

Tribhuvan University

The Blemished Reality of Women in the Selected Lyrical Songs of Tara Thapa

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English,  
for the Approval of the Research Committee in the Partial Fulfillment of the  
Degree of Master of Arts in English

By

Urmila Rai

Roll No: 3215044

T.U. Regd. No: 7-1-7-698-99

Department of English

Saraswati Multiple Campus,

Lekhnath Marg, Kathmandu, Nepal

June, 2025

## Declaration

I hereby declare that this research paper entitled “The Blemished Reality of Women in the Selected Lyrical Songs of Tara Thapa” is submitted to the Research Committee of Saraswati Multiple Campus, Thamel, Kathmandu is my original work and has not been submitted previously to any other institution or university for any degree or diploma.

All sources of information and help received during the course of this research have been duly acknowledged.

This work is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I understand that if this declaration is found to be false, disciplinary action may be taken in accordance with the policies of the institution.

Urmila Rai

## Letter of Recommendation

This is to certify that *Urmila Rai* has completed her research paper entitled “The Blemished Reality of Women in the Selected Lyrical Songs of Tara Thapa”, under my supervision. I hereby recommend that her thesis be submitted for viva voce.

.....

Kul Bahadur Khadka

Associate Professor

Department of English

Saraswati Multiple Campus

Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “The Blemished Reality of Women in the Selected Lyrical Songs of Tara Thapa” submitted to the Department of English, Saraswati Multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University, by Urmila Rai, has been approved by the undersigned of the research committee.

Research Committee:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

.....

Kul Bahadur Khadka  
Supervisor

.....

Arvind Dahal  
External Supervisor

.....

Program Coordinator/HOD  
Dr. Chandra Bahadur KC

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Acknowledgements**

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Associate Professor Kul Bahadur Khadka, Department of English, Saraswati Multiple Campus (SMC) for his invaluable guidance, constant support, and encouragement throughout the course of my research.

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Chandra Bahadur K.C., Head of the Department of English, SMC, for his invaluable remarks. I would also like to extend my big thanks to Prof. Dr. Babu Ram Khanal, our ex-coordinator who was always helpful, approachable and committed.

I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to singer Tara Thapa for her kind contributions for this research, both through her incredible musical performance and valuable insights shared during interviews.

My huge thank goes to my family for their steady love and faith in me and a cordial appreciation to my incredible friends whose companionship and motivation were continuous source of my strength. The discussions, shared challenges, and cooperation played a vital role in my progress.

I can't thank enough to my lecturers and the entire faculty members of SMC for their valuable insights and knowledge during lectures and discussions. Thank you so much for always inspiring and untiring support and making my campus experience better.

Finally, I thankfully acknowledge all those who contributed directly or indirectly to make this research possible.

Urmila Rai

June 2025

## **Abstract**

This research paper aims to analyze and investigate how the women are portrayed as subordinated to men in the eight purposively selected songs sung by Tara Thapa in the contemporary society. To address this objective, the researcher is going to examine the primary text (lyrics) of each song and analyze it in-depth by using the liberal feminism. The study aims to explore how the reality of women is blemished or misrepresented in different forms of literatures like poems, songs and novels. Here the researcher aims to explore how both the male and female lyricists have used the different metamorphic symbols in their songs to show the superiority of men in the contemporary society. Tara Thapa, a female singer who has sung songs of female lyricists as well as male lyricists embodies the patriarchal ideas challenging the traditional gender roles. This study has used the qualitative analysis and applies liberal feminist theory as the main analytical tool. The significance of this research study lies in its attempt to reveal the hidden gender biasness in popular cultural norms and to show how the songs behold the deep cultural meanings while also offering the potential for social change for equality, freedom and autonomy.

**Keywords:** Blemished reality, liberal feminism, metamorphic symbols, patriarchy, social norms, subordinate

## Table of Contents

Letter of Recommendation

Letter of Approval

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Chapters	Pg No.
I. Songs of Silence and Strength: Representation in the Songs of Tara Thapa	
II. Unveiling Women's Subjugation through a Liberal Feminist Lens	10
III. Women's Struggles and Blemished Realities	26
IV. Female Subordination as a Symptomatic Reading	50
Works Cited	

List of Figures:

1. Songstress Tara Thapa in Paleti Series (2068 BS)
2. Songstress Tara Thapa's Folk Album (2039 BS)



Fig 1: Songstress Tara Thapa in *Paleti* Series (2068 BS)

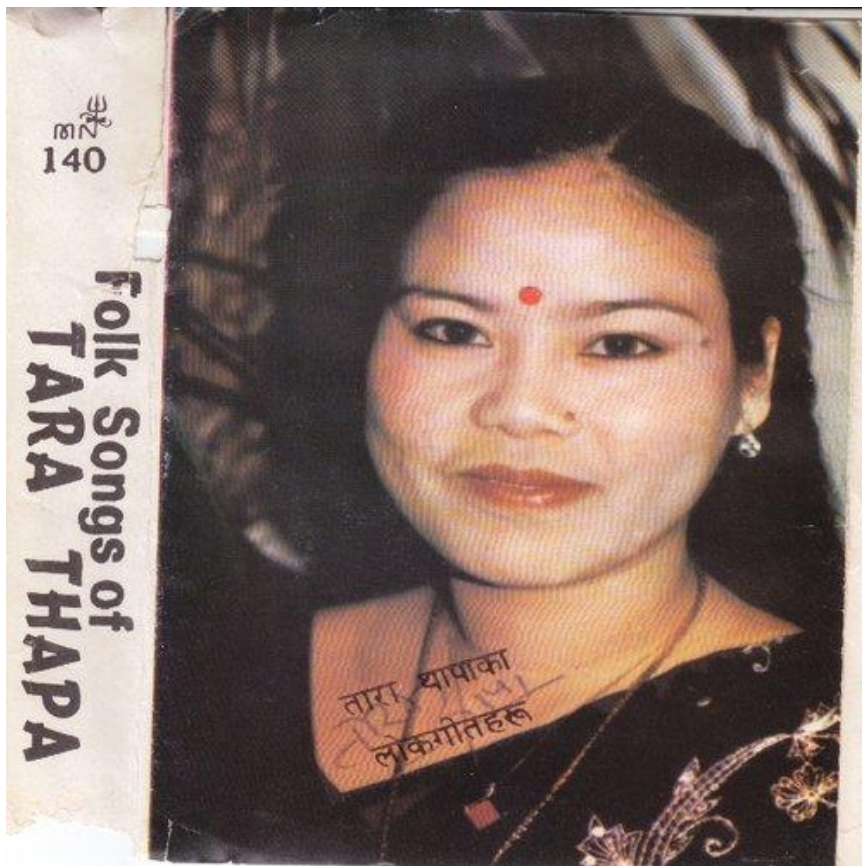


Fig 2: Songstress Tara Thapa's Folk Album (2039 BS)



## 1. Songs of Silence and Strength: Representation in the Songs of Tara Thapa

The selected songs of this research paper revolve around the women's struggles, blemished identity and their representation in the songs of Tara Thapa. The songs showcase Nepalese women's plight since time immemorial and the appropriation of patriarchy that has made them appendage to their male counterparts. Songstress Tara Thapa, whose voice has captured the hearts of many across the nation, has left an impact in the modern songs of Nepal. She has sung more than 600 songs from Folk songs to Modern songs and Dohori to Movies songs. She has also given her voice for the songs that hold the theme of patriotism. She is considered as the Living Legend in the music industry of Nepal who has sung the song written by Chadani Shah (Late Queen Ashwairya) to many renowned lyricists like Byakul Maila, Rajendra Thapa, Surendra Rana, Kali Prasad Rijal, and Durgalal Shrestha. Tara Thapa has sung many different songs that tackle the issues of love, identity, patriarchy, and societal expectations.

The paper delves into Tara Thapa's eight songs that have been purposively selected namely "*Mero Mayako Sansaar*" [The World Of My Love], "*Tari Nadeu Hey Majhi Dai*" [Hey! Boatman Brother, Please, Don't Sail Me Across The River], "*Chita Banai Jalai Nadeu*" [Don't Build a Pyre and Burn], "*Kinar Betna Khojda*" [While Trying to Reach The Shore], "*Mayaluko Chheuma Jada Ye Hawa*" [While You Go Near My Love, Hey! Wind], "*Sabaile Dine Ustai Hunxa Maya*" [Everyone Gives You The Same Kind Of Love], "*Hajar Choti Janmula*" [I will Be Born a Thousand Times], "*Dhuwa Dhuwa, Tuwalo Tuwalo*" [Smoke Smoke, Haze Haze]. They are selected on the basis of thematic relevance that explores the blemished reality of women of the then contemporary society which was purely a patriarchal society. It aims to explore the reasons behind the subordination of women in the

society by in depth study and analyzing the lyrical songs written by both male and female lyricists. It also observes the women's education and independence, marriage and personal choice, social norms and gender roles and their suffering in the patriarchal society. It aims to study the different metamorphic symbols that are used in the lyrics which are used as a tool to blemish the reality of women that reflects the cultural norms of the then patriarchal society highlighting the women's subordination depicting women's inner sufferings, stereotyped gender roles and inferiority in the social hierarchy.



Fig 2: Songstress Tara Thapa's Folk Album

When we look back to history, the situations of women were shaped by complex social, cultural and political factors. The status and experiences of women can be classified into two aspects: the “reality of women” and “the blemished reality of women”. The reality of women back then in Nepal was highly controlled by the social, political and cultural norms. Women had very limited rights as they were primarily centered on domestic duties like a homemaker who ensures family welfare. This happened due to the patriarchal structure of the society. The same situations were there in Europe and North America and to bring balance in between the genders,

Liberal Feminism emerged in late 18<sup>th</sup> Century that advocates for the legal rights for women, particularly the right to vote, the right to education, and the right to property. In our country Nepal, there used to be the practice of “Sati System” (widow immolation) under the act of Muluki Ain, 1854 B.S. In this practice, the widows were expected to sacrifice their life on their husbands’ funeral. This proves the ruthless act towards women and the bitter reality of women. While for men, they didn’t have to sacrifice their life instead they were free to get married to another woman after his wife’s demise and live a normal life.

Another harsh reality for women was restriction of education. Education for women was very rare. Generally women were not given priority for education. The majorities of women were illiterate and were given only the domestic roles. Some women from aristocratic family were lucky enough to get education. However, they were yet restricted to join or study the subjects they wished. For example, Angurbaba Joshi, a renowned educationist and a social worker has addressed the same thought of otherness for women in her interview. Her dream of being scientist was snatched. She was not given opportunity to enroll in Tri Chandra Campus in Science stream for just being born as a woman.

