
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/jodem.v15i1.68926>**Aruna Lama: An Indigenous Identity Beyond the Boundaries****¹Tara Lal Shrestha, PhD and ²Bidhya Shrestha, PhD**¹Lecturer of English, Central Department of English, TU Kirtipur

ORCID: 0000-0002-4874-3001

email: shresthatara.tu@gmail.com

²Central Department of Population Studies, TU, Kirtipur

ORCID: 0000-0001-6701-6355

Abstract

Aruna Lama, as an indigenous Tamang female singer from Darjeeling, articulates a unique history of struggle in Nepali music. Applying Naila Kabeer's concept of woman empowerment including insights collected from 10 key informants, this study attempts to answer a key research question: How did Aruna Lama crossover the narrow boundaries and appear as a prominent singer in Nepali music? The findings examine Aruna Lama's life journey and present the aesthetic and ethical essence of her struggle in music history. The conclusions shed light on the ways in which Aruna Lama harnessed her indigenous woman's identity beyond the boundaries asserting her agency to achieve success.

Keywords: Gender subaltern, indigenous self, Nepali music

Introduction

This paper explores the saga of Aruna Lama, a gender subaltern becoming *swor-samragyi* (song queen) in Nepali music, which was not easy for a Tamang woman to crossover the boundaries, and establish as a pioneering singer in Nepali music then. She was born as the youngest daughter of Mana Maya Tamang and Surya (Surja) Bahadur Lama in Ghum Hill Darjeeling on September 9, 1945 after elder sisters Pabitra and Bhimu. Her father worked in Indian police force. She spent her childhood in Ghum Hill, Jalpahad and Mangpu (Subba 2). She started her singing hobby from the age of seven, when she was too little then, and her father would carry her on his shoulder to reach up to the microphone (Ibid. 3). She met top-level music mentors including Amber Gurung, Gopal Yonzen, Ranjit Gazmere, and Jitendra Bardewa. At the age of thirteen, she met Saran Pradhan and they were married on July 11, 1963 (Subba 5).

Aruna Lama became a daughter-in-law of Newar family. Her mother-in-law was decisive in the family. Despite her authoritative nature, she appreciated Aruna's

Department of English, Mahendra Multiple Campus, Dharan, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

singing talent and encouraged her to pursue her musical career. Her mother-in-law also would sing and dance in the gathering at her home. Their house in Darjeeling was like ‘a mini music academy’ (Prasai 37). She gave birth to a daughter Sapana in 1965 and then son Suprit in 1969. Their life was in pace of recording masterpiece songs. Aruna was already popular after recorded the song “Jiwanko harek modama” with Narayan Gopal in Royal Recording Nepal in 1969. Aruna would take this song as the best one of her life (Subba 6). She kept on recording songs when her husband Saran would write songs and give them music composition. She recorded songs under the music composition of her husband. But, he died on May 4, 1974, at the age of early thirties, after her father died in 1971 and mother in 1973.

Aruna Lama would say that her mother-in-law and her husband motivated her in her music career. After her father, mother and husband died one after another, she came on the stage again with the motivation and permission of her mother-in-law. She was economically so vulnerable then that she had to work in white dress of mourning. She had to do any job she could get for livelihood (Prasain 40). She neither got more than NRs 300 per song she recorded in Radio Nepal nor received rewards from the government agencies; rather when Narayan Gopal and Aruna entered to record in Radio Nepal studio, all the music crews left the recording room, disrespecting them twice (ibid. 44). She lived an aloof life for some time. Karma Yonzen played role to bring her out from her mourning and presented her on the stage again. She began to sing better sad songs as if a music therapy. She began to achieve dignified awards. More significantly, she accomplished Aruna Lama Swornim Sanjha with ‘swor kinnari’ award. She performed 18 songs that night (ibid. 42). She came Kathmandu when she was sick and died on February 4, 1998 (Subba 8). Her dead body was taken to Darjeeling from Kathmandu for the funeral generating multiple stories. Bulu Mukarung depicts personalities who exist at the foundation of modern Nepali music. But, in his words, “There are multiple reasons to keep Aruna as the best singer regarding her voice, pattern, aesthetics, impression...” (52). If we could collect all songs she recorded including in Culcutta, Kharsang and All India Radio, the number may reach up to 350-400- mostly sad songs as her life stories (ibid. 56). Three anthologies dedicated to her we found are: *Aruna Lama Katha ra Vyatha* (2050 vs), *Swor-Samragyi Aruna Lama* (1998) and *Aruna Lama Smriti Grantha* (2001).

