Kṛṣṇa.

4. See HOLLAND and SKINNER (in preparation) for more details on Tij song production and this latter development.

5. This part of the festival is called *dar khāne*.

6. Widows usually undergo the fasting if they are physically able. Unmarried girls, while allowed to fast, are not compelled to and, in Naudada, generally choose not to. BOUILLIER (1982), who observed Tij in Kathmandu, records that widows fast to ensure marriage to their deceased husbands in the next life and that younger girls undergo this ritual to obtain a good marriage.

7. This unit was called a *panchayat* until the Pro-Democracy Movement in the spring of 1990. After this the word *panchayat* was systematically eliminated. Now the unit is referred to as a *gāũ bikās samiti* (Village Development Committee).

8. Participation in the rituals of fasting and bathing also varies by caste. Newār women do not perform them, but in Naudada we observed women from the lower castes and from one Magar family undergoing the rites. Just which categories of women participate in the various rituals seems to vary locally and regionally, but it is evident from our and others' observations that Tij is no longer solely the domain of Bāhun and Chetrī women (if, indeed, it ever was).

9. AHEARN (1991), who observed Tij in a Magar gaon near Tansen, reported that relatively few Magar women celebrated the rituals of Tij, but many joined in groups to sing Tij songs.

10. See HOLLAND and SKINNER (in press) for an analysis of this change in the formation of Tij groups.

11. The Tij songs we are most familiar with come primarily from central Nepal. We know that songs from the western region of Nepal are slightly different in melody and rhythm and are accompanied by drums and other instruments, but we are not familiar with all of the regional variations in meter and style. We have been told by several observers that Tij songs both east and west share similar themes, though those in the western areas may be more political. Tij songs that were remembered by older Naudadan women from their youth had slightly more complex and varied melodies and were sung to a slower cadence.

12. The titles of the songs are given only when provided by the composer. Most locally produced Tij songs have no titles (Song No. 19 is an exception), whereas almost all published songs do (e.g., Songs No. 22, 24, 25, and 26). For vernacular versions of the translated songs see the Appendix.

13. Indication of the speaker is added for clarity in this and later songs.

14. The life path of Indian and Nepalese Hindu women is variously described in BENNETT (1976, 1983), CAPLAN (1985), DAS (1979), SKINNER (1989; 1990a); and STONE (1978).

15. This song was sung by a woman over eighty years old who remembered singing it in her youth. Her daughter, who was in her fifties, said she sang it in her youth as well. These older women told us that many years ago they sometimes sang the same song for thirty years. Today Tij songs may stay in the repertoire for five or six years at most, but are rarely performed publicly on Tij for more than two consecutive years.

16. This southernmost region of Nepal was malaria-infested up until the 1950s, when a government program virtually eradicated malaria and opened the land up to intensive cultivation.

17. This indicates a poor house because it only has a one small pot for cooking rice and a traditional wood stove.

18. Although it is not legal except under certain circumstances, men sometimes bring a second wife into the household.

19. An ornament of gold hung on a necklace of glass beads that is the symbol of a married woman.

20. Sung to us by Raj Kumari, aged fifty-two, who remembers singing it when she was twelve.

21. Literally "Water in a pot, nettles in a bundle." Moistening stinging nettles in a pot of water makes the pain from the beating worse.

22. Though angry, as indicated by his silence, he did not scold her.

23. A confusing line, but it was interpreted by one translator and a Naudadan to mean that the daughter-in-law and mother-in-law do not get along.

24. Certainly there are many married couples and many daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law who have affection for one another and get along very well. But there are also many incidents of scolding, hitting, and beating. This experience of bad treatment, whether undergone directly or through friends, neighbors, or relatives, is given voice in Tij songs.

25. Thakali is the name of an ethnic group whose members are known for establishing hotels where various kinds of liquor are available.

26. Secondary schools go through the tenth grade, after which students take the examination for the School Leaving Certificate (S.L.C.).

27. Bhābī is said to come on the sixth night after birth to write the fate of each infant on its forehead. Bhābī is sometimes thought of as a goddess and sometimes as fate itself. In the few Tij songs that refer to Bhābī, the being is usually depicted as masculine and malicious.

28. Literally: "The flower in the courtyard has not been in the sunlight."

29. If the daughter finds the husband's household new and strange, the husband's household finds in her a threat to the solidarity of the males—the father and his sons—who dominate the household. BENNETT (1983), analyzing this threat, provides a framework to understand why the emotional coldness described in Tij songs might be there.

