

**INTELLECTUAL INCEPTION: A Multidisciplinary Research  
Journal of Bhojpur Campus**  
(Peer Reviewed)

ISSN: 2990-7934, Volume 2, Issue 1, June 2024, pp 1-20  
Published by Research Management Cell (RMC), Bhojpur Multiple Campus, Bhojpur  
E-mail: [rmcbhojpur@gmail.com](mailto:rmcbhojpur@gmail.com)

---

**Melody of the Malady: Musicking Subaltern Counterpublics Space in J. B.  
Tuhure's Selected Songs**

**Dipankar Senehang**

**Lecturer, Department of English, Kathmandu Bernhardt College, Kathmandu**

---

**Article History:** Submitted 15 April 2024; Reviewed 20 May 2024; Revised 14 June 2024

**Corresponding Author:** Dipankar Senehang, Email: [Senehanglims51@gmail.com](mailto:Senehanglims51@gmail.com)

**DOI:**.....

---

**Abstract**

*When the Panchayat regime emerged as a new governmental system in Nepal, it brought various developmental projects to elevate the socio-economic condition of the people. However, when it was practically implemented, instead of betterment, the public confronted hardship in celebrating their liberty and autonomy. The society was stratified into different domains, constricting the space for the commoners and limiting their horizon of understanding. In this context, J.B. Tuhure's song played an important role to narrate the precise story of the folks and make them aware of their position, blasting revolutionary thoughts inwardly in their consciousness. As the songs are suggestive in nature, they are, in fact, counter-voices against the regime and underlying structure of Nepali society, which had to be changed for the emancipation of the subalterns. In this relevance, this research paper explores Tuhure's three specific songs: Basai Hidne ko Taanti Le, Aama Didi Baini Ho, and Chhora Haru Ho, focusing on how the musicality of these songs create subaltern counterpublics space to construct anti-dominant narrations of the Panchayat regime and how these songs pave the way for the recognition of the marginalized category of people in the stratified societies, where layers of domination persist. Taking Nancy Fraser's concept of 'Subaltern Counterpublics Space' and Christopher Small's notion of 'Musicking' as a theoretical perspective, the paper argues Tuhure's songs are the spaces where a cluster of subaltern narratives simultaneously occur, challenging the regime and vocalizing the rights for the subordinated. It unravels that Tuhure's songs are the musicking of subaltern counterpublics spaces, making the public participatory and performative.*

**Keywords:** The Panchayat Regime, domination, stratified society, space, and performance

**Introduction**

Juth Bahadur Khadgi, widely known as J. B. Tuhure, is one of the celebrated folk singers of Nepal who commonly sang revolutionary songs during the Panchayat Regime. His musical endeavor was affluent in uniting the people and making them aware of their real conditions in the domain of an autocratic monarchical system. Playing a significant role in raising public consciousness against governmental actions, Tuhure vitalized the necessity of

public integrity for the resistance through the musical space. In this light, this paper analyzes his three selective songs namely, *Basai Hidne ko Taanti Le*, *Aama Didi Baini Ho*, and *Chhora Haru Ho* to explore a sound of integrity and resistance, focusing on three specific questions: What were the layers of dominance of the Panchayat regime and how the spaces are created to challenge them? Why are Tuhure's songs more provocative? And how do his songs create subaltern counterpublics spheres through musicking to address the aspirations and demands of the folks? In order to signify its contextual prominence, this paper considers the discourse of the Panchayat regime from 1960 to 1990.

This study analyzes Tuhure's songs in relevance to the historical discursivity of the Panchayat Regime because as Moslih Kanaanah argues, "[M]usic is . . . inevitably organically tied to history such that one can read history in music, and, at the same time, one always has to understand music and musical works in their historical context" (2). The socio-political atmosphere is equally important to comprehend the substantial dimension of music and its impact. In this relevance, this research paper embodies Nancy Fraser's concept of subaltern counterpublics space to evaluate and expose the spaces created by Tuhure's songs, understanding how the politics of unity was an alternative mode of resistance that confirmed the implicit, however, active form of counter-voice in the Panchayat regime. As Fraser defines, 'Subaltern Counterpublics' as a discursive constellation space, where a marginalized group of people has a "contestatory relationship to dominant publics" (70), her notion elasticizes a broader horizon for this research to excavate the magnitude of dominance and range of counter-narratives of the Panchayat regime and Tuhure's song respectively. More specifically, as she contends: "they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and need" (67), this research holds her conception to address the alternative spaces created by the songs, understanding subordinated group as subaltern.

Similarly, to expose how the voice of unity and resistance came into action, though passively, the paper incorporates Christopher Small's notion of 'Musicking' as he defines, "Music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do" (2). Moreover, Small's understanding of music is the core principle of the research to highlight how the socio-cultural environment plays a significant role in shaping the formation of music to change society's performance. To be more specific, Small's notion of 'Musicking' is adopted to explore the 'Subaltern Counterpublics Space' in the musicality of Tuhure's song. With this, the paper claims that Tuhure's songs counterchallenge the multifaceted national narrations disseminated by the Panchayat regime by musicking the subaltern counterpublics space to accentuate the emancipatory voices for the subalterns.

This article is divided into four sections: Panchayat Regime and the Public Space: Tuhure in the Burning Coal, Tuhure's Musical Assessment and Counter Narrative, Politics of Integrity: An Implicit Defiance, and Resistance and Refutation. The first section deals with the historical background of the songs, the public sphere during the Panchayat regime, and Tuhure's musicality. The second part deals with Tuhure's counter-narrative against the grand narrative promulgated by King Mahendra especially focusing on the song *Basai Hidne ko Taanti Le*. Taking *Aama Didi Baini Ho* song into account, the third section deals with some other layers of domination and Tuhure's stand for voicing the subalterns. The last section

deals with the musicking of nationalism and patriotism especially focusing on the song *Chhora Haru Ho*.