Women also had to face the religious and cultural constraints as they were not free like men to conduct many religious and cultural activities. Women were restricted to access to temples and do religious rituals. Unfortunately, these kinds of discriminations are still available in our society.

Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the prominent Liberal Feminist has written a book, *A Vindication of Rights of Women* (1792) where she has criticized the societal norms where women were suppressed under patriarchal mindset and society. She has argued for women’s education, independence and equal rights; “I do not wish them to

have power over men; but over themselves” (45). She has argued that women should have access to the same education as men as she thinks that lack of education has led to the suppression of women by men. Wollstonecraft also argues that women are not only the objects of beauty but they should be valued for their intellectual and moral qualities:

Would ye, O my sisters, really possess modesty . . . ye must acquire that soberness of mind, which the exercise of duties, and the pursuit of knowledge, alone inspire, or ye will remain in a doubtful dependent situation, and only be loved whilst ye are fair! (4)

The lines above justifies that woman should be educated to prepare themselves to work as a good citizen rather than just preparing them to be wives and mothers. She also asserts that women are rational beings who are fully capable of thinking and acting independently. This illustrates those women’s autonomy and self-governance as an essential aspect of liberal feminism:

Liberal feminism stresses on individuals act as a free and responsible agent that enjoys the life as per her choice without any interruptions from other people and society. Liberal feminism is in fact a freedom of choice and equality between the sexes which emphasis on change through legal and political reforms instead of revolutions. Liberal feminist believes that the inequalities between sexes are not based on any ‘natural’ differences but are the consequences of socially constructed patterns of behavior. (Wollstonecraft 184)

Another prominent figure of Liberal Feminism is John Stuart Mill. His book “The Subjection of Women (1869)” also advocates for gender equality and challenges the different societal structure that oppresses the women. His main liberal feminist ideas

are the equality between the sexes, the right to vote, right to education, harmful impact of gender inequality, oppressing women is unjust, social and legal reforms and criticism of marriage as a patriarchal institution:

Emphasizing equal individual rights and liberties for women and men and downplaying sexual differences, liberal feminism is the most widely accepted social and political philosophy among feminists. Liberal feminists defend the equal rationality of the sexes and emphasize the importance of structuring social, familial, and sexual roles in ways that promote women's autonomous self-fulfillment. They emphasize the similarities between men and women rather than the average differences between them, attribute most of the personality and character differences between the sexes to the social construction of gender, and tend to promote a single set of androgynous virtues for both women and men. While rejecting strong claims of sexual difference that might underwrite different and potentially hierarchical rights and social roles, liberal feminists otherwise avoid the promotion of particular conceptions of the good life for either men or women, instead defending a broad sphere of neutrality and privacy within which individuals may pursue forms of life most congenial to them. (103)

As a liberal feminist, John Stuart Mill not only advocates for social and legal reforms to grant the women the same rights as men but also criticize the marriage as a patriarchal institution where women are considered as property. He argues that marriage should be based on mutual respect and equality. He believes and argues that oppressing women is morally unjust, "The subjection of women is wrong itself, and now one of the chief reasons why it is wrong is that it deprives them of all the free development of their faculties" (3). Through this Mill argues that women can't fully

develop and utilize their talents, skills, and potential when they are inherently subjected. He emphasizes that regardless of gender, every individual has right to personal development and self-expression, denying this right is actually unjust.

Simon de Beauvoir another notable feminist and existentialism also has argued that women are socially constructed as “the other”. She has explored how the women are oppressed through cultural, historical, and psychological lenses in her book “The Second Sex.” Her famous quotes from the book are, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” (1) This line encapsulates that the gender of human is not inborn but constructed through societal prospective. Another famous quote is, “For a woman, her humanity is often reduced to her functions of motherhood and sexual appeal, which deprives her of her autonomy” (1). This line emphasize that women are culturally included into traditional roles like homemaker which reinforce their position as an inferior in the patriarchal society.

The research aims to explore the reasons behind the subordination of women in the society by analyzing the lyrical songs written by both male and female lyricists. It also observes the women’s education and independence, marriage and personal choice, social norms and gender roles in the patriarchal society. And for this analysis, it will analyze the words that are used as the metaphors, other different symbols, imagery and narratives that support or critique the gender equality and women’s right.

“*Mero Mayako Sansaar*” [The World Of My Love] highlights the significance of “*Sindoor* (Vermilion) and *Pote*” put on the females by their husbands. Throughout their life, they give importance to these cultural symbols rather than their intelligence and wisdom. “*Tari Nadeu Hey Majhi Dai*” [Hey! Boatman brother, Please, Don’t Sail Me across the River] reflects the journey of a young lady from her childhood to her adulthood and marriage. It also portrays the cultural tradition of the country where

men expected to leave her “*maiti ghar*” maternal home and move to her husband’s house and make it her home. “*Chita Banai JalaiNadeu*” [Don’t Build a Pyre and Burn] showcases the dedication of woman upon her beloved and request her beloved not to betray her and bury her desire of his “Sindoor and pote”. Men are socially and culturally free to do what they want where as females are to be within certain social and cultural taboos. “*Kinar Betna Khojda*” [When Trying to Reach The Shore] depicts the invisible suffering of the girl who is immensely in love with her man but for some reasons they are not together. The song has used the different metaphors to demonstrate the men as in the center. Examples of metaphors are “khali siudo”, “viduwako pote”, “sindoor” (2<sup>nd</sup> verse, first and third line). “*Mayaluko Chheuma Jada Ye Hawa*” [While you Go Near My Love, Hey! Wind] portrays the strong feelings of a girl who is immensely in love with someone but is unable to express her feelings herself to him as she thinks that she is powerless and has no courage at all. Therefore she is asking wind to help her out. Thinking powerless by a girl shows that she is inferior to men or indicates a sort of barriers to women to express their feelings probably due to the social costumes in the contemporary society. “*Sabaile Dine Ustai Hunxa Maya*” [Everyone Gives You the Same Kind Of Love] expresses the intense love of a girl towards her beloved. She is showcasing herself as a stronger self and expressing her desire to offer a love that is completely new kind and genuine. “*Hajar Choti Janmula*” [I will Be Born Thousand Times] depicts the devotion and sacrifice of a woman for her love. In the lyrics, women is stereotyped and represented as a beauty (youth) while men are represented as stability or life. “*Dhuwa Dhuwa, Tuwalo Tuwalo*” [Smoke Smoke, Haze Haze] highlights sorrow and emotional suffocation of a women for some reasons. This song also indicates how women’s pain is often silenced in this patriarchal society.

These eight lyrical songs of Tara Thapa have used many symbols and metamorphic words that depict the marginalized situation of women in the contemporary society which had completely a patriarchal mindset. The metamorphic words like “*sindoor*” (vermilion), “*pote*” (crystal necklace), “*maiti ghar*” (girl’s parents’ home), and “*shakti chhaina*” (powerless) exemplify the subordination of women upon men. These metamorphic words also signify how culturally and socially the women were put in inferiority in the social hierarchy. The lyrical songs of Tara Thapa embody the gender inequality situation where women are treated as the other depriving them from different social privileges.

Just being born as a female is also considered as having a doomed fate in our society which is justified by the popular saying in Nepali, “*Chhoriko janma, hareko karma.*” [A daughter is born with the consequences of past deeds.] This kind of belief in Nepal which has predominantly a patriarchal society has propagated to accept the otherness as a fate. This quote also suggests that women’s lives are heavily influenced by karma and societal norms and expectations beyond their control.

These harsh realities of women were found blemished in the form of different literatures, songs and religious texts. Women were often portrayed as virtuous, self-sacrificing figures, the epitome of purity and devotion. Even in many folk tales and myth, women are portrayed as the ideal women with different qualities like obedience, honesty, beautiful, chastity and self-sacrifice. One good example is the story of Sita from Ramayan. Sita is portrayed as an ideal woman who happily accepts to go along with Ram (husband) during his 14 years of exile. Similarly in Mahabharata, the female character Draupati is idealized as the model of virtue and devotion. And Radha is also epitomized as spiritual devotion. Behind these, the

realities of women are blemished as they had to sacrifice their freedom and follow the cultural norms of the contemporary society.

The role of the women shows the reality of women in the society where they are limited to the households and are expected to remain subservient to their husbands. Women had minimal involvement in public life however the blemished reality is that women are considered the backbone of the society. Even the songs of Tara Thapa depict the silence and struggles of women in the then contemporary society where women were considered as subordinated to men.

In the nutshell, the purposively selected eight songs of Tara Thapa comprise the males as a center character in the patriarchal society where women are considered as the other. The harsh realities of women are blemished naming women as the honest, obedience, pure and beautiful by only providing them very limited duties inside their home as a homemaker. Women had to do the things as per the expectations of the society. Women are though called as a backbone of the society; they were restricted to do so many religious and cultural norms. The metamorphic words like '*Sindoor*(Vermilion)', '*Pote* (a crystal necklace)' are often used in the lyrics of the songs reflecting the oppressive conditions of women of the then society where women were bounded by these kind of social norms where their autonomy were snatched from them. They were not given freedom like men in many terms like education, property and autonomy. These symbols of the songs represent the silence and struggles of the women. For all these conditions, many liberal feminist have put their voices for equality in terms of educations, voting, and properties by changing existing law and order of the patriarchal society.

## II. Unveiling Women's Subjugation through a Liberal Feminist Lens

Music plays a vital role in shaping the nation's social and cultural identities. Basically songs behold the themes like love, loss, patriotism and self-identities. This chapter examines the different Nepali songs, from folk songs to pop and Dohori to modern songs that deal with the cultural significance and the role of prominent artists in shaping contemporary music and songs unveiling women's subjugation. Popular culture leaves an everlasting impact on the psyche of the youth of nation. Modern songs in the context of Nepal shaped the identity formation of the youths as it had a relational value:

The rise of Nepali modern songs started from early 20<sup>th</sup> century. With the establishment of Radio Nepal in 1951, the Nepali music and songs flourished more than ever as many popular songs were composed and recorded here. Radio Nepal still conducts the different singing competitions like Folk Song Competition (Lok Geet Pratiyogita), Modern Song Competition (Adhunik Geet, Pratiyogita) every year. Some of the most popular modern singers of the era were Narayan Gopal, Aruna Lama, Tara Devi, PremDhoj Pradhan, Mira Rana, Tara Thapa, Om BikramBista, GopalYonzon, Bhaktaraj Acharya to name few. (Gazette- Radio Nepal Web)

Different genre of Nepali songs cover a wide range of topics such as emotions, experiences, love and relationships, patriotism and nation pride, social issues and awareness, youth struggles and aspirations, nostalgia and memories, spirituality and religion, nature and beauty of nation, and hope, positivity and resilience.