30. Our informants could not remember specific lines from these songs. They described what the songs were about.

31. There was an exception. Adhikari, observing Tij in Kathmandu in 1991, noted that Tij songs were banned at Pashupatinath, site of a large Śiva temple that hundreds of women visit during the annual festival. This was perhaps due to the incidents that took place there in 1990, when a Tij song that was explicitly critical of the queen of Nepal was sung and the car that the queen was sitting in was stoned.

32. Alternate translation: "Since we don't have fate, how can we have luck?"

33. It is Bhābī who writes, so we are not responsible for this ourselves.

34. In this song, we note a theme complementary to those of older Tij songs, but not expressed: a direct comparison of the work done by wives versus that done by husbands. This is reminiscent of a major theme of the women's movement in the United States and Europe.

35. BRENNEIS (1991) argues this conclusion for most folklore genres.

36. For a discussion of multivocality in the lives of individual girls and young women, see SKINNER and HOLLAND (1990).

37. For examples of this type of analysis, see JACOBSON (1975), NARAYAN (1986), and SRIVASTAVA (1991). For a more dynamic and cultural production perspective on women's songs in India and Nepal, see EGNOR (1986); SKINNER, VALSINER, and BASNET (1991); and TRAWICK (1991).

38. We were told this in Naudada, but college women from the regional campuses said they would sing them anytime they liked. Also, schoolgirls in Naudada composed Tij songs long before the festival of 1991.

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APPENDIX

Song No. 1

sora sae gopīnī sapai jammā bhaera,
jamumā nuhāuna jhare barīlāi.
sārī jatī phukālera barmā rakhera.
jamunā nuhāuna pase barīlāi,
jamunā nuhāera niskera herdā.
rakheko sārī chaina barīlāi.
muralo oṭhmā kadamko boṭmā,
kṛṣṇale sārī lukāe.
sora sae gopīnīle ūbho pharke herdā,
kṛṣṇale jālīlāi dekhe barīlāi.

gopīnīharū: "he kṛṣṇa jālī, leu hāmro sārī,
hurīmat hāmro liyo, barīlaī?"

krṣṇa: "dui hāt joḍera jumle hāt gara.
taban diūla sārī timīlāi."

gopīnīharū: "he kṛṣṇa jālī, leu hāmro sārī,
timīlāi nai yati mānulā hei."

sora sae gopīnīlāī sapai bāt mānera,
kṛṣṇale sārī die barīlāi.

Song No. 2
Where were Ram and Laxman born?
Where was Sita born?
In Ayodhyama, Ram and Laxman were born.
And Sita was born in Janakpur.
Whose sons were Ram and Laxman?
Whose daughter was Sita?
Dasharatha's sons were Ram and Laxman.
Janak's daughter was Sita.

Song No. 2
kahā nai janme rām, lakṣmaṇ?
kahā janmin sītā barīlāi?
ayodhyāmā janme rām, lakṣmaṇ.
jankapurmā janmin sītā barīlāi.
kasko chorā rām, lakṣmaṇ?
kaski chorī sītā barīlāi?
daśarathakā chorā rām, lakṣmaṇ.
janakaki chorī sītā barīlāi.
[*Sung by a group of Bāhun women in a practice session that we elicited. They thought this song to be very old.*]

Song No. 3
The god of Kaasi sits on a dais of folded hands.
Who will pray to the goddess?
We will sit in the flower garden and make a garland.
We daughters will pray to the goddess.
When will we go and when will we come?
We will pray to the goddess at midday.
At sunrise we will go and at sunset we will return.
We will pray to the goddess at midday.
We will pick a basketful of flowers.
These flowers are for the god of Manakamana.
I remember vividly my co-wife enjoying herself in my house.
Again and again I see [my co-wife], and I get furious.
Keep your daughter in her natal home for Tij,
Or let the flood carry her away.
We will pick a basketful of flowers,
For the god of Nepal.
I remember vividly my co-wife enjoying herself in my house.
Again and again I see [my co-wife], and I get furious.
Keep your daughter in her natal home for Tij,

Or let the flood carry her away.
The father gave [his daughter] across seven rivers.
Who will come to get her?
[Father says] We will make a bridge over seven oceans,
And come to take our daughter.