### **Panchayat Regime and the Public Space: Tuhure in the Burning Coal**

After the royal coup in 1960, Nepal experienced a new wave of the governmental system led by the then-empowering King Mahendra. Dissolving the parliament and banning the political parties on 16 December 1960, Narayan Khadka contends, “Under the partyless system, the king wielded absolute power, governing through a largely rubber-stamp government and national assembly whose members were not permitted to identify themselves with any party or ideology” (694). Condemning the Western democratic system, which was unsuitable for Nepal, as per the King, because of its diverse and heteroglossia issues, he introduced ‘Partyless Panchayat Democracy’ in 1962. The distinctive new Panchayat system was said to have more potential to address aspirations and demands of the people than the democratic government, which was abolished by the King.

However, in fact, Carol C. Davis asserts, “The Panchayat system . . . sought to give an illusion of local participation and self-governance and to appear to represent the people fairly, while, in reality, permitted real power to remain solely with the King, who continued to rule despotically” (49-50). While concentrating the authority within the grip of the palace, the folks were not merely deluded but also, as Pratyoush Onta and Devraj Humagain argue, “it severely retarded the potential for a critical public sphere in Nepal” (102). Indeed, while confirming the spaces of the public, limited access was given to the people and astonishingly, those small spaces were also under strict observation. Expostulating the situation of the time, Richard Burghart attests:

Literary societies, businessmen’s clubs, newspapers and so on—they were allowed to enter public space only with the prior authorization of the state. Every local meeting, procession, and publication that was not sponsored by a state organization required government approval.(303)

Despite the governmental assertion of democracy, which is more affluent in delivering autonomy to the public, the system was more like attested formal prison—a metaphor for freedom. In such public spaces, Tuhure was playing implicit harmony among the people to alter the discourses pervasively disseminated by the Panchayat regime. Internalizing the atrocities and monopoly of the government, he chose an alternative space, musical space—in which he was imminent, sharp, and polished, to accumulate the audience and hammer the constraints that prevailed. His participation in public space was undoubtedly a bridge to enlightenment for the commoners; however, it was a threat to the authority because as Raf Geenens and Ronald Tinnevelt argue public space as, “the set of processes in which the particular ideas and interests of individuals or groups come into a more or less friendly confrontation with each other” (2). From this perspective, when Tuhure was creating an open domain where multiple thoughts could participate democratically through the musicality of his songs, he was also rupturing the hegemonic discourse of the Panchayat government.

In his interview, uploaded on *dcnepal.com* youtube channel he says, “Especially during the Panchayat regime, our songs were not allowed to sing. Police would attack where we would sing” (0:03:02-0:03:15). Government’s coercive force was readily there to obstruct the musical space through which Tuhure and his companions were vehemently intimidating

the domination. In fact, in his interview he reveals that he was beaten and imprisoned while performing programs. Even though, I stress, he restlessly fought against the suppression, creating subaltern counterpublics spaces. A news report published in *Kathmandu Post*, for example, reveals, “Even when he was underground during the Panchayat era, Khadgi was involved in raising public awareness about various public concerns through cultural programs” (2). His contribution does not suffice to this limit, moreover, “He is popularly known as a singer who raised leftist consciousness among people through popular songs” (*My Republica* 3). In this sense, the trajectories of his life pervade unsurmountable tragedies, full of upheavals and turmoils; nevertheless, he recounted the voice of subaltern as his primary motif and persistently generated proxy spaces via his musical venue to summon the dominion, putting his life at stake.

### **Tuhure’s Musical Assessment and Counter Narrative**

Initially, Tuhure was not as revolutionary as he became in his later days. Nor was his musical domain as resistive as it became after being influenced by the communal thoughts of the communist, who were against the Panchayat regime. Born in 1943, in the eastern part of Nepal, Dharan, his musical career encompasses transposition in his musical messages and performances. He says “When I had no political consciousness . . . I had an affinity to love songs” (0:05:08-0:05:18). In one of his interviews with *Nagarik Online TV*, he admits that he had sung revolutionary songs against corruption and government in his early days despite his strong bond to long songs during his formative years of his artistic creation. Influenced by Hindi songs, and songs of Dharma Raj Thapa, one of the prominent singers of Nepal, he started his musical career. Nevertheless, he was directed to a different musical subgenre once he was politically indoctrinated. In the course of programs and singing, in his interview with Tika Ram Yatri, he says, “Friends from leftist circles, especially from the Eastern Koshi Federal Committee, became close to me. They said you could sing such a sweet song, do sing people’s songs. That drove me to epiphany” (0:11:10-0:11:28). His acknowledgment, most importantly the motif of music, became his driving mechanism to address the situation of the commoners and especially those who were subverted by the power politics, grappled by the ruling sovereign. To be more precise, after taking party membership of Communist Party Nepal (CPN) in 2025 BS [1968], he started singing songs of progressive thought, as per his interview with *dcnepal.com*, from 2026 BS (1969), when the Panchayat regime was in its utmost effort to substantially prove the eminence of the new governmental system.

In this political phase, Tuhure for the first time composed the song and sang *Basai Hidne ko Tatile*, written by Love Pradhan in 1968, which became a revolutionary turn in his musical journey. This song exposes the situation of common people who were obliged to migrate because of social inequality. Inequality, here I mean opportunity which was limited merely to a certain group of people. T. Louise Brown claims, “The Panchayat regime preserved socio-economic inequality and continually reconstituted the authority of elites and the political marginalization of the majority of the population whose poverty was, in large part, both created and maintained by their economic, political, and social subservience to the national elite” (51). These happenstances explicitly reverberate in the song as it goes:

बसाई हिडने को ताँतीले  
बस्नेको मन रुवाउदा छ ।

The trail of migrants  
makes a cry to those who stay.

लाखौको लागि उजाड छ यो देश,  
मुट्टी भरलाई त स्वर्ग छ ।  
छोरा र छोरीको आँसु देख्दा,  
छाती पोलेर आउदछ ।  
साउ को रिड सम्झिदा,  
मनमा डढेलो लाग्द छ ।

This country is desolate for millions,  
but heaven for a handful  
Seeing tears of sons and daughters,  
my chest comes to burning.  
Remembering the debt of creditors,  
a wildfire burns in my heart.

(My Trans.)