In the article, *Music as Resistance: Revisiting Melawa Devi and Her Songs* by Tara Lal Shrestha has examined about Melawa Devi, who recorded the first Nepali song and became the first Nepali female singer of Nepal. He explored her hardships in

perusing a career in music as a female singer in patriarchal society. The writer has also explored how Melawa Devi has utilized the music as a tool for personal agency and resistance against the social constraints. He has also examined how her songs were the means of expressing cultural taboos and how she has challenged the norms of patriarchal and caste based society:

Subaltern studies including postcolonial studies examines the experience and existence of the oppressed people, whose voices have been silenced and attempts to replace the Euro-centric and national elitist narratives with the cultural and indigenous studies of the oppressed communities. It aims to create space to the excluded women and disempowered communities from the dominant political representation. For Antonio Gramsci, the history of the subaltern classes is as complex as the history of dominant class. The history of Melawa Devi appears distorted and fragmented but her voices are heard eloquent through her musical performances. The term 'music' refers to the vocal and instrumental performing arts, often accompanied by dancing – the arrangement of sounds in a pleasing sequence or combination to be sung or played on instruments (Hornby 277; qtd. in Regmi 2); the combination of vocal, instrumental and dance is known as sangeet (Saranadev 6; qtd. in Regmi 2). Music is a high quality art, a ladder that one moves on towards attaining salvation (Shastri 1). A person, who possesses knowledge of all these arts – vocal, instrumental, and dance – is considered a perfect musician (Deva 1). In Nepal, as elsewhere, music is a sacred part of human life, a way of living in communication with God while seeking salvation. (Shrestha 2)

Melawa Devi who was born during a completely traditional patriarchal society took a daring step to become a first Nepali female singer. Her music career represents a form

of individual agency. She has defied the old traditional norms where women were restricted to participate in public life. In her time, women were limited to household duties as a mother and a wife or simply a homemaker. But Melawa Devi challenged to this norm and took music as her career to resilience against the patriarchal society. Melawa Devi recorded her song and became the first female artist of Nepal. This is how she exercised her right to personal freedom and autonomy.

Melawa Devi who recorded several songs and became famous after recording “*Na Gharlai Ghar Kahincha, Nari Nai Durbar Ho*” song written by Sukraraj Shastri. This particular song sung by Melawa Devi beholds the importance of women, how a woman acts as a central pillar of the home to become a sweet home. This song advocates for the equal value of women in home and in the entire society. Her song also reinforces women to become independent and empowered financially.

In another article, “*Nepalese women defy gender and caste stereotypes through music*” by Sangharsha Panta highlights how women played Naumati Baja and challenged the traditional norms where only men were engaged to play the music (Naumati Baja). Naumati Baja has always been considered to be played by men from the Damais, a subgroup of Dalit community in Nepal but thirteen women from different castes put on huge transformative efforts and redefined the legacy by playing Naumati Baja. This article focuses on thirteen women who formed a group in 2021 named ‘Srijansil Mahila Naumati Baja’ comprising different castes like Rai, Limbu, Brahmin, Chaudhary, and Chhetri. They play different Nepali instruments in different functions to symbolize their struggle and rebellion against stereotypes and traditional gender roles. Beyond this, the article emphasizes the broader context of women’s right, equality and freedom of choice with their involvement in music. These women

are not only playing a great role to preserve the cultural heritage but also showing their autonomy by challenging and reshaping traditional gender and caste stereotype.

Naumati Baja has traditionally been played by Damais, a subgroup of the Dalit caste, on auspicious occasions such as weddings, religious ceremonies and different celebrations.

In 2021, when her all-women group was founded, Bhusal, along with fellow musicians from different castes – Rai, Limbu, Chaudhary, Brahmin, Chettri, etc. – faced significant resistance. Their struggle started from within: first, to learn how to play and stay determined; then, to build up the courage to stand up to their families and then society in order to break these gender and caste stereotypes.

But, after challenging traditions, the 16 members of Sirjanshil Mahila Naumati Baja are now making a living by playing these instruments, and have managed to establish themselves as respected musicians.

They were among the more than 150 feminists from 37 districts of Nepal who travelled by bus to Padmalaya to attend the nationwide “Anupam Abhiyan” women’s gathering organized by the IGFF, to celebrate and support fellow women. Every participant, including the Naumati Baja group, shared their stories and efforts to challenge and change gender stereotypes in their families and communities. (Panta1)

Thus, these thirteen women not only mastered and performed this music, they also challenged deeply rooted gender and caste norms asserting their autonomy, promoting cultural preservation, and advocating for equality, freedom of choice, and women's rights through their artistic rebellion.

In such way, in another article, “*How Nepali songs are blurring the lines between entertainment and sexism*”, by Srizu Bajracharya discusses about the portrayal of women in different Nepali songs and music and how they are objectified for entertainment. Some of the important key points of the article are listed below: Sexist imagery and Lyrics: The article highlights how women are objectified and represented in Nepali songs as a tool for male pleasure by using misogynistic language. It has given the example of song called “*Ghati vandatala ta ramri nai chhe*” (She is at least beautiful from the neck down). This article discusses how entertainment media has put on the significant influences on the audiences and people living in the society and shaping the social attitudes. Bajracharya argues that these kinds of songs have reinforced the traditional gender norms by objectifying women. Bajracharya has pointed out that despite the sexism, many people or audiences embrace and celebrate it. People have accepted and normalized these representations or sexism as living in such patriarchal society.

If we look through the lens of liberal feminism, this article shows the inequality between men and women as women are portrayed in stereotypical and sexist manner. There’s the imbalance of power in between men and women as women’s autonomy is limited because of traditional gender roles. This article urges for changes in cultural norms and media portrayals to ensure the equal rights and respect for women.

Nepali pop songs that describe a woman’s relationship with a man—where the woman’s role is only to react to the man’s experience to make sense of the man’s story. There are some songs that straightaway attack and stereotype women to boost male masculinity. Yet these are the songs that

people have enjoyed over the years, making it a trend to make songs that have lyrics that demean women. (Bajracharya 1)

The song “*Hajar Choti Janmula*” [I Would Be Born a Thousand Times] of Tara Thapa beautifully captures the depth of the speaker’s love and devotion, yet it simultaneously reveals the deeply embedded gender norms that shape female identity and emotional expression.

*Hajar choti janmula*

*Hajar dukha sahula*

*Timilai pauna, timilai rijhauna*

*Timi mero jivan, ma tirmo joban*

*Timi mero biswas, ma timro dhadkan*

*Hajar choti.....*

*Timi mero mandir, ma aaradhana*

*Timi jivan yatra, ma shuvakamana*

I would be born a thousand time

I would endure a thousand sorrows

Just to have you, Just to win your heart...

You are my life, I am your youth

You are my faith; I am your heartbeat...

You are my temple, I am your prayer

You are the journey of life, I am the good wishes

This song “*Hajar Choti Janmula*” [I Would Be Born a Thousand Times] sung by Tara Thapa beholds the intense love of the speaker towards her beloved and shows deep devotion to him. “I would be born a thousand times; I would endure a thousand

sorrows” (1-2) These lines from the first verse of the song depicts the devotion and sacrifice of a woman for her love and happily willing to reborn thousand times and endure the numerous sorrows to win his love. “You are my life, I am your youth” (4) in this line the speaker has represented herself as a beauty (youth) reveals the stereotypical norms regarding women where they are expected or objectified as beauty while men are represented as stability or life. This also illustrates that the speaker’s existence is meaningful because of her beloved while in return; the speaker gives him passionate and unconditional love. “You are my temple, I am the prayer” (6) Here, the speaker is considering her beloved as holy and sacred and herself as someone who constantly worships and prays for him.

When viewed through the liberal feminism, the speaker of the song is passionate lover who is ready to go through countless lives and suffering to win her beloved. She is out pouring her pure, selfless and spiritual kind of love seeing where she is willing to intertwine with her beloved. However, the speaker’s passionate expressions of love can be seen as assertion of emotional agency suggesting a balanced relationship where there’s mutual respect in the relationship. “You are my life, I am your youth” (4). In this particular line, the speaker is valuing the presence of her beloved to have her life. She is defining her worth and identity in relation to her lover. And this is reflecting a loss of self where women are expected to put men in the center for their existence and objectifying them as a matter of beauty. The speaker has used the metaphors like “temple” for her beloved and herself as a “prayer”. She also describes her beloved as her journey of life indicates inequality in gender roles where women are served as a complement and often idealized as self-sacrificing partner. In this way, though the speaker of the song is showcasing her intense and passionate love towards her beloved, it also reflects the deep rooted cultural norms where the

women are considered to be the one who always sacrifice. The speaker also voicing for mutual admiration, autonomy and social freedom like men.

Similarly, if we look through the lens of liberal feminism, this article appears to highlight the inequality between men and women, as women seem to be portrayed in stereotypical and sexist ways. There may be an imbalance of power between men and women, where women's autonomy appears to be limited by traditional gender roles. The article seems to advocate for changes in cultural norms and media portrayals in order to promote equal rights and respect for women. Tara Thapa's songs also suggest the same which aligns with the broader concerns raised in the article.

In another article, "*Nepalese Culture: Special Reference to Folk Music and Dance*", by Sujata Baral has highlighted that Nepal being a multi-lingual, multi-cultural, and multi-diverse country has a great number of folk songs, and dance for many different occasions related to festivals and rituals. This has made Nepal culturally rich with various kinds of music where women and people can express their feelings. She has also mentioned that the music is completely different according to the geography of Nepal. Nepal has specifically three different regions i.e Mountain, Hilly and Plain region. The music differs accordingly. Tamang Selo from Hilly reasons to Phagu Purne song in Terai and from Purbeli Bhaka to Paschimeli Bhaka has its own sweetness and importance. She has also mentioned that there are different songs related to our festivals and rituals. For example, Malashree Dhun, Deusi and Bhailo songs sung during Tihar and Dashain, Ropai song, Fagu song, Teej song, Ratauli song etc.