Song No. 3

kāśīko deutā ājīl māthi basekā.
kalle garlā bara-dān devaṭīko dhyān?
phūlbārimā basamlā phūlko mālā gẽsamlā.
hāmī chorī garumlā devaṭīko dhyān.
kun belā jāulī, kun belā āuli?
madhyenīmā garaulā devaṭīko dhyān.
udāe jāmlā astāe āulā.
madhyenīmā garaulā devaṭīko dhyān.
ḍālimā bhari phūl ṭipi rakhi.
mankāmanāko deutālāī.
gharmā dekhchu jhalimali sautā.
jhaljhali dekhchu jhaḍkelā.
tījmā chorī māita pāla,
tījmā chorī bagāedeũ.
dālimā bhari phūl ṭipi rakhi,
nepālko deutālāī.
gharmā dekhchu jhalimali sautā.
jhaljhali dekhchu jhaḍkelā.
tījmā chorī māita pāla,
tījmā chorī bagāedeũ.
sātai gaṅgā pāri nāri die bābā.
tījmā lina ko jālā?
sātai samudra sẽghuwāri dimlā,
celilāi lina āulā ni ho.
[*Sung by a Chetrī woman over eighty years old who thought the song was at least sixty-five years old.*]

Song No. 4

chorī: bihāna uṭhera phūl ṭipna jẽdā,
phūl maile ṭipina śīta bhanera.
bāu āmāko gharmā kām garāunu rahecha,
ẽganko cheupani pāido rahenacha.
āmā/bāu: ẽganko cheupani dhān sukāuna cāhincha,
jāu chorī āphnai ghar aṅśa pāincha.
chorī: jānu paryo hāmīle ritto jholā bokera,
dāju bhāile aṅśa lāuchan kīla ṭhokera.
dāju bhāiko kapaṛā bākasmā kuhincha,
hāmīlāī euṭā lugā dīdā āsu cuhincha.

Song No. 5

māgna bhanī āekā rahechan yāhā̃ thiena gharmā.
kastā khāle pāhunā hun bhanchu he mata?
nikai kāmle āekā bhani malāī ḍākani.
bāu āmāko sur rahecha bibāha āṭani?
yeti kurā bhanera gaẽ ma ta banamā.
dinai bharai kurā khelyo bhitri manamā.
banabāta āũdā ta biskunko pasāro.
bhāi bahinī bhanna thāle khāne kasāro.
banabāṭa āera basẽ āphnai surale.
sāthīharū jīskyāunchan pārsī kurāle.
belukīko cāra baje āe jantī hururu,
yo hā̃silo mohaḍā lage hururu.
hitkā sāthī basna thāle cārai paṭṭi gherera,
dhururu runa thāle mukhmā herera.
diũsoko bāhra baje caṛhai die ḍolāmā.
jhaṇḍai malāi laṛai dienan śiśā kholamā.
belukīko cha baje puryāīhāle yo ghara.
andhakāra bhayo malāī sārā sansāra.
chorā pāẽ rajeśwor chorī pāẽ lakṣmī.
yeti jābo sāthī pani purba paścima.
"yetabāṭa āu hai sāthī damaulīko geṭmā,
utābāṭa mai āũchu sabailāī bheṭana."
sāthī bheṭna āũchu bhanyo śīśa kholā arko pāra.
hitko sāthī samjhera roẽ he ma ta.
śīśa kholā baṛdākherī hũdo rahecha gaṇḍaki.
yeti kaimā gayo sāthī hāmro jindagī.

Song No. 6

hariyo caur sukilo carā,
maiyā̃lāī māgna āeni hai.
āmā/bāu: "jhyāl basī kina runchau maiyā̃?
śirphula dāijo dimlā nī hai."
chorī: "śirphula dāijo kina cāhiyo hāmīlāī?
āyu ta puro chaina nī hai."
āmā/bāu: "āyu ta puro kina chaina bhanchau?"
chorī: "śikhakī chorī aũlāmā diyau,
āyu ta puro chaina nī hai."

Song No. 7

kapālu korera phul lāune kāṭāmā,
bāule chorī nadinu bardan phāṭamā.
ghar jānuparcha maile bardan kholā tarera,
ḍhuṅgā bhandā sāhro mana maile garera.
ghā̃sko bhāri liera bardan kholā cheucheu,
kalle bhanyo bubālāī chorī tyāhā̃ deu?

bardan kholā tarepachi ãpko pāt sasto cha.
sāiko ghaṛi liko pāint lāko [lageka] dekhera.
sāiko ghaṛi liko pāint lāune ājkal jamānā.
yo keṭa ta dhani cha bubā nabhana.
bahira herdā ṭinko chāno, bhitra pardā ṭãgeko.
sāiko ghaṛi bãdheko raicha [rahecha] māgeko.
ek māne kasaũṛimā bhāt pakāune culo cha.
sāiko ghaṛi bãdheko cha tyasai ṭhulo cha.