The first four lines are the interlude, which is consistently a refrain throughout. Besides, the other four lines are the first verse of the song. These lines expose the situation of the folks and the pathetic predicament of citizens as an individual. Especially, the first four lines are the narration of a stratified society where few people enjoy and the majority of people suffer, resulting in migration—either as migrant workers or for a better opportunity. In terms of stratified society, I share the view of Nancy Fraser: “societies whose basic institutional framework generates unequal social groups in structural relations of dominance and subordination . . . in such societies, full parity of participation in public debate and deliberation is not within the reach of possibility” (66). Tuhure, in this sense, resistively portrays a segregated society where the majority had to work, being dominated, by the minority. In other words, Tuhure is creating an alternative mode of expression through which he penetrates the mind of people and inwardly flashes the light of truth showing them how the relaxation of the Panchayat regime is displacing the commoner for the struggle, limiting their horizon of accessibility.

The other four lines or the first verse of the song are more concerned with the in-depth reality of the folks that they were going through. The line incorporates the intensity of the unharmonious experience of the Nepalis when they see tears in the eyes of their children. This verse metaphorically suggests that neither the present nor the future has mellifluous experience; the pain the persona goes through does not merely suggest the heartbreaking reality of his situation but at the same time it visualizes the gloomy and solemn days forthcoming. Moreover, reflecting upon the stratified society, the last two lines suggest a heart-piercing casualty that the poor people go through because of the economic load they had to carry. Tuhure excavates the underneath solidity of the Panchayat regime and unmasks the empirical experiences of the citizens, which were covered by the impression of nationalism. Indeed, Tuhure, in this song, illuminates the lifestyle of the people and their social, political, and economic situatedness because according to Krishna Hachhethu, “Nepal's economy had suffered from a prolonged state of stagnation. During 1960-85 per capita growth rate was only 0.1 percent”(191). The economic crises and the recurring conflict with the neighboring country, resulting in blockades, were exacerbating the status of the commoners, throbbing the country towards timidly slow progressive affirms if not regressive economic condition. “In such troubled times,” Krishna Hachhethu further argues, “thousands of unorganized workers who were previously engaged in construction and in other industries lost their jobs as these sectors immediately began filling the consequences of the trade embargo” (192). These consequences were directly impacting the life of the folk which was compelling them to search for alternatives to rejuvenate the possibility for their sustenance. Thus, perhaps, Tuhure was empathetically rooted in these phenomena, so he attempted to voice for the public in this song.

Tuhure's song is not merely an exposition of the problem that was prevalent in the society but also a cautionary urge to the government to take appropriate steps for the country's betterment. Moreover, his song is also about detecting the problem and the resemblance of the consequence. Devoid of stratification, it is a call for unity to demolish the persisting coercive force and create an equal society, establishing peace, security, and harmony. These expressions are more palpable in the last four lines of the song below:

मुटुमा घाउ बोकेर	Carrying wound in your heart,
नजाउ नेपाली बिदेशमा	Nepali do not go abroad.
मासेर शत्रु झलमलपारौ	Annihilating the rivels, let's make the
बसेर आफ्नै स्वदेशमा	country radiant staying in the country.

(My Trans.)

The lines are optimistic in tone and resistive in attitude. Unraveling the excruciating situation of the folks, the song requests them to stay in Nepal rather than go abroad. More importantly, the last two lines are powerful enough to expostulate that there are enemies, metaphorically the Panchayat regime, in the country and it is possible to glimmer the nation only if they are exterminated. Tuhure gives an alternative to the problem and exhibits the prosperous country through his musical sphere. He stretches the public sphere and idealizes the hope of emancipation, metaphorically uniting people to fight against the challenges. This, if we take Nancy Fraser into account as she says, "the proliferation of subaltern counterpublics means a widening of discursive contestation, and that is a good thing in stratified societies" (67), is, therefore, a process of acclimatizing public to participate in the successful warfare. Since the country was polarized, there was a demand for public unity and demolishing the monopoly of the government. In this case, Tuhure's song profoundly creates an anti-Panchayat narration, vitalizing the amalgamation of the public and their diverse thought.

People might argue that King Mahendra even had similar thoughts in terms of people going abroad as he had started the 'Return to Village National Campaign.' The question, then, might arise as; to how Tuhure was projecting anti-Panchayat conception if the government's thought and his concept match. To answer this question, I take King Mahendra's political speech of 2024 Poush 2, inscribed in Dr. Harsha Bahadur Budha Magar's book *Shree 5 Mahendra - Antaranga Ra Bahiranga Byaktitwa.*, into consideration because it was the day he officially put 'Return to Village National Campaign' as a major strategy to develop the nation proportionally in front of the citizens. In the speech, King Mahendra said, despair from the centuries rooted in the rural areas has not been evacuated so far and citizens from the village have not yet been aware and conscious of their rights and responsibilities. For this, he rationalized, "Because the majority of people live in the village, to attain the fundamental purpose of the system, we have to return to the village . . . . Because of the tendency of leaving the village in the educated, able, and capable to hold the leadership people, the problem will be exacerbated" (292). Both Tuhure and King Mahendra seem to be in the same direction; however, if Mahendra's words are closely observed there lies his vested interest in his speech. For example, his call is specifically targeted to the potential manpower who could improve the situation of the remote area to fulfill the goal determined by him. In other words, his call is directed to retain the primary purpose of the system which means implicitly Mahendra was more concerned with his self-interest, deluding the folks. I firmly assert this because as Satish Kumar points out, "Besides the supreme position that the

King has in the executive and legislative fields, he is the supreme commander of the armed forces. The King has the sole power to grant pardons and to remit, suspend or commute any sentence passed by any judicial authority of the country” (141), thus, he could mobilize educated people in the village and silence the resistive voices against him and prolong his autocratic monarchy. The point is that he strived to call capable manpower to the village just to consolidate his position rather than develop and elevate the socio-economic status of the villagers.