In this way, Baral has examined the various forms of folk songs and also the dances highlighting the cultural values and traditions that have ultimately contributed

to the cultural identities of Nepalese communities. She has also explored how the folk music and dance is integrated with rituals, festivals and people's daily life. Baral has also focused the preservation of these different rituals, festivals and traditions for our cultural identity in a rapid changing world.

In the next article, "*A Folkloristic Study on the Folk Songs that Reflect Nature*", by Ram Prasad Ghimire examines how the nature such as landscapes, rivers, plants, and seasons are used as metaphors to examine the different cultural identities and to convey the relationship between people and natural environment. Ghimire argues that the folk singers use the nature in their songs to produce rhymes in the songs and also to associate the human feelings with the virtues and qualities of the things of nature. This way, the use of nature in the songs helps to create beautiful songs with the rhyming that reflect the belongingness and authenticity of the locality that ultimately reinforce the identity of the people.

Folk song is associated with nature in many ways. The creator of a folk song tends to produce rhyme with the help of the objects that he or she has seen or felt in nature. We can regard this as the formal or surface level association. Secondly, there are several situations of creation in which the folk song creator enters the space of nature to associate his or her experiences and meanings with the virtues and qualities of the objects or things available in nature. It is in this context that the creator becomes more complex and dynamic in his or her creation, either associating and harmonizing the subtle layers of idea and feelings that he or she passes through in his or her life with the virtues and qualities of the things of nature or contrasting the ideas and feelings with the essential elements available within the things of nature.

(Ghimire139)

In the song “*Mayalu Ko Chheuma Jada Ye Hawa*” [When You Go near My Beloved, Hey Wind] of Tara Thapa has also used “*hawa*” [wind] – nature as her medium to convey her message to her beloved. The song portrays the strong feelings of a speaker who is immensely in love with someone but is unable to express her feelings herself to him as she thinks that she is powerless and has no courage at all. The speaker’s thought of being powerless simultaneously reveals the social and psychological constraints that prevent her from expressing her love directly and seeking help from the wind. Thinking powerless by the speaker indicates a sort of barriers to women to express their feelings directly unlike men probably due to the social costumes in the contemporary society.

In “*A Folkloristic Study on the Folk Songs that Reflect Nature*”, Ram Prasad Ghimire emphasizes how elements of nature are deeply woven into Nepali folk songs, often serving as symbolic channels to express human emotions, desires, and social values. Similarly, Tara Thapa’s song “*Mayalu Ko Chheuma Jada Ye Hawa*” [When You Go near My Beloved, Hey Wind] uses the wind as a metaphorical messenger, carrying the speaker’s unspoken feelings of love to her beloved. The speaker, unable to express her affection directly, relies on nature to communicate her innermost emotions. This reliance on the wind not only reflects a poetic connection with nature, as Ghimire discusses, but also reveals the social and psychological constraints that hinder women’s emotional expression. The speaker’s perceived powerlessness may restrain from the traditional gender roles and societal expectations of women’s behavior in a conservative context. Thus, the song aligns with Ghimire’s folkloristic analysis by showing how natural imagery like “*hawa*” is not only aesthetically rich but also socially and emotionally loaded, particularly for women navigating restrictive norms.

In another article, *“How Teej Songs Have Evolved and What they Mean for Women”* by Ankit Khadgi focuses on how Teej songs were sung by women and made it their agency to share their miseries, frustrations and struggles in the patriarchal society. Khadgi has given brief history on Teej songs that how it used to be the medium for women to express their problems and struggles particularly around their situations, gender roles, marriage, societal expectations in the male dominated society. However, from Panchayat system to multiparty system and to Republic system, Teej songs have changed over the time. These days, Teej songs are changed into the songs about the women’s right, freedom and even breaking the old traditions like fasting. Teej songs are now changed into the modern song genre showcasing that the women are becoming bold, confident and independent. Teej songs have challenged the traditional songs and questions about the fasting and glorifying suffering in marriage. But then these kinds of Teej songs have to face the controversies and backlash. The songs like “Poila Jana Pam” by Komal Oli and Sophia Thapa’s “No Barta Please” had faced strong backlash. The modern Teej songs today are more commercialized diluting the cultural message. We can find the Teej song videos which are quite flashy and influenced by pop songs. However, some songs are composed celebrating women’s independence and how they have perceived to present themselves in society. In the nutshell, there are different Nepali songs sung by different singers which are interpreted in different manner like culturally and representations of women in the contemporary society. In some songs, women are objectified and represented as sexism even in this modern society.

Although Thapa had to pay a price for being vocal about women issues through her work, according to Indira Mishra, associate professor of English in Mahendra Multiple Campus, Dharan, the essence of Teej songs has always

been this—to use the songs as a medium to vent out the frustrations and grief women face in society, because of patriarchy’s unfair treatment and other societal injustices.

“Teej songs, most of the time, are filled with pathos, as it has always been used as a medium through which women express their problems,” says Mishra. (Khadgi 1)

These lines depicts that Teej songs serve as a powerful emotional outlet for women, allowing them to voice their struggles, frustrations, and pain caused by patriarchy and social injustice. Despite facing consequences, women have long used this traditional art form to express their lived realities and resist societal constraints. The songs are more than cultural expressions; they are subtle yet poignant tools of protest and storytelling:

**“Kinar Betna Khojda Khojdai” [When Trying to Reach The Shore]**

*(Kinar bhetna khojdai ,lahar bhitra dubi sake*

*Pachhyauriko sapko bhitra, aanshu mera sukisake*

*Khali khali sinudo tara, hridaya bhitra sindoor paryo*

*Bhawanako changa kina katiera bhuima jharyo*

*vidawako pote jhai raharu tuti sake*

*Pachhyauriko sapko bhitra aanshu mera sukisake*

*Suryamukhi phool bani hansa rahe begla beglai*

*Jwalamukh ibani aaja jaldaichhu ma eklaieklai*

*Unda undai mala maile phool haru sukisake*

*Pachhyauriko sapko bhitra aanshu mera sukisake*

When trying to reach the shore, I have already drowned within the waves

Tears hidden in the folds of my shawl have already been dried.  
My parting is bare, yet vermillion stains my heart  
Why did the kite of my feelings get cut and fall to the ground?  
Like the broken beads of a widow's necklace, my desires have shattered,  
Tears hidden in the folds of my shawl have already been dried.  
I stood smiling like a sunflower, each one differently  
I am burning like a volcano – solitary and silently.  
While I was trying to make a garland, the flowers dried up in my hands  
Tears hidden in the folds of my shawl have already been dried.

“*Kinar Betna Khojda*” [When Trying to Reach The Shore] song of Tara Thapa illustrates the inner suffering of the speaker who is immensely in love with her man but for some reasons they are not together or her beloved has left her all by herself. The speaker in the song is in a deep emotional labor and has lost her hope and strength while trying to find the love, peace or a stable life. She has symbolized it by “shore” in the song but instead of reaching her goal, she has drowned shattering her desires and dreams within the waves of loneliness.

“My parted is bare, yet vermillion stains my heart” (3) here, the speaker is talking about her “*khali siudo*” (parting) juxtaposing with “the vermillion stains in her heart” depicting the disconnection between social recognition and personal truth. It also showcase the commitment of the speaker to her beloved which is unrecognized or not acknowledged by the society as “vermillion” in the parting is considered an approval to validate their relationship in our culture. “Why did the kite of my feelings get cut and fall to the ground?” (4) In this line, the kite used by the speaker is a metaphor that shows how her life was full of life and colours soaring high in the sky but now it's fallen and cut off from its source.

“Like the broken beads of a widow’s necklace, my desires have shattered” (5)

likewise in this line, the speaker has compared her hope, dreams and joy with the broken beads of widow (*pote*) as the metaphor of grief. There are other symbols like “sunflower” and “volcano” through which the speaker is shifting her identity of being bold and beautiful because of joy, light and love from her beloved, now changed into a volcano symbolizing the rage, sufferings and destruction indicating the result of loneliness. The another symbol is “garland” which she was trying to make out of love and affection is now dried and its all dried long before. Her efforts to find joy went all in vain and she has to meet with loss. The speaker has repeated the line about tears drying in the folds of her shawl indicates that she has cried silently for so long that now it’s already dried and is unacknowledged by the world.

Through the lens of liberal feminism, “*Kinar Betna Khojda*” [When Trying to Reach The Shore] emerges as a powerful reflection on the speaker’s struggles for freedom of expressions, autonomy and individual identity within the patriarchal society and restrictive cultural norms. The speaker in the song has sought love and meaning on her own terms but has been left abandoned and broken due to some reasons. Her voice represents the pain of countless women whose autonomy and emotional labor is unrecognized despite of their huge efforts into love, relationships and hope. “When trying to reach the shore, I have already drowned within the waves” The speaker in this line dives into the metaphorical waves to reach the shore symbolizing her independence, identity and autonomy but ends up drowning in it. The speaker is mourning the loss of identity and agency. In fact, she is silenced and subjugated by the expectations of the patriarchal society.

“Tears hidden in the folds of my shawl have already been dried” (2, 6) depicts the inner sufferings of the speaker and is not able to express it as bounded by the

cultural norms and is expected to endure the sufferings silently. The speaker has used the metaphor like “sindoor”, “pote” that evokes the roles of wifehood, and widowhood which are socially constructed identities. The speaker is crying out for a life shaped by the societal expectations symbolizing her dreams and desires as a kite that is cut down from the source. Despite being shattered emotionally, the speaker asserts her voice for the gender inequality and the urgency for women to be treated as full individuals but not just relational identities as wife or daughter in law.

In conclusion, “*Kinar Betna Khojda*” [When Trying to Reach The Shore] is the articulation of liberal feminist values where the speaker of the song voices her inner sufferings that are trapped in societal and gender roles. The repeated line “Tears hidden in the folds of my shawl have already been dried” signifies the emotional exhaustion resulted by patriarchal expectations. Yet, she voices and cuts through that silence calling for emotional agency. There is the absence of a clear resolution of her sufferings as so she is ongoing through the struggle for gender equality. However, the articulation of her pain itself challenges the norm that women should endure quietly asserting the self for equality, autonomy and freedom of expressions.

Both the song and the article emphasize invisible emotional suffering that women endure largely unacknowledged by society and the burden of emotional labor that is expected of them without reciprocation or validation. And also highlights the forced silence of women under patriarchal norms where they are forbidden to say aloud and how metaphor (shawl, sindoor, pote) becomes a coded language for suppressed emotions and identity. Both the article and the song appears to share similar liberal feminist values foregrounding the personal as political and raising questions about autonomy, gender norms, and emotional freedom. Both the article and the song, in their respective ways, highlight a cultural shift in how women's voices are

being represented and heard in Nepali music. At the same time, the presence of controversy and unresolved tension in both contexts suggests that the journey toward gender equality in representation remains ongoing and complex.