Song No. 8

chorī: "he paṭanakā hajārīyā bābā,
sautānīkā māiti ni hai.
sautāle lyāulan kilīpa dāijo,
hāmīlāī lāulān bacana.
ki deu bābā kilīpa dāijo,
ki deu bābā churī dāijo."

bāu: "laijāu celī kilīpa dāijo,
nai die celīlāī churī dāijo."

chorī: "he paṭanakā hajārīyā bābā,
sautānīkā māiti ni hai.
ki deu bābā paṭanīko dāijo
ki deu bābā churī dāijo."

bāu: "he laijāu celī paṭanako dāijo,
nai die celīlāī churī dāijo."

chorī: "tilharī ka hajārīyā bābā,
sautānīkā māiti ni hai.
ki deu bābā tilharīko dāijo,
ki deu bābā churī dāijo."

bāu: "laijāu celī tilharīko dāijo,
nai die celīlāī churī dāijo."

chorī: "jantaruko hajārīyā bābā,
sautānīkā māiti ni hai.
ki dinus bābā jantarako dāijo,
ki dinus bābā churī dāijo."

bāu: "laijāu celī jantaru dāijo,
nai die celīlāī churī dāijo."

chorī: "kaḍarukā hajārīyā bābā,
sautānīkā māita ni hai.
sautāle lyāulan kaḍaruko dāijo,
hāmīlāī lāulān bachana.
ki deu bābā kaḍaruko dāijo,
ki deu bābā churī dāijo."

bāu: "laijāu celī kaḍaruko dāijo,
nai die celīlāī churī dāijo."

Song No. 9

māitamā basera hurkeko chorīlāī,
aba sikāi āmāle ghara barīlāi.
āmāle bhannu bho ghara jani belāmā:
āmā: "gharko dhandā bhyāera jāu melāmā.
dhāna kuṭnu cha bhane yak pāela uṭhana.
dailo sailo potera dhān kuṭana.
sarara potera bhitra bāhir nachoṛa.
jeṭhājūko sāmunne kapāla nakora.
jeṭhanī ho bhanera hitko kurā nakhola.
sasurāko sāmunne carko nabola.
swāmī ho bhanera timīle ãsu najhāra.
tyo ãsuko sāmunne jālā gharabār.
sāsuko sāmunne galti napār."
chorī: "ghara ta mero yahã hoina rāināsko pallo cheu.
kalle bhanyo bubālāī chorī
jānai paryo maile ghara nāwaũ dãṛã kāṭera.
gāli garchina sāsule lauro tākera.
māyāko koseli rakhne ki phyākni?
ḍhoka din jãdākheri goḍo lukāuni.
mari meti ghãs kātyo maile muthā ganera,
huryāidiena sāsule thorai bhanera.
kuṭna parne ghayã pāni pareni.
bajyai bhani bolna parni ãkhā tareni."

Song No. 10

cautārīmā basum bhane pharara barko pāt.
kallai bhanu māmā ho yo manako bāt?
bubāle dinubhayo dinako bāṭo hīḍnalāī.
gārai paryo āmā ho karma cinnalāī.
bubā sīta bhanum bhane bubā swarga hunu bho.
āmā sīta bhanum bhane pahilyau runu bho.
dāju sīta bhanum bhane bhāujū kākhī ṭhoknechan,
dāju lina āũdā pani bhāujū roknechan.
bhāi sīta bhanum bhane buhārīko khatana.
ek dui dina āũdā pani lāuli bacana.
didī sīta bhanum bhane purba dakṣiṇa uttara.
āu he śiva bhagawān mero ko cha ra.
yo manko birahale pāgal sari bhayo man . . .

Song No. 11

chorī: "sāun māsko niśmalī rātā,
ughārnus āmā daīlo."
āmā: "bhāgera āune timī jābā celīlāī,
ughārdina ma ta daīlo."
chorī: "ārīmā pāni sisnoko ãṭho,

sāsu parnele laī ni hai
tyahī pāribāṭa gurau ā cha [āeko cha].
ḍhokā kholnus āmāle.
āunai ma āyo gurau pani.
ughārī denau [dienau] daīlo."

(*Verses are repeated with āmā being replaced with bābā, dāju, and didī.*)

Song No. 12

dina bhari kāma garẽ salyāṇtarko phāṭama.
kohi pani thienan lāmo baṭomā.
kohi thienan bhanu bhane swāmī thie sāthamā.
ekai bacan bolena lāmo baṭomā.
aghi aghi ma hīḍẽ pachi pachi swāmī chāhi.
swāmīle gāli chāhi garena barīlāi.
man napari napari kina bibāha gareko?
aghi pachi hīḍdā pani ākha tareko.
bhitra bāhira gardā pani nasahane sāsule.
khaṛerīmā tāl paryo mero ãsule.
thālmā piṭho muchera telmā pāni tarkāīdeu.
man napare swāmīle sīdur pharkāīdeu.
timī dāju ma bahinī karmako nātāmā.
kanye bahinī hu bhanera jānchu kholāmā