Unlike Mahendra, Tuhure impartially requests to stay or to return all the Nepalis to the nation for the betterment of the commoners. Regardless of ability, potentiality, and biases, Tuhure inclusively addresses entire migrants for the nation's development. In this sense, the centrality of Mahendra's speech revolves around his motif whereas Tuhure's song, vanishing the locus of the center, prioritizes the communal whole. Moreover, in terms of spatiotemporal location, Mahendra's call is 'place' specific, whereas Tuhure's urge focused on 'space.' More precisely, Tuhure's song is a platform through which he is substantially addressing the status of subaltern whereas Mahendra's speech is more of his expectation with the commoners to be seen as he intends to see them. Thus, the difference between Mahendra's speech and Tuhure's song is an ideological difference, though Tuhure confesses that he was touched by the return to village slogan, imminently the discourses they brought into visibility. Tuhure's song is a philosophical ground compounded with an irresistible subaltern's aspiration and a flexible space through which he could create an anti-dominant public sphere. In this sense, Christopher Small's definition occupies much space as he says, “The fundamental nature and meaning of music lie not in objects, not in musical works at all, but in action, in what people do” (8). Relying on Small's proposition, I stress, Tuhure's song is not merely tuneful compositions of melodies but also a profound amalgamation of voice and action.

### **Politics of Integrity: An Implicit Defiance**

J. B. Tuhure's songs are simple and composed in ordinary people's language; however, his songs encapsulate layers of resistance embedded with unity and nationalism. His songs perforate into the mind of the listener and burst like ammunition, scattering a bundle of questions in the conscious portion they hold. Countering the discursive regime created by the dominant, his song opens multifarious spaces where subaltern can establish their own narration for their recognition. In this relevance, his most popular song *Aama Didi Baini Ho*, written by Ekdev Gyawali, is worth discussing. This is one of the songs sung during 2033 B.S. (1976) that popularized Tuhure and accelerated his musicality in the domain of progressive movement, proportionally involved in the most sensitive issues of the country. The song is a composition of multiple narratives like patriarchal stratification, the role of capitalistic society, and the overwhelming domination of the Panchayat regime. These issues are intermingled indispensably. Thus, I will holistically discuss how these dimensions of narration are Tuhure's major concern in this song.

आफ्नै पौरख खान्छन,  
आफ्नै शिपमा बाच्छन  
दुख कस्त सहेर,  
सुस्थी यिनले धान्छन  
असल महान व्यक्तिहरु,  
यिनैले जन्माउछन

Eat their own prowess,  
lives on their own skill;  
bearing sorrows and hardships;  
they hold creation,  
good great people—  
they give birth to,

ज्ञान गुण बुद्धिहरु,  
 यिनैले सिकाउछन  
 तर पनि अधेरोमा  
 जीवन बिताउछन  
 आमा दिदि बहिनि हो,  
 कति बस्छौ दासी भै  
 सुखको सधै प्याशी बनेर

knowledge qualities wisdom;  
 they teach; however,  
 they spend life in the dark  
 Oh! Mother, sisters  
 how long do you stay  
 being a slave  
 being always thirsty for happiness.

(My Trans.)

The aforementioned lines are the interlude section of the song which was written by Tuhure himself. These lines vividly describe how women are compelled to live a vulnerable and dependent life though they are independent and self-mobilized individuals in society. Tuhure vocalizes that the labor they endure, the prowess they acquire, and the strength they comprise to hold the pain are the qualities of women that make them robust and sturdy.

However, they live their lives in darkness. Tuhure, disclosing the aptness of women shows that they are not born vulnerable but made vulnerable. As Seira Tamang argues, “the Panchayat era was an important time in the history of gender in Nepal and that the state and the law played central roles in the structuring of a particular form of patriarchy – a shift from “family patriarchy” to “state patriarchy” (127). For Tamang, the Panchayat regime institutionalized patriarchy, formulating a legal code and amending the Muluki Ain which was in favor of males that exacerbated the condition of women. From this perspective, Tuhure was rightly pointing out the crux of the Panchayat regime through which women were deliberately converted into a secondary character of society and subordinated to men.

In fact, the women are, as Tuhure’s song indicates, the bearer of the universe and they are the teachers to enlighten the people. In this sense, women are the source of energy that makes the world go round. However, contextualizing the Panchayat regime, Tuhure projects that women persistently await their contentment as a slave to their counterparts. How they sacrifice their life for the males, limiting their freedom within a small portion of spaces, are explained in the following lines:

वलेरीको वरिपरि  
 मात्र तिम्रो संसार छ  
 अरु सबै अधेरो छ  
 घरको आटलिमा  
 तिम्रो लण्डन र न्यु योर्क छ

Miniature spaces  
 only are your world,  
 the remaining all is dark.  
 At the balcony of home,  
 You have your London and New York

(My Trans.)

The starting three lines of the third verse of the song narrate the sphere of women’s liberty in the Panchayat regime. Delivered in the second person point of view, it enforces women to understand the constricted array of their autonomy which is bounded within the homely periphery. These lines ostensibly portray the deficient life women go through, confining themselves inside a small space where they had to observe the world from there. It is not to argue that the Panchayat regime merely restricted the liberty of women. Indeed, as Seira



Tamang, asserts, “King Mahendra, initiated widespread administrative and development programs - the national project of *bikas*, development - with the aid of foreign donors” (135). However, this innovative system “. . . was basically just an attempt to idealize the concept of a Hindu monarch by combining it with certain features of other political systems” (432) claims Narayan Khadka. In this connection, contradictorily, “The emphasis, in the name of *bikas*, [for women] was on the domestic roles of cooking, cleaning and working exclusively within the household [. . .]” (Tamang 164). In this sense, the Panchayat regime, bringing different political agendas into account—either through movements or as a national project, consistently derailed them from their real agenda. Structuring the society homogeneously, guided by the Hindu-based cultural legacy, the government imposed a restrictive code of conduct, converting them into a subaltern.

In such a political scenario, it was exceedingly daunting for the women to revolt against the domination. The women had to confront double challenges: male as individual and coercive state governance. Therefore, they were obliged to follow the prescription as they lack their autonomous voice. Moreover, as Nancy Fraser contends, “Subordinate groups sometimes cannot find the right voice or words to express their thoughts, and when they do, they discover they are not heard” (64). This was exactly the situation of the women during the Panchayat regime. At this, Tuhure, in this song, does not merely shed light on the conditions of the women but also suggests them the best alternative they adhere to for their redemption. The following lines are the pervasive insinuation Tuhure vocalizes in the song.