### III. Women's Struggles and Blemished Realities

This chapter includes detailed analysis of the eight purposively selected songs sung by Tara Thapa, focusing on how lyrics of the songs reflects the theme of gender, emotions, cultural agency, social norms and costumes as agencies and resistance. This chapter explores how these songs include the voices of women and their inner struggles and desires, often within the boundaries of traditional expectations. The songs are interpreted as emotional narratives that challenge social norms by asserting female subjectivity and emotional dignity. The English translation of the song is done by the researcher herself. The translated lyrics of the song may not reflect the linguistic sweetness or flavor of the song.

#### ***“Mero Mayako Sansaar” [The World of My Love]***

*mero mayako sansaar dhera ithulo kaha xa*

*timro pote ra sindoor bhari ma atekoxa*

*mero sukhako muhan dherai tada kahaxa*

*timro khusi ra muskaan bhari ma chhalkeko xa*

*kahile jiskiyerai vayepani yo mayako tiraskaar nagara*

*manxeko mann kamalo hunxa, oieledela bho khelaichi nagara*

*mero mayako sansaar*

*kaile behosimai vayepani, yo mayako kehi bikalpa nakhoja*

*manxeko mann swabhimani hunxa, dhunga banxa tyo taulana nakhoja*

*nindra kai kurana ho, lamo jiban kahaxa*

*timro ra mero sapana bhari ma bitekochha*

The world of my love isn't as big,  
It is held within your vermilion and smile  
Even in the jest, please don't make fun out of my love  
Heart which is so fragile, do not play carelessly with it.  
The human heart is tender, don't play carelessly  
Love itself is fragile; it lives within the trust between us.  
Even if unconscious, please don't look for an option

The song "*Mero Mayako Sansaar*" [The World of My Love] sung by Tara Thapa and written by Chadani Shah highlights the significance of "*Sindoor*" (Vermilion) and "*pote*" (crystal necklace) put on the females by their husbands. The significance of these metaphors shows how the men are given more importance keeping women themselves in inferior position.

From a liberal feminist perspective, this song written by Chadani Shah emphasizes the significance of the *sindoor* (vermilion) and *pote* (crystal necklace) put on by their husbands. Chadani Shah, who was the most powerful woman as the former queen of Nepal is also bound to follow the cultural norms of the then contemporary patriarchal society. However, the speaker of the song advocates the power of mutual respect, trust and deep bonding between two people transcending gender roles. Beyond social norms, the speaker of the song asserts that love and happiness go beyond the societal and cultural norms.

Patriarchy is creating an illusion blemishing the reality of women where they are bound to accept to play as a submissive role in the society. The song has encouraged the character of the song not to be less in comparison to men who is longing for his *sindoor* and *pote* of his name. The paradox in the song is that both the singer and the lyricist are female but writing and singing the song keeping men as a

center character. However, it may be interpreted in another way where love knows no boundaries and out of love, the lover or the character in the lyrics is intensely in love with her beloved and willing to have the “*Pote*” and “*Vermillion*” of his name. She really cares for her beloved but also makes her feel vulnerable. She connects her entire world to the emotions and actions of her partner, like his “*Pote*” and “*Sindoor*” and also his smile.

When we look through the lens of liberal feminism, the lyrics of the song is asking her beloved to not to take her lightly. She is in fact asking for care and respect as of the heart is soft and fragile. She is openly asking and longing for her beloved’s Vermillion which clarifies that she is asking to be heard, seen and treated equally.

In 3<sup>rd</sup> verse first line, (*kaile behosimai vayepani, yo mayako kehi bikalpa nakhoja*) “Even if unconscious, please don’t look for an option” This particular line narrates the speaker’s emotional autonomy where she is requesting her beloved not to replace her even in his unconsciousness. When we look back the history of Nepal, there was the practice of polygamy, where men were allowed to have more than one wives. Even the lyricist of this song, late queen Ashworiya’s father in law, late King Mahendra had two wives and this practice or culture of having two wives was considered normal. As so, the lyricist or the speaker here in the song, she is requesting her beloved not find her alternative even in his unconsciousness. Perhaps she doesn’t want to share her beloved with other women. She must have seen or faced the consequences of the facts of practicing of polygamy through the eyes of her mother in laws. Therefore, she simply wants to be only his love for life. Through the lyrics, the speaker has voiced for the acknowledgement of her intense love for him highlighting her emotional sovereignty and self respect.

In conclusion, the song “*Mero Mayako Sansaar*” [The World of My Love] exemplify the narrator’s autonomy and intense love for her beloved reclaiming on equal emotional contribution by demanding the mutual respect in their companionship. The speaker is not pleading but affirming the value of equal emotional contribution to make their own world of love where there is equal love, care and respect for each other. When viewed through the lens of liberal feminism, the song is subtle but yet a very powerful articulation of women’s right to express freely about their emotions, desire and love expecting equality in their companionship. The speaker is expecting her beloved’s vermillion and pote accepting the cultural norm yet affirming the liberal feminist principles of autonomy, equality and dignity.

**“*MayaluKo Chheuma Jada Ye Hawa*”[When You Go near My Beloved, Hey Wind]**

*(mayaluko cheu ma jada ye hawa  
yesari nabatise ye hawa  
manda manda susta chaalma taile chalide  
mayaluko cheu ma jada yehi bhainide  
jiunumailebhule, mayabhulnechhaina  
yeutai mutu mero kasailai dine chhaina  
chhariyeka paat sori yetauta paridiye wasta chhaina  
samundrako chhaal odia aadhiberi lyayidiye wasta chhaina  
tara khabar boki jada sunn ye hawa  
maile aafai gayee unko kaan ma yehi bhannalai shakti chhaina  
mayaluko aashu puchhda suna ye hawa)*

When you go near my love, hey wind!  
Don't be such a strong gale, hey wind!  
Blow like a gentle breeze,  
And when you reach to my beloved, mention this  
"I may lost the track of life but not my love for you  
The only heart that I have – I'll give it to no one else.  
Blowing away the fallen leaves and scattering them – it doesn't matter  
Bringing in hurricane with big ocean waves – it doesn't matter  
But when you carry my message, listen, hey wind:  
I don't have strength to go and whisper this into his ears myself.  
I don't have strength to sit close to him and express my pure love to him.  
So while wiping his tears, tell him this hey wind...

*"Mayalu Ko Chheuma Jada Ye Hawa"* [While you Go Near My Love, Hey!

Wind]portrays the strong feelings of a speaker who is immensely in love with someone but is unable to express her feelings herself to him as she thinks that she is powerless and has no courage at all. The speaker's thought of being powerless simultaneously reveals the social and psychological constrains that prevent her from expressing her love directly and seeking help from the wind. Thinking powerless by the speaker indicates a sort of barriers to women to express their feelings directly like men probably due to the social costumes in the contemporary society.

This song offers a heartrending insight into a woman's inner emotional world, marked by depth, pride, and silent resistance. Through a liberal feminist lens, the song highlights the condition of struggle between emotional autonomy and the restrictive norms that limit women's self-expression in romantic contexts. The opening lines emphasize a profound emotional loyalty: even if the narrator's life is forgotten, her

love remains stable and non-transferable. Liberal feminism, which upholds individual rights and emotional dignity, recognizes such expressions as forms of personal agency. Here, love is not a passive or dependent sentiment—it is a deliberate and meaningful attachment that the narrator claims ownership of. By refusing to give her heart to anyone else, she asserts the right to emotional faithfulness on her own terms. However, the narrator’s inability to voice her love directly—(*maile aafai gayee unkokaan ma yehi bhannala ishakti chhaina*) “I don’t have the strength to go and whisper this into his ears myself, reflects a deeper critique of gendered silence. The speaker of the song expresses her emotions full of passionate love for her beloved but also asserts the restraints that has aroused from internalized social norms that condition women to be emotionally passive, modest, or silent.

From a liberal feminist perspective, this reveals the structural barriers that hold back women’s full participation in emotional discourse. The inability to speak freely is not merely a personal shortcoming but a symptom of broader patriarchal expectations that makes female desire invisible or improper. Moreover, the act of speaking through the wind—a non-human, symbolic messenger highlights the creative strategies women employ to communicate in restrictive environments. While the speaker of the song cannot approach her beloved herself, she entrusts nature to carry her emotions, subtly asserting her voice despite limitations. This becomes a form of symbolic resistance, aligning with liberal feminism’s call for women’s inclusion, recognition, and expression within existing societal structures.

The line (*yetai mutu mero- kasailai dine chhaina*) “The only heart that I have – I’ll give it to no one else.” further illustrates emotional pride and the setting of personal boundaries. The speaker is not begging for reciprocation but is rather dignifying her emotional truth. In doing so, she refuses to dilute her affection,

defending against social pressures that often demand women's sacrifice. This quiet assertion of self-respect and dignity underscores liberal feminism's emphasis on equal moral and emotional standing in relationships.

In conclusion, "*Mayalu KoChheuma Jada Ye Hawa*" [When You Go Near My Beloved, Hey! Wind] articulates a calm yet powerful emotional experience that challenges conventional gender roles through subtle assertions of agency and emotional dignity. The speaker who is immensely in love with her beloved uses a creative agency "the wind" to convey her message portrays her courageous act exemplifying her autonomy. Although the speaker expresses her emotional affection within the bounds of traditional expectations, her unwavering loyalty, emotional clarity, and creative expression exemplify the liberal feminist ideals of self-respect, autonomy, and the right to emotional voice.

***"Sabaile Dine Ustai Hunchha Maya"* [Everyone Gives the Same Kind Of Love]**

*Sabaile dine ustai hunchha maya*

*Tara ma nauilo prita dinchhu*

*Timilai nai samjhi samjhi racheko*

*Mutu bhariko chokho prita dinchhu*

*Bhandina ma timilai tipera aakashko juna dinchhu*

*Tara geeta akashma sadhai gunji rahane*

*Yehi geetko mitho dhuna dinchhu*

*Bhandina ma timilai jindagi bhari nai sath dinchhu*

*Tara mann aakashma sadhai kheli rahane*

*Yehi geetko nyano bhav dinchhu*

Everyone offers the same kind of love,  
But I offer a love that is of new kind  
A love I created just by thinking of you,  
I offer that pure love, straight from my heart  
I won't say I'll pluck the moon from the sky for you  
But I'll give you the sweet melody of a song  
That echoes in the heavens forever  
I won't say I'll stay with you for a lifetime,  
But I'll give you the passionate melody of the song  
That plays in the sky of soul...