Song No. 13

Today I gather fodder near the house,
Listen, everyone, to my sorrows.
My father gave me to such a house as this,
I have to work all the time or they won't feed me rice.
They scold me and make me work all night long,
I have to do such work and it doesn't matter to you [the husband].
He [the husband] loves his younger sister so much,
Though I am a girl, not even my father loves me [i.e., he sent me to such a place].
I pleaded with you, Father, not to marry me, but you had already decided.
This old man's burden is gone now.
You just saw the boy and not his family's background,
My life will be spent like this.
You gave your daughter, Father, to such a house,
I must stay here, always crying.
He [husband] has become so proud that he is educated,
Each evening he comes home and doesn't understand my problems.
He has studied up to I.A., B.A.,
He is so proud he doesn't even speak to me.
The match between us is not good,

My life is spent in torment.
I had to work the whole night winnowing at a faraway mill,
Don't give daughters to such a place.
The fate of daughters cannot be known,
We [women] also know where to give daughters.

Song No. 13

āja maile ghās kaṭe bāri cheuko simānā,
sunnu holā sabaile mero bilauna.
dinu bhayo bubāle nahune gharamā,
sadhai maile kām gare bhātko bharamā.
rāta bhari kām lagāune nāmnārā diera,
malāī kām yasto cha timīlāī ke bho ra.
usko kākhko bahinīlāī kati māyā garekā,
malāī mātra bubāle tyahā pārekā.
nadeu bubā bhanu bhane keṭo roji sakecha.
yo buṛhāko kaṣṭa aba jāne cha.
keṭo mātra heryau bubā herenau gharāmā,
yesai garī jāne bho mero jobana.
diyau bubā chorīlāī tyasto gharmā gaera,
basnu paryo maile sadhai roera.
paṛheko bhanera hīḍcha ṭhulo bhaera,
mero markā bujhena gharmā āera.
paṛhna ta paṛheko āi. e. bi. e. paṛhiko,
bolna pani boldaina kati caḍheko.
kaṇṭhāko śiraphula parecha sirānmā,
jīndagī jāne bho pirai piramā.
ṭaṛhā rahecha mil pani ḍhikī jāto rātīmā,
chorī dina najānu tyo ṭhāumā.
chorī karīma [karma] nasakīne cinnalāī,
hamīle pani jānyāchaũ [jānekāchaũ] chorī dinalāī.
[*A recent composition performed in a practice session by a group of Chetrī women in 1991.*]

Song No. 14

padherā bhanjyānmā hāi skul khuleko.
kina holā swāmīle paṛhna bhuleko?
āja bholi jamānāmā ṭerlin sārī lāidaina,
raksī khānī swāmīko juṭho khāidaina.
cār paisā bhaepani khairenimā jānī re.
kā̃ cha raksī bhanera najar lāuni re.
pā̃c-das rupiyā̃ bhaepani khairenimā jānī re.
gharbārlāī nadekhera dāru khānī re.
bhānchāmā basdā basdā bhāt chiso bhaisakyo,
āulān swāmī bhandā bhandā rāt gaisakyo.

thakāliko hoṭelmā kati raksī kuhekā!
madhya rātmā āe swāmī laṭṭhi liera.
nakhā raksī bhanum bhane kānchī lyāuchu bhandichana.
aba āuni kānchīle ___ khwānunecha.
___ khwāunecha sukha pani rojnecha.
goḍā dhuna pāni leu swāmī bhanincha.

Song No. 15

In Pokhara, [there is] an electricity line,
Listen to the description of the drunken husband.
Rising in the morning, he goes down to the hotel,
Who will do the household chores?
The hotel girl has probably [already] made the tea [for the day].
The *raksī* [distilled alcohol] has finished all the money.
The household wealth has all gone to the *hīronī* [a cinema role—refers to a hotel girl here].
The most fertile land is all finished because of his drinking *raksī*.
Whatever money you have, it is not enough,
Two or even four bottles of *raksī* is not enough for you.
If I say, "Don't drink," he replies, "I'm not drinking your father's [property]."
The most fertile land is gone and still he does not know [how much he has spent].
The best land is gone because of the drunkard husband,
How will we spend our lives?
The whole day the husband king drinks a jar [of *raksī*],
[The wife says] You don't need to return home after drinking there in the evening.
In Pokhara bazaar, [there is] an electricity line,
The household property is not mine.
The housewife is an outsider,
All the household property is needed [for *raksī*].
If this wife is not enough, you can get another,
The head of the cock will be caught [i.e., with two wives he'll have problems].
Why do you hold your head [looking worried]? Go sell the buffalo and pigs,
If you don't have enough money [for *raksī*], you will even sell your wife.
After selling his wife, he'll become a *jogi* [here: a beggar without a wife].
I, the daughter, will go stay at my natal home.
If I want a man, I can find one just like you,
For my parents' reputation, I have to stay with you.