रेशमको बुट्टे पल  
काँध आङ्गमा कस्र पाई  
लाली पौडेर धस्र पाई  
केरलिंगको झिल्के सारी  
लौन पाई मक्ख परि  
बुद्धि सबै नस्त पारि  
पुरुसको खेलौना भै,  
जीवनलाई ब्यर्थे फाल्यौ  
भोगविलासको साधन बनेर  
सामन्तीको कुचलयो  
भ्रष्ट रिति पुँजीको  
बुझी सब ब्युझ अब  
ध्वस्त पार्न नारि बन्धक  
दुख अनि जीवनको  
युगले आज भन्दछ,  
नारी पनि मान्छे हो  
जाग उठ नारी हो  
सिर्जनाको घाम बनेर

Silk’s embroidered cloth getting ties on  
shoulders and on body,  
applying lipstick and powder;  
Sparkling sari of Keraling  
Blushed when got to wear,  
Destroying entire knowledge,  
Being toys of male,  
You wasted your life  
Being a means of commodity.

The crushed of feudal,  
the corrupt tradition of capital,  
knowing all now awake,  
to rupture female constraints  
and the suffering of your life.  
Age says today,  
women are people too.  
Wake up woman  
Becoming the sun of creation.

(My Trans.)

Tuhure stresses that women should not be deluded by the material products invented by capitalistic males because it merely turns them into a commodity, a means of consumption. The lines are the vehement rejuvenation of thoughts that evokes a sense of consciousness to take the right step against male domination, provoking women to be revolutionary and be apart from the grip of patriarchy. Tuhure prioritizes the existence of women not merely as subordinated beings but rather also as significant as males, who are dominating the country.

Moreover, stating the cunning strategy of capitalists, he urges the demand of a resistive voice that could creatively rupture their colossus regime. Indeed, Tuhure scintillatingly kindles women to be revolutionary because as Mihaela Racovita argues, “Although Nepali women have had the right to vote and stand for election since 1951, social changes regarding women were slow to occur, with the women’s movement being largely suppressed during the Panchayat regime”(6). The spaces to resist the domination for the women were not merely limited but also as Mukta S. Tamang contends, “the women’s movement . . . remained tightly controlled” (98) during the Panchayat regime. This control was not merely a restriction of women’s liberation but also a possible space where they could gleam the taste of power because “Space is fundamental in every form of communal life; [it] is fundamental in any exercise of power” (Foucault 170). The avoidance of permitting the spaces for women means boycotting them from the communal whole. In other words, for women, since their spaces were bounded by the four walls, being strictly observed by patriarchy and ruled by elitist thoughts, they were being effaced from the position where they had to be.

In this regard, since societies were more concerned and inflicted by bourgeois thoughts, Tuhure, in this song, unravels the faces of dichotomized societies created through the modality of the bourgeoisie's notion. In this context, Fraser’s understanding of bourgeois democracy is significant to illustrate as she cautiously argues, “the bourgeois conception of the public sphere is inadequate insofar as it supposes that social equality is not a necessary condition for participatory parity in public spheres” (65). For Fraser, the bourgeois does not undertake social equality to be a necessary element in public spaces which is a fallacy because, without a participatory public space, the possibility of democracy vanishes. If Fraser’s proposition is taken into account, then it corresponds that the Panchayat regime was intensely dichotomizing the social sphere, endorsing social inequality—and resulting in the constricted public sphere for women. This phenomenon is comprehended by Tuhure, thus, he reinforces his provocation to be revolutionary against the Panchayat regime.

Through his songs, Tuhure not merely exposes the bitter reality of the Panchayat regime but also negotiates with the subaltern for their representation and recognition. Bridging the gap between the powerful and powerless people of the Panchayat regime

through his ‘musicking,’ Tuhure alternates the spaces of the subaltern, providing them counterpublics space to interrogate the system for their vindication. In this sense, Tuhure’s song has the potential to prolong the contestatory discursive truth disseminated through the power, providing everlasting political strata where subalterns can participate in the discussion as long as they are subordinated. This is how Tuhure creates a subaltern counterpublics sphere because “to interact discursively as a member of a public - subaltern or otherwise - is to disseminate one's discourse into ever-widening” (Fraser 67). In this sense, Tuhure, musicking the agendas of the subalterns, brings them into such a social and political arena where they can not merely enrich their consciousness but also can stretch their potential to debunk the persisting domination.

### **Resistance and Refutation**

When King Mahendra on 5 January 1961 gave a message to the folks outlining the policy that the new regime would maintain, according to L.S. Baral, “He promised to introduce a new system of national education, expand health services, and eliminate bribery, corruption, and favoritism in order to inspire public confidence in the administrative system” (33). In this sense, King Mahendra ensured to be a responsible and nationalistic head of the government who was more concerned about the aspirations and demands of the public. More importantly, his patriotic yearning to develop the nation seems to be rooted fundamentally in Nepali-ness. As he was perturbed by the system prevailed, to change the status, Bhuwan Lal Joshi and Leo E. Rose discloses, “What was required, he announced, was a new “Nepali” political system that conformed to the spirit of Nepal’s traditions and culture— “Nepalism,” [. . .]” (395). His ambitious conviction sufficiently ensured people to reckon him as a king with virtue and evidently, as far as his propositions are concerned, he undoubtedly accentuates a good position in the public’s heart.

However, though, to a certain extent, he attained his purposes, the achievements were paradoxically his winning merely. For example, in 1971, he introduced National Educational System Plan (NESP) but this, according to Lokranjan Parajuli, was “To control the entire education system: locally established and managed schools were nationalized, the examination system was centralized, and new curricula, textbooks were introduced in an effort to craft the young mind” (148). Similarly, he exclaimed Nepali Congress Party was a mediator of Western modernity and accused it of undermining national solidarity. But while King Mahendra’s constructive works were marching forward, “From building roads, communications, state apparatus, and various other development projects and programs, donor aid was key in enabling and legitimizing Panchayat-defined nation-state building and the concomitant creation of ‘the Nepali’ political community” (Tamang 64). As a result, the “External financing, in turn, led to the internal consolidation and legitimization of the autocratic monarchy [. . .]” (64). Moreover,

Richard Burghart claims, “Nepal public order was defined in terms of national unity and private interests were excluded from the political structure. The state claimed both the monopoly on the legitimate use of force within its boundaries and the monopoly in public service” (303). In this context, King Mahendra himself was, in fact, doing nothing more than disseminating his person interest implicitly, when he was maintaining public order in the Nepali society.