*"Sabaile Dine Ustai Hunxa Maya"* [Everyone Gives You the Same Kind Of Love]

expresses the intense love of a girl towards her beloved. She is showcasing herself as a stronger self and expressing her desire to offer a love that is completely new kind and genuine. The speaker expresses a deep and heartfelt love which is not about big promises or unrealistic gestures, but about honesty, creativity, and poignant depth. The speaker in the song acknowledges that many people express love in similar and expected ways. But she wants to make their love unique, genuine and the only one love that is created thoughtfully. It's completely new kind and not copied or superficial. "I won't say I'll pluck the moon from the sky for you- But I'll give you the sweet melody of a song" This particular first line of the second verse of the song, exhibits the speaker's honesty about not promising the impossible things like bringing the moon from the sky. Like some people do make huge and false promises to try to win the love from their beloved. Unlike them, she offers something new and different kind of love that is genuine and lasts forever. She wants to offer the emotional warmth of their love that is created in an undying melody of the song which could be played

even if they aren't always physically there. In fact, the speaker in the song values honest, heartfelt emotion over dramatic gestures offering love that is real and timeless in its own new kind of way.

While interpreting through the lens of liberal feminism, the song involves in focusing individual agency, emotional authenticity, and the rejection of traditional gender roles and expectations in love where men are more open and bold to express it without hesitations. The speaker openly rejects grand, idealized promises like giving the moon or eternal companionship which are often part of conventional, patriarchal ideas of romance. Instead, the speaker of the song is willing to offer something more real, meaningful and a new kind of love that she has created in the melodies of a song with full of intense feelings and love. From a liberal feminist view, this reflects agency and a move away from performative, gendered expectations in love. In third verse first line the speaker says, "I won't say I'll stay with you for a lifetime, but I'll give you the passionate melody of the song" This line reflects a feminist emphasis on mutual respect and emotional truth, not control or dependency. She also doesn't make lifelong promises, knowing that life is uncertain. Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949) explores the concept of gender as a social construct, "arguing that women are not born but rather made into what society defines as feminine" (13). Her work shares some common ground with liberal feminism's emphasis on equality and individual rights, but also extends beyond it, particularly in her existentialist approach:

If I want to define myself, I first have to say, "I am a woman"; all other assertions will arise from this basic truth. A man never begins by positing himself as an individual of a certain sex: that he is a man is obvious. The categories masculine and feminine appear as symmetrical in a formal way on

town hall records or identification papers. The relation of the two sexes is not that of two electrical poles: the man represents both the positive and the neuter to such an extent that in French *hommes* designates human beings, the particular meaning of the word *vir* being assimilated into the general meaning of the word “*homo*.” Woman is the negative, to such a point that any determination is imputed to her as a limitation, without reciprocity. (25)

Similarly, the speaker of the song creates a “new kind of love” articulating against the societal norms where women are expected to accept what men desires. The women were considered nice when they listen and do what men say. They were not allowed to be as bold as men to express their desires due to the cultural and societal norms. However, in the song the speaker is willing to offer new kind of love to her beloved and take equal part in the partnership of companion. Here, the speaker is articulating the strongest self by pouring her inner feelings towards her beloved going against the stereotypical cultural norms where women were portrayed as suppressed being in the patriarchal society.

In the nutshell, “*Sabaile Dine Ustai Hunxa Maya*” (Everyone Gives You the Same Kind Of Love) upholds and celebrates the pure love of a woman to her beloved who is willing to offer pure and new kind of love. She has presented herself as a strong self to offer authentic and pure love freeing her from traditional gendered societal norms. Through the lens of liberal feminism, the speaker is seeking for the equality voicing for freedom of expressions and equal participation in the companionship which is against traditional patriarchal society.

**“*Dhuwa Dhuwa – Tuwalo Tuwalo*” (Smoke Smoke, Haze Haze)**

*(Dhuwa dhuwa-tuwalo tuwalo- mero aakha mero mann*

*Aandhi huri dhulo dhulo, hiyo thiyo aaja chha jhan*

*Mero yatra shunya mero shahar shunya*

*Mero hridaya shunya mero rahar shunya*

*Sunyasunyadadhelodadhelomeroaakhameromana*

*Mero gham aansu mero juna aansu*

*Mero geet aansu mero dhunn aansu*

*Aansu aansu dhamilo dhamilo mero aakha mero mann)*

Smoke-smoke, Haze Haze - My eyes, my heart

Storms and dust, what was yesterday – it's even more today

My journey is empty, my city is empty

My heart is hollow, my desire is empty

Empty, empty – wildfire, wildfire.... My eyes, my heart

My Sun is tears, my moon is tears

My song is tears, my melody is tears

Tears, tears clouded, clouded my eyes, my heart

*“Dhuwa Dhuwa – Tuwalo Tuwalo”* (Smoke Smoke- Haze Haze) is very emotional song sung by Tara Thapa that portrays the deep emotional emptiness and despair by the speaker. The speaker has used the vivid natural symbols and imagery to reflect her inner self. She seems to be in the deep emotional pain perhaps due to devastative loss

in her life. Each line of the song has very depressive sufferings of the speaker where she finds the world very blurred and empty. “*Dhuwa Dhuwa Tuwalo Tuwalo- Mero Aakha Mero Mann*” (Smoke Smoke, Haze Haze – My eyes, my heart) exemplifies that the speaker is going through intense emotional pain and grief. The speaker is portraying the entire world very blurred and unclear.

Smoke and haze usually represent confusion, sadness and gloomy heart which she has mentioned clearly. The speaker has expressed her sufferings powerfully though she hasn't mentioned the reasons behind it. We can assume that, this chaos and emotional turmoil may have occurred due to personal loss or a societal crisis. (Storms and dust, what was yesterday – it's even more today) This second line from the first verse represents the speaker's unsettled disruption like storm which is not taking the name to stop. The problem or the pain was there yesterday and it's still there. Actually it's growing more continuously putting the speaker into hopelessness. (My journey is empty, my city is empty. My heart is hollow, my desire is empty. Empty, empty-wildfire – wildfire.... My eyes, my heart).

These lines from the second verse articulate the meaninglessness of life of the speaker. She repeats the word “empty” suggesting the numbness of her life. The speaker finds all empty or meaningless; her desires, her goals, her place, her journey, her relationships and her emotions. She is mentioning about the wildfire symbolizing the destruction of her inner self. The speaker is indicating that her entire world is burning, burning in deep pain.

In the last verse of the song, the speaker is talking about ‘Tears’. Tears usually symbolize grief. “My Sun is tears, my moon is tears” This line indicates that the speaker is completely overtaken by sorrow. The sun symbolizes warmth and day and

the moon symbolizes beauty and night. The speaker's day and night, her joy and hope everything is soaked in sufferings and sadness.

“Tears, tears clouded, clouded my eyes, my heart” The last line of the third verse has portrayed the complete emotional breakdown of the speaker. Here, she has articulated how grief has clouded her thoughts and mind. The speaker feels helpless and surrounded by overwhelming sorrow, confusion and emptiness. This verse indicates the speaker's pessimistic state of mind regarding her life because of the suffering and pain she is struggling inside herself as there is no clarity or light ahead. The adjective ‘clouded’ used by the speaker indicates everything is blurred and meaningless that she is going through.

Through the lens of liberal feminism, we can see the speaker's struggles and emotional distress and she is searching for individual freedom, equality and right to self expressions in the then contemporary patriarchal society. Helen Pluckrose, in *Cynical Theories* (1990) argues that once women gained legal equality with men and had control over their own reproductive choices and when societal expectations had changed so much that it was no longer surprising to see women in all fields of work:

Liberal feminists generally believe society already provides almost all the opportunities required for women to succeed in life. They simply want the same access to those opportunities as men and advocate measures that allow and protect that access—educational opportunities, affordable childcare, flexible working hours, and so on. Liberal feminism does not automatically assume that differences in outcomes imply discrimination, however, and thus it eschews the equity-based approaches of intersectional feminism. The liberal focus on removing the social significance of identity categories—that is, the legal and social requirements to comply with gender, class, or race

expectations—seeks to refine the legacies of the Enlightenment project and the civil rights movements, rather than overthrow them for socialist or postmodern ends. (53)

In the context of Nepali social and cultural norms, unlike men, women are not provided the equal rights and freedom. Women have to face many social and cultural constraints. Women were limited to household chores and stay home as a wife and a mother. “Smoke Smoke – Haze Haze – My Eyes, My Heart” the very first line of the first verse of the song indicates the blurry and unclear vision that is full of emotional distress of the speaker. This portrays the internal conflict of the speaker who is aware of her inequality, yet fearing to express clearly against the suppressive traditional norms of the society. “My journey is empty, my city is empty” This particular line reflects how the speaker is feeling meaninglessness or isolated in the male dominated society. Through the repetition of the word “empty”, the speaker is indicating the lack of the feelings of belongingness suggesting the social and cultural constraints and barriers for women. “My heart is hollow, my desire is empty” This line exemplify that how the speaker’s desires are buried and silenced in the name of social norms and expected to sacrifice their choice and ambitions.

In the context of the social and cultural values, the patriarchy has a heavy influence in silencing women’s desires, considering women to accept the situation firmly as a gendered role. Even now with the legal reforms, women are given only 33% of the legal rights to represent in the government bodies showing the huge gap in between the genders. And this bitter reality is mirrored by the speaker in the line “Wildfire, wildfire – my eyes, my heart”. This image of wildfire represents the suppressed rage and grief of the speaker that are culturally discouraged from

expressing. And she is burning inside though she remains composed outside as expected by the societal and cultural norms.

“My Sun is tears, my moon is tears” The sun and the moon often symbolize the day and night and also warmth and beauty however both are turning into tears. The tears reflect the barrier of the sources of warmth and beauty and the light and support soaking her into the deep emotional sufferings caused by the societal and cultural norms. It suggests that the speaker is in depressing stage who has failed to uphold her dignity. “Tears, tears – clouded, clouded, my eyes, my heart” This line narrates the speaker’s distress and outcry about her situation being as a women who has suffered for a long term and silenced due to the expectations of the patriarchal and cultural norms.