Song No. 15

pokharāko bajārmā bijuliko laina,
raksī khāne swāmīko suna byāna.
bihāna uṭhera rodi hoṭel jharni,
gharko ghar dhandā kasle garni?
ciyā pakai rakhī holi hoṭelki nānīle.
paisā jati sakiyo tāto pānile.
gharko paisā sakiyo hironīlāī liera.
gairī khet sakiyo raksī piera.
bis tis rupiyā paisāle hajurlāī pugdaina,
dui cār boṭal raksīle chudai chudaina.
nakāu raksī bhannu bhani tero bāuko khāchaina.
gairī khet gai sakyo ājhā thā [thāhā] chaina.
gairī khet becera raksī khāne swāmīle,
ke garera jivan bitāu hāmīle?
din bhari swāmī rājā boṭal bhari jarkina,
bharai dekhī pardaina ghara pharkina.
pokharāmā bajārmā bijuliko laina,
yo gharko sampati mero chaina.
gharko śrīmāntīlāī bāhira bāṭo lāincha,
yo gharko sampati jammai cāhincha.
yo nārī nabhae arko nārī pāincha,
bikāsi bhāleko ṭāuko samāincha.
kina ṭāuko samāuchau rāgo sũgur maside.
gharko śrīmāntīlāī laera becīde.
śrīmāntī becera hīḍa jogi bhaera.
ma chorī ta basī dinchu māita garera.
khoje hudi pāincha timī jasto sāhu,
malāī ta cāhieko bāu āmāko nāu.
[*Composed and sung by a group of Chetrī women in 1990.*]

Song No. 16

śrīmāntī: "jamai jamai tīj āyo bhancha.
kamāi deu rājai śirphula."
śrīman: "timī mā nārī kālimā chau ra,
suhāũdaina śirphula."
śrīmāntī: "vedakā akṣar kāla hunchan rājai,
napaṛhna rājai pustaka."
śrīman: "yatikā bacan jāni lāyau nārī,
dosarī bibāha ghanakāũlā."
śrīmāntī: "dosarī bihāba ghanakāũlā bhane,
hāmī jastī nārī ta pāuna.
rupakī ni pāulā gunakī ni pāulā,
hāmī jasti sipākī pāuna."

Song No. 17

She rose up and went to fetch water,
The sunflower has stopped the water.
I have on one side an enemy,
And a co-wife has been written on my forehead.
I had taken out the hair ornament in order to wear it.
But had put it down because I was shy in front of my brother-in-law.
The *jeṭhānī* (husband's elder brother's wife) found it and gave it to my co-wife.
I told my husband that the co-wife wore it.
I had taken out the earring in order to wear it,
But had put it down because I was shy in front of my brother-in-law.
The *jeṭhānī* got it and gave it to my *deurānī* (husband's younger brother's wife).
I told my husband that the co-wife wore it.

Song No. 17

bihāna uṭhi pāni lina gaeki,
surya maṇḍalphulle pāni chekeko.
e kunāmā mero kokhīmā bairī,
dosarī nidhāramā sautā lekheko.
śirako śirphul lāuna bhani jhikethẽ.
jeṭhājyūko sarimale bhaīmā rākhẽthẽ.
jeṭhānīle pāicha sautānīle lāicha.
swāmī rājāī yo sautānīle lāī bhant bā.
kānako ḍhuṅgri lāuna bhanī jhikẽthẽ,
jeṭhājyūko sarimale bhaīmā rākhẽthẽ.
jeṭhānīle pāicha deurānīle lāicha.
swāmī rājāī yo sautānīle lāī bhanī bā.
[*Sung by a group of older Chetrī women who believed this song to be at least sixty-five years old.*]

Song No. 18

gāũmā charnaũ dana makai tinana,
sunna holā didī bahinī manko bilanā.
āphu saṅgako sāthīle dasa kakṣhā paṛheka,
dekhadā kheri sāthīlāī murchai pareko.
ajhai pani paṛhaula bhanne thiyo manāimā,
āmāle dinale karlung dāṛāmā.
ghās kaṭana jānu parcha karlungako dāṛāmā,
kati pira pardo ho mero manamā.
karlung dāṛā bhandākheri mero man kasto bho,
tetinkherā hudo bolne mero ko bhora.
jyānko khuna kehī chaina banako jugā kharile.
nadine ni bhaenan māhīlo bubāle.

māhīlo bubā gharmā bubā thie pokharā.
tetinkhera hudo bolne mero ko ko thiyo.
karlung dāṛā bhandākheri mero mana kasto bho.
āmāko ma chorī sārai sasto bho.