I have brought up King Mahendra’s nationalistic assertions and the pragmatic differences he made while implementing them in the above paragraphs to contextualize his discursive regime of nationalism and the contradictory reality that the state went through. The discussion gleams that the definition of nation, state, nationalism, and patriotism was propagated on the basis of King Mahendra’s assertion, which was merely a dominant perspective to understand the nation. In this context, I argue, challenging this definition, J. B. Tuhure, in his song *Chhoraharu ho Chhoriharu ho* [Oh! Sons and Daughters], enunciates patriotic contrivance to address subalterns and displays the nation from a marginalized perspective. In doing so, I stress, he created a subtle subaltern counterpublics space that not only challenged the national narration but also provided a revolutionary voice to retrieve their existence, bringing their perspective into account.

The song *Chhoraharu ho Chhoriharu ho*, written by Bom Dewan, encompasses patriotic emotions full of the thrust of resistance and the spirit of revolution. Indeed, it can be argued that the song reflects Dewan’s spirit but, I emphasize, it became the voice of the people when Tuhure vocalized these words. Thus, the song is not merely either Dewan’s notion or Tubure’s conception but a shadow reality of the Nepali public who were far removed from the national agenda promulgated by King Mahendra. In this relevance, this song initially shows the vulnerable condition of the nation, urging for help to rescue the fatality. In other words, the song is a call for help to support Nepal in its efforts to overcome its challenges and build a more prosperous and stable future.

आमाले साथ मग्दछिन,  
माटो ले रगत माग्दछ  
शान्तिका सन्तान हामी हो  
युद्धले ब्युझ भन्दछ।  
छोराहरु हो छोरीहरु हो  
वीर छोरा छोरी हो ।

Our mother calls for help,  
Our land asks for blood,  
We are the children of peace,  
war says to be awake.  
Oh! Sons and daughters,  
Oh! Brave sons and daughters.

(My Trans.)

Tuhure in the above lines addresses sons and daughters, the public, about the vulnerable situation of the mother nation. With a revolutionary remark, the second line suggests that bloodshed is necessary demand of the nation to overcome the pathetic situation. The song narratives that though Nepal is a peaceful country and the folks have virtue in it; the war is awakening them to be alert and vigilant to observe the wrong thing happening to the nation.

The song is a vehement call for unity to fight against the enemy. However, the lines above do not explicitly construe who is the enemy. Even though, contextually, it is conspicuous that the Panchayat regime was the target of the song because nothing was beyond the grip of the system and everything happening in the nation was under the supervision of the regime itself. It means if there was the enemy and if there was anyone who was problematizing the nation, it was the regime itself. To make it more palpable, I appropriate Kamal R. Adhikary's comprehension of the Panchayat regime as he illuminates, "Any form of leadership and organization independent of the government was considered a threat to the system and the authority of the new government. People were thus forced to follow centralized authority. Power was so concentrated in the center that local leadership effectively died out" (13-14). Adhikari discusses the Panchayat's syndicate in every aspect of the nation and the exercise of power over the folks to discourage any creative work that could possibly make people aware. In this sense, Tuhure has brought two things into the limelight while 'musicking' the song. On the one hand, he is challenging the authoritative power, giving a revolutionary voice, and embarking on people's consciousness. Embedding mother and land to its aspiration, he is falsifying King Mahendra's nationalism, because though King Mahendra was affirming the new nation to be more prosperous, Tuhure in the song says the nation itself is in an overwhelming situation which is demanding an intense rage of fatality that could annihilate the enemy.

In doing so, Tuhure, through the song, opens a broader avenue to observe the atrocities of the Panchayat regime. How the government, in the name of national progress, was deteriorating the harmonious condition of the state has been the concern of the song. It constructs a formidable space through which the public can comprehend the national agendas and participate in its critical observation. It is through musicality Tuhure exponentially replaces the grand narratives and articulates his thoughts, expecting the audience to understand the demand of the nation. But in such instances, he does not conceal the Nepali history of peace and polyphony. These inspirations are ardently presented in the following lines:

झगडा हामी चाहन्नौ,  
इतिहास हाम्रो यहि बन्छ  
टेकेको फेरी सहन्न,  
शहिद को रगतले यहि भन्छ ।

We do not want quarrel,  
this becomes our history, but we do not  
tolerate the suppression,  
the blood of a martyr says this.

(My Trans.)

Tuhure satisfactorily proclaims that Nepali is peace lovers but it does not mean they remain docile if oppressed. It also means that if their peace is violated they are ready to sacrifice their life. In this sense, Tuhure is demanding a democratic society where the voice of equality and harmony is heard and ascertained. It might be confusing what sort of democratic society is because King Mahendra was also narrating Panchayat democracy but interestingly his democracy was for himself and his voice was shrill to that of the public.

The voices of the folks had to come through political affiliation but these possibilities were concealed by his authoritative regime. In doing so, the government, I argue, was abolishing the possibility and existence of multiple thoughts, persistently denying the spaces of emergent values of opinions. In fact, he was not merely opposed to the political parties that could voice the voiceless, as Loe E. Rose and Margaret W. Fisher argue, “He has repeatedly characterized parties as corrupt and divisive, and has accused them of being pawns of foreign powers. His insistence that former party leaders and workers can participate in Panchayat politics only as individuals is based on his conviction that partisan spirit is wholly incompatible with Panchayat-based democracy and national integration” (113). In this connection, King Mahendra was accepting individuals merely if s/he meets the goal of the Panchayat slogan. This means he was in any case against the voice against him. But contradictorily, the one who disrupts the peace of others is demanding peace for him. To this, Tuhure, in this song, unhesitatingly signifies the consequences if they are deterred and if their voices are muted.