In conclusion, “*Dhuwa Dhuwa, Tuwalo Tuwalo*” [Smoke smoke- Haze Haze] recounts the deep emotional sufferings of the speaker highlighting the situation of women who are silenced and suppressed by the societal norms in the patriarchal society. She is expressing her distress and outcry for justice through the legal and social reforms. The speaker is emphasizing the bitter reality of women where they are expected to be inside the boundaries as a home maker and silently accept it as the patriarchal society and cultural norms demands. The speaker is not only expressing her emotional struggles but also out pouring her rage against the system of patriarchal society seeking for equality, autonomy and freedom of expressions as goals of liberal feminism.

**“*Tari Nadeu Hey Majhi Dai*” [Hey! Boatman brother, Please Don’t Sail me  
Across the River]**

*(Ho majhidai. . . . .*

*Tari nadeu hey majhi dai - Maitiko pap lagla hai*  
*Chhadi nadeu hey majhidai, Mayaluko shrap lagla hai*

*Wari mero maitighar jaha aankha khulyo*  
*Khelda kheldai lukamari phula jhai yowana jhulyo*

*Tyahi gaaun ,tyahi thau aaja eklai pari,*  
*Jana mana chhaina malai sathi sara chhadi*  
*Pari mero sindurko indreniko desh*  
*yowanama lali chharne mayaluko bhesa*

*Ghumto bhitra lukai rakhchhu sukumar isansar*  
*Pahilai palta dekhu aaphnai khasamko anuhar*  
*Tari nadeu he majhidai . . .)*

Hey! Boatman brother....

Don't sail me across the river

I feel like I will be cursed by my mother's love,

Don't stop me here either, for my love might bring curse upon you

On one side is my maternal home where I first opened my eyes,

And where I played hide and seek, and had fun

The place where my youth blossomed like a flower

That same village, that same place

Now, I have to leave it all alone

I really don't want to go, leaving all my friends behind.

I am about to cross into the land of sindoor (vermillion)

The land of rainbows and marriage,

Dressed in the colours of youth and love

I will hide this tender world within my bridal veil,

For the first time,

I will see the face of the man I married

So, please boatman,

Don't sail me across the river....

*“Tari Nadeu Hey Majhi Dai”* [Hey! Boatman brother, Please, Don't Sail Me across the River] reflects the journey of a young lady from her childhood to her adulthood and marriage. It also portrays the cultural tradition of the country where women expected to leave her *“maiti ghar”* maternal home and move to her husband's house and make it her home. The speaker in the song addresses a boatman brother, a symbolic figure and pleading him to not to sail her across the river through the first line of the first verse of the song “Hey! Boatman, please don't sail me across the river” There is a tradition in our country Nepal, where women are suppose to leave their parental or maternal home and go to her husband's home after wedding ceremony. And this line of the song suggests women's hesitations, sadness and kind of fear to step into the new phase of life. Here crossing the river not only signifies the physical movement of woman to her husband 's house but it symbolizes leaving behind her childhood, her family and her happy place to enter into completely

unknown phase of her new beginning, new space and responsibilities and relationships of her life. The speaker in the song is calling a boatman as a brother which is the culture of our country where there is not necessary to have a kinship relationship. We call people of our community with relations as our brothers or sisters, aunt or uncle which is completely different from western culture. So, as in the song the speaker calls Boatman as “*Dai*” (brother) signifies strong sense of trust as protector. Prof. Dr Sanjeev Upreti in *Sidhanta Ka Kura* argues that “structural violence relates to gender inequality, exploring how social structures privilege one gender while marginalizing the other” (1). He argues:

A central theme of the discussion was the concept of structural dividend. Prof. Upreti introduced this term to describe the unearned benefits an individual receives from social structures without directly contributing or putting in effort. He elaborated, “Being born into a middle-class family and as a male, I have received certain privileges without having contributed to them. This has placed me in an advantageous position.” In contrast, he explained, “A woman born into a Madhesi-Dalit family in a lower-middle-class household is deprived of every structural privilege that I have had.” He challenged the homogeneous understanding of gender inequality and argued that it must be examined through the lens of structural dividend, as each individual’s experience of inequality is unique. Factors such as caste, gender, class, language, and geography, he argued, are directly linked to the distribution of structural dividends, making the issue multi-layered. (1)

In Thapa’s song “I feel like I will be cursed by my mother’s love, Don’t stop me here either, for my love might bring curse upon you” These particular lines portrays the sense of confusion and unwillingness of the speaker whether to leave her parental

home and go to her husband's home as she is newly married to her husband. She is nostalgic about her childhood reflecting her memories of playing hide and seek and how suddenly her youth blossomed representing her innocence to adulthood. The speaker feels kind of lonely and uncertain to play a new role as a wife. The word "*mero sindoorko indreniko desh*" (The country of the rainbow of the vermillion) is the symbol used for the speaker's entering to her new phase of life. However, there's sense of hesitation in speaker's tone as she is seeing her husband's face for the first time. Overall, it reflects the innocence and bittersweet feelings of a speaker who is newly stepped into the new phase of her life after arranged marriage as of guided by our traditional norms or costumes.

While interpreting through the lens of liberal feminism within our Nepali cultural context, it reveals the emotional turmoil of the speaker in completely patriarchy society where there is huge gap in the gender roles. The speaker here talks about "Crossing the River" culturally and metaphorically signifies the act of the speaker or the daughter leaving their parental home and joins her newly wedded husband's home. The river in the song symbolizes the boundary between her parental home and husband's home creating social obligation from individual freedom and loss of autonomy. It shows how a daughter's identity is changed after marriage and bound to accept as her duties and responsibilities as demanded by our cultural norms and expectations. There is a repetition in the line "Don't sail me across the river, hey boatman brother" the speaker is pleading not to take her across the river as she seems to hesitate and have unwillingness to get married. This line also reflects the speaker's valid emotions emphasizing her individual agency and out pouring her internal conflict with the sense of fear and hesitations regarding arranged marriage where her

choice is repressed by the traditional costumes. In our culture, especially women are trained to endure and not to question about our traditions.

The speaker in the song has used the symbols like “Vermillion”, and “bridal veil” that she is going to have it changing her identity and signaling the new phase of her life which is being owned by her husband and his family. She has also mentioned that she is going to see her husband’s face for the first time reveals that there’s a lack of informed consent reflecting the issues around arranged marriage where women are not given choices and have minimal voice. This uncovers the harsh reality of women where they are suppressed and not given voice for their choices in the then contemporary society and simply bound to accept the expectations demanded by the traditional costume.

In conclusion, “*Tari Nadeu Hey Majhi Dai*” [Hey! Boatman brother, Please Don’t Sail me Across the River] portrays the emotional turmoil of the speaker where she is pleading the boatman brother to not to sail her across the river. She also reveals that she was not given a chance of choices regarding her individual freedom but act accordingly the traditional and social costumes expectations. This song represents the harsh reality of women where they are suppressed in the name of Nepali traditional and cultural costumes snatching their autonomy in the then contemporary society. The tone of the song goes melancholic as the speaker is unwilling to go across the river leaving her parental home and seeing her husband for the first time and also criticizing the arranged marriage without emotional consent. The speaker of the song shows the tensions of her mind and fear of the beginning of new phase of her life in her husband’s home. As of so, she is silently protesting and calling attention to the need of reforms for their greater autonomy and equality within both family and society.

**“Hajar Choti Janmula” [I Would Be Born a Thousand Times]**

*Hajar choti janmula, hajar dukha sahula*

*Timilai pauna, timilai rijhauna*

*Timi mero jivan, ma timro joban*

*Timi mero biswas, ma timro dhadkan*

*Hajar choti.....*

*Timi mero mandir, ma aaradhana*

*Timi jivanyatra, ma shuvakamana*

I would be born a thousand time; I would endure a thousand sorrows

Just to have you, Just to win your heart...

You are my life, I am your youth

You are my faith; I am your heartbeat...

You are my temple, I am your prayer

You are the journey of life, I am the good wishes

This song “*Hajar Choti Janmula*” [I Would Be Born a Thousand Times] sung by Tara Thapa beholds the intense love of the speaker towards her beloved and shows deep devotion to him. “I would be born a thousand times; I would endure a thousand sorrows” this particular line from the first verse of the song depicts the devotion and sacrifice of a woman for her love and happily willing to reborn thousand times and endure the numerous sorrows to win his love. “You are my life, I am your youth” in this line the speaker has represented herself as a beauty (youth) reveals the stereotypical norms regarding women where they are expected or objectified as beauty while men are represented as stability or life. This also illustrates that the

speaker's existence is meaningful because of her beloved while in return; the speaker gives him passionate and unconditional love. "You are my temple, I am the prayer" Here, the speaker is considering her beloved as holy and sacred and herself as someone who constantly worships and prays for him.

When viewed through the liberal feminism, the speaker of the song is passionate lover who is ready to go through countless lives and suffering to win her beloved. She is out pouring her pure, selfless and spiritual kind of love seeing where she is willing to intertwine with her beloved. However, the speaker's passionate expressions of love can be seen as assertion of emotional agency suggesting a balanced relationship where there's mutual respect in the relationship. "You are my life, I am your youth" In this particular line, the speaker is valuing the presence of her beloved to have her life. She is defining her worth and identity in relation to her lover. And this is reflecting a loss of self where women are expected to put men in the center for their existence. The speaker has used the metaphors like "temple" for her beloved and herself as a "prayer". She also describes her beloved as her journey of life indicates inequality in gender roles where women are served as a complement and often idealized as self-sacrificing partner. In this way, though the speaker of the song is showcasing her intense and passionate love towards her beloved, it also reflects the deep rooted cultural norms where the women are considered to be the one who always sacrifice. The speaker also voicing for mutual admiration, autonomy and social freedom like men.

In conclusion, the song "*Hajar Choti Janmula*" beautifully captures the depth of the speaker's love and devotion, yet it simultaneously reveals the deeply embedded gender norms that shape female identity and emotional expression. While the speaker appears to emphasize emotional agency and genuine affection, her portrayal often

aligns with traditional expectations of women as self-sacrificing, nurturing, and inferior to their male counterparts. The use of metaphors like “temple” and “prayer” not only promote love to a spiritual level but also highlights the imbalance in power and worth within the relationship. Through a liberal feminist lens, the song becomes a reflection of how love, while powerful, can also be a space where women's individuality is include under the weight of idealized devotion blemishing the reality of women. Ultimately, the song highlights both the beauty and the burden of female love in a patriarchal society—expressing a desire for emotional equality, recognition, and freedom alongside the enduring legacy of subordination.