Song No. 19

pāri pākhā dhān makai ghar bārimā tilama,
sunna holā ma chorīko yasto bilanā.
skul jāne rahara malāī ati bhaeko,
skul jāne napāera mata roeko.
īswar bhābī timile mero pāpa lieko,
garibako kokhamā basa dieko.
āphu saṅgakā sāthīharū kitāb chepi skula.
"ka" ko achera cinnalāī malāī muskila.
āphu saṅgakā sāthīharū skulamā jādā ta,
ma ta kati abhāgi rahechu mana ta.
sāthīharū ramāuchan kitāb kāpi cyāpera,
maile hīḍna pareko bhāri bokera.
abhāgilāī choṛne chaina nāmlo lera ḍokāle choṛne.
mero jīvan bitne bhayo paṛhna dhokāle.
jinḍagi nai jāne bhayo dāsi bhai khelaunā.
kati bhannu ma dukhiko manko bilaunā [bilanā]!
āganko phūllāi jhulke ghāmle choena,
ma dukhīko paṛhne icchā purā bhaena.
janma diyo hāmīlāī bhābī pāpī hunāle.
āsu mero sakiyo sadhai runāle.

Song No. 20

There's a small house with a roof of leaves on the next hill.
This house is the property of a father and mother.
When opening the door of that house,
A small child was crying.

Child: "Oh, middle uncle, oh, second mother!
Where are my mother and father?"

Uncle: "Your father has gone to Kaasi [i.e., he is dead].
And your mother became a *sati*."

Sati: "I will leave my golden hairpiece here,
If you will raise my child."

Uncle: "We don't need the golden hairpiece,
We believe it is our duty to raise the child."

Song No. 20

tyahī pāri dāṛā jhiṅaniko chano.
āmā ra bubāko gharbāra.
gharbāra ḍhoka ughāri herdā,
eklai bālaka roirako [roiraheko].

bālak: "he māilā bābā he māilī āmā!
āmā ra bā khoi barīlāi?"
māilā bāu: "timaro [timro] bābā kāśimā gae,
timaro āmā sati barīlāi."
sati: "śirako śirabandī mai choḍi jāūlā,
yasai bāllāi pālī die."
māila bāu: "śirako śirabandī cāhīdaina hāmīlāī,
dharmako āśiṣ pālīdiūlā."

[*Sung by a forty-year-old Chetrī woman who said she learned it before she left her* māita *at age fourteen. She thought it was much older, however, dating it back to the time when the practice of* sati *occurred. This practice, though never common in Nepal, was outlawed in 1920.*]

Song No. 21

There was a landslide in Nisan,
And the river Kaali became dark.
The first time the cowshed slid down,
The second time our father was taken.
I don't see the cowshed,
I just see my father's face.

Song No. 21

niśānaimā pahiro gae,
kālīmā gaṅgā thunie.
ekmā gayo gāiko goṭha,
dosari lagyo bā lai lai.
gāiko goṭh najarle dekhdina,
jhaljhalī dekhchu bā lai lai.

[*Sung by a group of Chetrī women who said this song was at least twenty-five years old.*]

Song No. 22 "kāṅgres nai cāhincha"

nepālkā didī bahinī kāṅgres nai cāhincha.
nadi-nālā desai sarāha bagna pāincha.
sarbahār jantālāī ṭhagna pani pāincha.
pūjīpati bannu pare kāṅgres cāhincha.
bepārī sāmān pani mahāgo,
yasile ta yo nepālmā kāṅgres cāhincha.
taskarī ra hatyā pani garna pāincha.
katai jāgir garnu pare kāṅgres cāhincha.
kamnīṣṭkā mānisko jāgir khosna pāincha.
kehi nabhaekā gariblāī kāṅgres cāhincha.
khulelāmā māhilāko ījjat luṭna pāincha,
yasaile ta didī bahinī kāṅgres cāhincha.
āṭaṅka ra hatyā lūṭ garna pāincha,

tyasaile ta sarbahār jantālāī kāṅgres cāhincha.
jasto sukai śatru āepani garyaũ hāmīle sāmanā,
aḍcālis sāl tījko subha kāmanā.