I have brought political parties into consideration to discern that it is through political parties that multiple voices could emerge to challenge the dominance. Moreover, I emphasize, to negate the existence of parties is not merely to undermine democracy but also to silence the poly-vocality of social diversity. I should not be misunderstood as I have equated peace with democracy, the point is how martyrs sacrificed their lives for democracy during the Rana regime can be a repercussion for the Panchayat regime is what Tuhure denounces in the line. Why Tuhure talks about the blood of martyrs is that when the Ranas suppressed the public they had to confront their ignominious loss. For this, Tuhure, in this song, cautiously satirizes the Panchayat regime to commemorate the past of how martyrs defamed the Ranas when the folks were subdued. And, in doing so, Tuhure discloses how they withstand the enemy without fear in the following lines:

सत्यको लागि नझुक्ने,  
हिमालको गाथाले यहि भन्छ  
बेलामा रगत बगाउने,  
युगको पुरुस तै हुन्छ ।  
सत्रुले कहिँ हक दिए,  
ढुंगाको धार बनिदेउ  
वीरको पहाड तिमि हौ,  
आमाको आधार बनिदेउ ।

Don't bend for the truth,  
The story of the mountain says this.  
He who sheds blood at the time  
will be the man of the age.  
If the enemy ordered you,  
become a stone edge.  
You are the mountain of heroes,  
be the mother's base.

(My Trans.)

The stand of an individual must resemble the unabating qualities of the mountain if one has to fight for the truth, says the line above. Signifying the importance of appropriate time, Tuhure encourages people to be ready to sacrifice and be a hero for the folks. The most important message of these lines, as Tuhure suggests, is that truthfulness has vanished and it is the right time to inflict upon the domination. In other words, the song

implicitly verifies the inevitability of warfare and the demand for aspirational readiness to fight against the system. At this, these lines are not merely the description of the quality of Nepali folks but also a forceful impulse to edify them the right things to do. What Tuhure is doing here is bridging the gap between the condition of the folks and the appropriate space they require to address the problem.

Indeed, Tuhure challenges the authority and paves the way for the folks to initiate affirmative action, beholding the necessity of the nation. Moreover, he also creates an urgency to make the work performative. In doing so, what is he doing? Is that giving space to the public to be a supportive voice against the regime? In this relevance Christopher Small's definition of music, I admit to be essential, as he argues, "Performance does not exist in order to present musical works, but rather, musical works exist in order to give performers something to perform" (8). For Small, music has performative value and it is exemplary in Tuhure's song. Substantially, Tuhure asks folks to be like the edge of the stone, which significantly means sharp enough to chop the enemy. And, assuring folks as the hero, he asks them to be the foundation of the nation. To this, a significant question is how did the folks perform when he was musicking?

To answer the question, Tuhure's musical assessment becomes relevant and substantial. Since the Panchayat regime took "to control and eliminate the nascent print media sector" (Parajuli 119), Tuhure in his interview shares, "We would create an album clandestinely just like we used to organize 'Room Programs' [*Kothe Karyakram*] visiting different schools, conducting musical programs like the 'Determination Musical Program' [*Sankalpa Giti Karyakram*] with friends including Ramesh Rayam, Manjun, Sambhu Rai, and Arim" (0:03:16-0:03:41). After the accomplishment of the program, "Arim had a radio studio where we would create and record new songs. Our songs reached the general public through these programs. As a result, people became curious about our songs and music, and we were invited to perform in different places." (0:03:44-0:04:10). This program made the public participatory and performative. In fact, Tuhure explained, "Wherever we would reach, people from approximately six-twelve Kos far would come to listen to our songs and music, caring flours and food" (0:10:53-0:11:06). How powerful the music was and how it was the source of energy for the folks can be assessed from his words. If it is not, what performance is in such a stratified society where the power was always authoritative and people were under strict legal surveillance?

Indeed, Nepal had undergone significant changes in terms of political practices and governmental activities. "Nepalis for the first time began to think of themselves as citizens rather than subjects," as Lynn Bennett argues, "The transformation from subjects to citizens remains incomplete" (7). Though people had started internalizing themselves as citizens, they had not become citizens but rather a subjective whole for the government. In such a political scenario, to travel such a long distance to listen to Tuhure's songs means

undoubtedly he had made a significant impact on the folks. Thus, even if it is not performative in the physical sense, no one can deny the mental performance that he transfigured in terms of consciousness.

### Conclusion

I have discussed Tuhure's songs in their context related to the socio-political dominance of the Panchayat regime. The article has shown that King Mahendra in the name of development created layers of domination that not merely subordinated the Nepali folks but also deluded them with false notions of nationalism and patriotism. In such political backdrops, the article disclosed Tuhure's songs created a subaltern counterpublics space and challenged the power structure through musical domains. King Mahendra's 'Return to Village National Campaign,' which was place specific and more concentrated towards privileged groups of people, was counter-challenged by Tuhure's *Basai Hidne to Tantile* song, being inclusive and space specific. To be more precise, King Mahendra's proposition was to develop a village, whereas Tuhure's notion was to develop the nation, rupturing the constraint prevailed. In this sense, Tuhure's approach was holistic and emancipatory for the public whereas King Mahendra's approach was fragmentary and self-centered.

Discussing and evaluating the conditions of the women, I have mapped the indispensable relationship between patriarchy and the Panchayat regime, showing how in the name of the national project, Bikash, state institutionalized patriarchy and how this fundamental ground has been questioned by the song Tuhure's *Aama Didi Baini Ho*. The study has shown that the song, narrativizing the pathetic condition of the women, energizes them to fight against the oppression, negating the material products that the elitists create to hegemonize them. Moreover, expostulating the interconnection between patriarchy and King Mahendra's policy, I have reflected that the song despite explicitly problematizing patriarchy and its subversive notion is a vehement objection towards the regime. At this, since women were marginalized and effaced from a solid authority, the song vocalized them, spreading consciousness across the women's sphere.

I have also discussed King Mahendra's ambivalent assertion regarding his promised political speech and its pragmatic differences when implemented. Illuminating his contradictory practices in terms of education, development, and public space, to name but a few, I have exposed how Tuhure's song *Chhoraharu Ho* calls for revolutionary action against the Panchayat regime, refuting the contestatory discourse disseminated by them. To this, the article unravels that the revolutionary songs were capable of transfiguring the consciousness of the folks, making them performative at least in terms of the subaltern public whole. Making them participatory, the song inclusively flashed the light inwardly to voice against the authority, enforcing them to be revolutionary. In doing so, the paper finds J.B. Tuhure's songs to be a collective form of narration that



performatively is a musicking of the subaltern counterpublics space through which he established the voice of the subaltern, discussing, exploring, and challenging the dogma of the Panchayat regime.