Similarly, “*Chita Banai, Jalai Nadeu*” [Don’t build a pyre and burn], showcases the dedication of woman upon her beloved and request her beloved not to betray her and bury her desire of his “Sindoor and pote”. The speaker of the song pleads her beloved to give the equal respect to her feelings. The speaker in the song doesn’t have any high demand but simply she desires for his fistful “Sindoor” (Vermillion) which she has mentioned in the first line of second verse of the song i.e. “What I asked from you was just a fistful of sacred vermilion” The speaker of the song who is blindly in love with her beloved is requesting her beloved to marry her and asking for his commitment as well. She simply wished to be treated with kindness and without hatred or rejection.

Likewise “*Kinar betna khojda khojdai*” [When Trying to Reach The Shore] depicts the inner suffering of the speaker who is immensely in love with her man but for some reasons they are not together or her beloved has left her all by herself. The speaker in the song is in a deep emotional labor and has lost her hope and strength while trying to find the love, peace or a stable life. She has symbolized it by “shore”

in the song but instead of reaching her goal, she has drowned shattering her desires and dreams within the waves of loneliness.

“My parted is bare, yet vermilion stains my heart” in this first line of the second verse of the song, the speaker is talking about her “*khali siudo*” (parting) juxtaposing with “the vermilion stains in her heart” depicting the disconnection between social recognition and personal truth. It also showcase the commitment of the speaker to her beloved which is unrecognized or not acknowledged by the society as “vermillion” in the parting is considered an approval to validate their relationship in our culture.

“Why did the kite of my feelings get cut and fall to the ground?” In this line, the kite used by the speaker is a metaphor that shows how her life was full of life and colours soaring high in the sky but now it’s fallen and cut off from its source. “Like the broken beads of a widow’s necklace, my desires have shattered” likewise in this line, the speaker has compared her hope, dreams and joy with the broken beads of widow (*pote*) as the metaphor of grief. There are other symbols like “sunflower” and “volcano” through which the speaker is shifting her identity of being bold and beautiful because of joy, light and love from her beloved, now changed into a volcano symbolizing the rage, sufferings and destruction indicating the result of loneliness. The another symbol is “garland” which she was trying to make out of love and affection is now dried and its all dried long before.

## 1. Female Subordination as a Symptomatic Reading

The analysis of the selected eight songs discloses recurring themes of emotional dependence, sacrifice, and idealized femininity and all these songs align with traditional gender roles. In songs such as “*Sabaile Dine Ustai Hunxa Maya*” and “*Mero Mayako Sansaar*”, the female voice is represented as emotionally vulnerable and devoted where they are positioned as dependent on male for her self-worth and identity. This ultimately proves that women are subordinated by the norms in the patriarchal society as identified through the liberal feminism theory as there is a vast structural inequality.

In the purposively selected eight songs sung by Tara Thapa, many symbols and metaphors are used that subtly reinforce the male authority. For example, in “*Tari Nadeu Hey Majhi Dai*” the boatman who is a male figure holds the power to control the women’s fate. It depends on him whether she crosses the river or remains stock. This symbolizes the broader social reality where women’s choices and mobility are often in the hands of male authority.

Similarly, in “*Chita Banai Jalai Nadeu*”, different metaphors like “a fistful sindoor”, “temple”, “worshiper” are used culturally symbolizing marriage and commitments. The speaker is willing have “a fistful of sindoor” and wants to be the worshiper of her beloved to whom she considers “temple” reflects vulnerability, yearning for commitment and a demand for respect and agency in love and relationships. This aligns with liberal feminist concerns about how social and cultural norms undermine women’s autonomy.

Although Tara Thapa a renowned female singer sings both songs written by male and female lyricists, her majority of songs are written by the male lyricists that embody patriarchal ideologies. This creates a paradox where the female voice is used

to express the narratives of the submission putting the male in the centre. “*MayaluKo chheu Ma Jada Ye Hawa*”, for example, depicts a woman pining in silence while her emotions remain controlled by the societal and cultural norms of the complete patriarchal society.

Interestingly, even when songs are written by female lyricists, such as “*Mero Maya Ko Sansaar*”, depicts the eternal love and self-sacrifice continues to overlook subordination, suggesting the deep internalization of gender norms even among women themselves.

In the songs like “*Kinar Bhetna Khojda*” and “*Dhuwa Dhuwa, Tuwalo Tuwalo*” there is the glimpses of the women’s emotional struggle for autonomy and individuality. The imagery of trying to reach the shore “*Kinar*” and or trying to showcase the blurred and gloomy situations of women created by the social and cultural norms embedded by patriarchal mindset. This imagery reflects confusion of the women, and suppression that is yearning for clarity or self-definition. These songs stand out as they introduce ambiguity, hinting at the possibility of resistance within the confines of conformity.

When observed the linguistic patterns in the lyrics of the songs whether written by male or female lyricists, there’s the clear gender roles i.e. women are associated with love, sacrifice, patience and sufferings while men are associated with protection, leadership, control and reasons. In songs for instance “*Hajar Choti Janmula*”, “*Chita Banai Jalai Nadeu*” asserts devotion of women and seeking male validation critically aligning with liberal feminism of how language shapes and stereotype maintaining the power dynamics in the patriarchal society. Even in romantic expressions, the women are portrayed and passive speaker.

In songs, women claims agency while expressing love and loyalty to her beloved and never speaks of her own dreams, desires and self-worth outside the relationship. This depicts the blemished reality of women who is always ready to offer her emotional labor and selfhood in service to someone else. Instead of seeking fulfillment on her own terms, she is portrayed as strong women just to redefine her love and loyalty for someone else. The women's feminist assertion is in fact framed through a male centered lens where women are presented bold but she needs the validation from the men. In relationships, women are called partners of men but due to the traditional patriarchic mindset and societal norms blemished the reality of women to just to become as a service provider in the partnership overshadowing women's identities by their roles as lovers, wives or care givers.

The frequent use of metaphoric and symbolic language in the songs further reinforces women as 'other'. Symbols such as "*Sindoor*" (Vermillion), "*Pote*" (beads necklace used by married), "*khali siudo*" (bare partion) conveys a sense of dependence upon men and loss of identity. Similarly the metaphors such as wind, fog, smoke, river, tears, waves portrays a sense of helplessness, lack of control, and sufferings highlighting how women's experiences are shaped and often limited by external, male-dominated forces and societal norms embedded with patriarchal mindset. Even in the songs written by female lyricists, there's the visibility of internalized patriarchy that glorifies women's self-sacrifice and emotional devotion. However, not all the songs are entirely submissive. Some lyrics depict the hints of resistance, and personal struggle, indicating the potential for change and transformation within the social and cultural narratives. It signifies that even within the traditionally patriarchic texts, there is a room for change imagining feminist reinterpretation.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that Nepali songs which are considered as a form of cultural literature continue to play a vital role in maintaining and circulating gender norms. By analyzing these texts through a liberal feminist lens, this study highlights the importance of critically engaging with popular culture to challenge biased representations and advocate for more empowering depictions of women. Such efforts are essential in the broader struggle for gender equality, freedom, and individual autonomy in society.

## Works Cited

- Bajracharya, Srizu. How Nepali Songs Are Blurring the Lines between Entertainment and Sexism. *The Kathmandu Post*, 10 Aug. 2021 <<https://kathmandupost.com>.>
- Baral, Sujata. Nepalese Culture: Special Reference to Folk Music and Dance. *Journal of Nepalese Folklore and Culture*, vol. 3, 2020, pp. 45–60.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Vintage Classics, 1949.
- Chita Banai Jalai Nadeu* [Don't Build a Pyre and Burn]. Lyrics by [DhananjayaThapa]. Sung by Tara Thapa. *Paleti Series*: Youtube
- DhuwaDhuwa, TuwaloTuwalo* [Smoke-SMOke, Fog-Fog]. Lyrics by [SurendraRana]. Sung by Tara Thapa. *Paleti Series*: Youtube
- Gazette- Radio Nepal Archive. Web
- Ghimire, Ram Prasad. A Folkloristic Study on the Folk Songs that Reflect Nature. *Nepal Folklore Society Journal*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2018, pp. 120–132.
- Hajar Choti Janmula* [I Will Be Born a Thousand Times]. Lyrics by [Narayan Acharya]. Sung by Tara Thapa. *Paleti Series*: Youtube
- Khadgi, Ankit. How Teej Songs Have Evolved and What They Mean for Women. *The Record Nepal*, 22 Aug. 2021, <<https://www.recordnepal.com>.>
- Kinar Betna Khojda* [While Trying to Reach the Shore]. Lyrics by [Man BahadurMukhiya]. Sung by Tara Thapa. *Paleti Series*: Youtube
- Mayalu Ko Xeu Ma Jada Ye Hawa* [While You Go Near My Love, Hey! Wind]. Lyrics by [Ruby Gurung]. Sung by Tara Thapa. *Paleti Series*: Youtube
- Mero Maya Ko Sansaar* [The World of My Love]. Lyrics by [Chadani Shah]. Sung by Tara Thapa. *Paleti Series*: Youtube
- Mill, John Stuart. *The Subjection of Women*. 1869. Edited by Susan M. Okin, Hackett Publishing Company, 1988.

Panta, Sangharsha. Nepalese Women Defy Gender and Caste Stereotypes through Music. *Nepali Times*, 5 July 2021, <<https://nepalitimes.com>.>

Pluckrose, Helen *Goodreads*, Goodreads Inc., Quote #10498558, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/10498558-liberal-feminists-generally-believe-society-already-provides-almost-all-the>. Accessed 22 June 2025.

*Sabaile Dine Ustai Hunxa Maya* [Everyone Gives You the Same Kind of Love].

*Lyrics by [SurendraRana]*. Sung by Tara Thapa. *Paleti Series*: Youtube

Shrestha, Tara Lal. Music as Resistance: Revisiting Melawa Devi and Her Songs.

*Studies in Nepali Culture and Music*, vol. 4, 2019, pp. 22

*Tari Nadeu Hey Majhi Dai* [Hey! Boatman Brother, Don't Sail Me Across the River].

*Lyrics by [NagendraThapa]*. Sung by Tara Thapa. *Paleti Series*: Youtube

Uprety, Sanjeev. *Siddhantaka Kura*. Book Hill Publication Pvt. Ltd., 2021.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on*

*Political and Moral Subjects*. 1792. Edited by Miriam Brody, Penguin Books, 2004.