Song No . 23

suna suna didī bahinī suna dāju bhāi ho,
yo kurālāī jāne bujhi manamā lini ho.
chorāko mātra hoina matribhūmi nepāl.
choriko jāta huna bhancha himāl.
chorīlāī bhane kāma garauna khaṭāune.
yasto ṭhulo atyācār kyārī (kasari) haṭāune?
chorī paṛhne beśyā bhanchan kurau ho.
aṭera yasto kurā pani mānchan patera.
chorī paṛhna hudaina bhancha hāmro samājā.
yo kurālāī samjadā lāgcha namajā.
yati mātra hoina ajha keṭo chānera,
bācchi jastai dān garchana dharma ṭhānera.
na ta keṭo rojne na ta milne man.
na ta āphu kharcha garna pāuni dhana pani.
birāmi hũdāpani sukha chaina nārīlāī.
ālchini ṭhagai bhanchan barī.
sāno galti bhae pani ṭhulo galti pārera.
basnu parcha nārīle pāśu banera.
yasto calana sahera katinjel bācne ho?
yo calanalāī khatam pārne kammar kasne ho!

Song No. 24 "tīj hāmro chāḍ ho"

tīj hāmro chāḍ ho, tīj mānne melā ho.
yo manko dukha sukha bhanne belā ho.
yo manmā thicera muṭu bhari bokera.
basnu paryo gahai bhari ãsu rokera.
aru deskā nārīle kati bikās khulayo,
hāmro deskā nārīle nācle bhulayo.
nārīlāī basi samai lugā sutā ganera.
kina hīḍyau pañcako gharī bādhera?
chandramāmā pugenan ki sagarmāthā caṛenan.
sansārmā nārīle ke ke garenan!
skulmā paṛhachan laṛāina lagdachan,
mauka pāe nārīle je ni gardachan.
āmāko piyārle ṭhulo huncha bālikā,
ārko baccā roirā cha bhitra talamā.
jaba samma āmāko nyāno pugcha nārīlāī,
kahile pani yo man śānta hunna barīlāi.

Song No. 25 "bhābī lekheko hoina"
us juniko kamāī ke nārī ho?
davera basechaũ ahile junīmā.
bhāgyakarma nidhārmā lekhincha.
bācne ho sabaile bhāgya bhaemā.
kahile hunthyo takdiramā nabhāko?
purpuro chāmera basa kunamā.
kasle holā takdiramā lekhdine?
bhāgyale lekhyo re nārī nidhārmā.
kahā bascha tyati ṭhulo lekhandās?
kasari lekhdincha hāmro nidhārmā?
kasto holā bhāgya lekhne kalam?
kasle kalam die holā bhāgya lekhna?
hāmī bhāgya ke bagathyaũ nārīle.
andhākarko kuvāmā hālyo pāpīle.
bhanchan hāmlāī (hāmīlāī) bhābī sabko eutai ho,
duniyāko nidhārmā lekhcha tyasaile.
ākhā phorī kuvāmā dhakelne.
yo sabai jāla race śosak pāpīle.
nata hāmro us junīko kamāī ho.
na lekhyo bhābīle hāmro nidhārmā.
yo calan ta kehī pani hoina.
jhukkāeka hāmīlāī dās banāuna.

Song No. 26 "tīj—kina ra kasari?"
śivajī ra pārvatīko upāsnā garera,
tīj mānna āyaũ bhokai basera.
upabās kasnu ta hāmro mātrai bahānā,
puruṣ-nārī samāna bãcne hāmro cāhanā.
hāmīlāī chorne hoina kahilyai gharko kāmle,
jiu pani sukisakyo tāto ghāmle.
kahile bhat culyāunu kahile dāura tulyāunu,
sadhai parcha āmāle nānī phulyāunu.
hāmro jīvan huncha are phariyāko pheromā.
kasle rākhyo hāmīlāī yo sāngro (sāguro) gharoma?
kasle aṅśa lāyo hāmlāī (hāmīlāī) culā-caũkādhansār?
kaso gari bhayo hāmro chuttai sansār?
sīgo sṛṣiṭa ucālera basnu parne nārīle,
tara hāmlāī chāṛena ghāsko bhārīle.
pharak chaina puruṣ ra hāmī bãcne bhaipani,
puruṣharū hāmī bhandā ṭhulā tai pani.
eutai mukhle devi bhancha ra eutai mukhle kamārī.
tyasto bhanne duṣṭalāī aba namāri.
yasto kālo kirā phālaũ hāmro gandhe nālikā.
tyaskai lāgi manaũ āja haritālikā.

barsa dinmā tīj āũcha bārhai mahinā ghamera.
āja hāmī nācne ho māṭo cumera,
bhadau śukla tr̥tiyāko dinlāī pārera.
tīj gāu manko mailo jhārera.
nārī mukti divas yai tījmā manāũ,
aba hāmle (hāmīle) nārīlāī sacet banāũ.