### Works Cited

- Adhikary, Kamal R. "The Fruits of Panchayat Development." *Himalayan Research Bulletin*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1995, pp. 12-25, <https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/himalaya/vol15/iss2/6>.
- "दशै हल्लाउने गितका गायक के गर्दे छन् अचेल ? Ama Didi Bainsi Ho| Jb Tuhure| Nagarik Online TV|." *Youtube*, uploaded by Nagarik Online TV, 25 April 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddBra5sIcgg>.
- Baral, L. S. "The New Order in Nepal Under King Mahendra, 1960-1962: an Assessment." *International Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1974, Sage Journals, pp. 29–74. doi:10.1177/002088177401300102.
- "Bekti Bishaya Ra Bishesh - (JB Tuhure)." *Youtube*, uploaded by Avenues Khabar, 21 September 2015, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUPOzqc2G\\_M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUPOzqc2G_M).
- Bennet, Lynn. *Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal*. The World Bank, pp. 1-36, Accessed 8 June 2023.
- Brown, T. Louise. *The Challenge to Democracy in Nepal: A Political History*. Routledge, 2003.
- Buda Magar, Dr. Harsa Bahadur. *Shree 5 Mahendra - Antaranga Ra Bahiranga Byaktitwa*. Manjari Publication, 2022.
- Burghart, Richard. *The Conditions of Listening: Essays on Religion, History and Politics in South Asia*. Edited by C. J. Fuller and Jonathan Spencer, Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Davis, Carol C. *Theatre of Nepal and the People Who Make It*. Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." *Social Text*, no. 25/26, 1990, pp. 56–80. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/466240>. Accessed 28 May 2023.
- Foucault, Michel. "Space, Power, and Knowledge." *Cultural Studies Reader*, edited by Simon During, 3rd ed., Routledge, 2012, pp.164-171.
- Hachhethu, Krishna. *Mass Movement 1990*. CNAS Journal, vol. 17, no. 2, July 1990, pp. 177-201.
- "Image Sambad - Interview with J.B Tuhure\जे.बी दुहुरे/जनवादी गायक - Magh 25." *Youtube*, uploaded by Image Channel HD, 9 February 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UoXm1BiUqI>
- "Janagayak JB Tuhure is no more." *myRepublica*, 26 August 2021, pp.1-3, <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/janagayak-jb-tuhure-is-no-more/>. Accessed 28 May 2023.
- "JB Tuhure, who sang revolutionary songs, dies at 78." *The Kathmandu Post*, 16 August 2021, pp. 1-2, <https://tkpo.st/2WtHtU7>. Accessed 28 May 2023.

- Joshi, Bhuwan Lal and Leo E. Rose. *Democratic Innovations in Nepal: A Case Study of Political Acculturation*. Mandala Publications, 2004.
- Kanaaneh, Moslih. "Introduction: Do Palestinian Musicians Play Music or Politics?." *Palestinian Music and Song Expression and Resistance since 1900*, edited by Moslih Kanaaneh, Stig-Magnus Thorsén, Heather Bursheh, and David A. McDonald, Indiana University Press, 2013, pp. 1-14.
- Khadka, Narayan. "Crisis in Nepal's Partyless Panchayat System: The Case for More Democracy." *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 59, no. 3, 1986, pp. 429–54. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2758328>. Accessed 30 May 2023.
- . "Nepal's Stagnant Economy: The Panchayat Legacy." *Asian Survey*, vol. 31, no. 8, 1991, pp. 694–711. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2645224>. Accessed 30 Apr. 2023.
- Kumar, Satish. "The Panchayat Constitution of Nepal and Its Operation." *International Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1964, pp. 133–152. *Sage Journals*, doi:10.1177/002088176400600202.
- Onta, Pratyoush and Dev Raj Humagain. "Janajati Magazines and the Contents of the Subaltern Counterpublic Sphere During the 1990s." *Political Change and Public Culture in Post-1990 Nepal*, edited by Michael Hutt and Pratyoush Onta, Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 99- 123
- Parajuli, Lok Ranjan. "Schools as an Arena of Struggle: Reexamining the Panchayat Era Politics of Education." *School Education in Nepal: History and Politics of Governance and Reforms*, edited by Lok Ranjan Parajuli, Devendra Uprety and Pratyoush Onta, Martin Chautari, 2021, pp.115-155.
- Racovita, Mihaela. *WOMEN IN STATE SECURITY PROVISION IN NEPAL: Meaningful Participation?* Small Arms Survey, 2018. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17653>. Accessed 30 May 2023.
- Raf Geenens and Ronald Tinnevelt. "Truth and Public Space: Setting Out Some Signposts." *Does Truth Matter? Democracy and Public Space*, edited by Raf Geenens and Ronald Tinnevelt, Springer, 2009, pp. 1-14.
- Rose, Leo E. and Margaret W. Fisher. *The Politics of Nepal: Persistence and Change in an Asian Monarchy*. Edited by Richard L. Park, Mandala Book Point, 1998.
- Small, Christopher. *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. Wesleyan University Press, 1998.
- Tamang, Mukta S. "Social Movements and Inclusive Peace in Nepal." *Two Steps Forward, One Step Back: The Nepal Peace Process*, edited by Deepak Thapa, Alexander Rams
- Botham, Conciliation Resources, no. 26, 2017, *Accord*, pp. 97- 106

- Tamang, Seira. "Legalizing State Patriarchy in Nepal." *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, vol. 5, no. 1, Mandala Book Point, June 2000, pp. 127-156.
- . "the Politics of Conflict and Difference or the Difference of Conflict in Politics: The Women's Movement in Nepal." *Feminist Review*, no. 91, 2009, pp. 61–80. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40663980>. Accessed 30 May 2023.
- . "The Politics of 'developing Nepali Women'." *State of Nepal*, edited by Kanak Mani Dixit and Shastri Ramachandaran, Himal Books, 2010, pp. 161-175.
- "Video Profile with JB Tuhure, Part 02, July 12, 2010." *Youtube*, uploaded by dcnepal.com, 14 July 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWnVYcb2jj0>.