The first anthology edited by Narendraraj Prasai was published from Nepal before the death of Aruna. The book begins from publisher Bhupalman Singh Karki’s eulogies, which is rare event in the book publication history (see, Prasai 7). However, the book compiles good pieces of memoirs related to Aruna Lama, her personality and relationality. The second anthology edited by T.B. Chandra Subba with a team

published from Gantok Sikkim includes 12 biographical pieces, 5 condolence poems, 2 memoirs, 39 articles, 3 interviews, and 31 annexes in 318 pages. The third anthology edited by Rudraraj Maskey, Manbahadur Gurung and Manikamal Chhetri and published by Darjeeling Kalakar Sangathan appears as a synthesis of the earlier two anthologies on Aruna Lama. With reference to these three anthologies about Aruna Lama and including 10 key informants' ideas from the perspective of gender subaltern and woman empowerment, this paper attempts to answer a key research question: How does Aruna Lama crossover the boundaries of class, caste, gender, ethnicity, region, position and post, and appear as a prominent singer in Nepali music?

Methodology

This study explores struggle of singer Aruna Lama including in-depth interviews (10 KIIs, 3 FGDs and two interactions) with music critics, scholars, and individuals, who worked closely with her. Likewise, drawing upon Naila Kabeer's conceptual framework of "resources, agency, and achievements," we explored how Aruna Lama's access to resources, her autonomy in decision-making, and her notable accomplishments intersect with gender, music, and empowerment and crisscross the boundaries beyond class, caste, gender, ethnicity and region. The historiography of gender subaltern, in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notion, woman faced limitations on their ability to make life choices- resources, agency, and achievements. This research then sheds light on the intricate relationship between these dimensions.

Aruna Lama's access to resources (training, place, people, mentors and family supports) plays crucial role in shaping her journey. This research assesses how her available resources helped to transform from an ordinary indigenous girl into a pioneering singer in Nepali music. For that we have also assessed how she used her agency in the critical time of her life struggle. Her agency here refers to her free will, inner freedom in decision-making that determines her destiny in music history of Nepal. We have assessed how her indigenous identity helped her to use autonomy while making decisions after she got married and became widow at the age of 28. For instance, how could she remain Aruna Lama even after she married Saran Pradhan and died as Aruna Lama, not as Aruna Pradhan? Though she did not compose songs, except exception, we have attempted to explore how she sang mostly sad songs, which established her as a 'tragedy queen'.

Finally, Aruna Lama's accomplishments have wider impact in Nepali community. We have attempted to explore how she was born as an indigenous woman in Darjeeling but her songs took her beyond the boundaries. This study, by examining these dimensions, sheds light on seeking results of the question: How does she crossover the boundaries and appear as a prominent singer in Nepali music?

Resources, Agency and Achievements of Aruna

Aruna Lama, though born in a small village in Darjeeling as a Tamang girl, got mentorship of the best lyricists and music composers from her childhood. After she met singer and music composer Amber Gurung with his students at art academy in Darjeeling, she devoted herself in singing and dancing. It was her opportunity, as Naila Kabeer believes, resources to empowerment for a gender subaltern to speak in the Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. She skillfully utilized the available resource. She chose Saran Pradhan as her husband, who was skillful music composer cum lyricist. But her mentor husband died untimely. It was not easy for a woman to exist as a widow at the public sphere then. Spivak believes, gender subaltern do not have agency to exist. Tracing the history of *sati* cult and hegemonic imperial structures inclined with patriarchy, Spivak claims that gender subaltern cannot speak. Kabeer focuses on access to resources, (training, place, people, mentors and family supports) which play a crucial role in shaping a woman's journey to empowerment. Family community's collective support, the resources she found made Aruna Lama possible to exist in the public sphere.

C.B. Lama, Aruna's uncle, was an artist. When she was of ten, she sang a hymn composed by him in Mangpu School Darjeeling and achieved second position in 1956. The competition organized by Gorkha Dukkha Niwaran Association gave her platform when she was of thirteen and she achieved second position again. She used to sing sitting on the shoulder of her senior when she was not tall enough up to the microphone (Subba 2). In 1957 she achieved first position in Nepali music competition. Then she always secured the first position. Rudra Mani Gurung recalls the moment when he met Aruna in art academy from Amber Gurung, Saran Pradhan, Gopal Yonzan, Jiten Bardewa, Karma Yonzan, Ranjit Gazmere to Kapilraj Subba. In his words, after securing the first position one after another in singing competition, Aruna and Rudra left to take part in the competition (1). The song "Ye kanchha malai..." they recorded in 1961 with Amber Gurung's words and music composition became popular as evergreen song. It was one of the rare romantic songs of Aruna. He writes, "We sang it in multiple stage programs till 1970; I could not continue music; but Aruna kept on singing, achieving fame. Remaining single since the age of 28 Aruna could keep on fame, which is rare example" (2).

Aruna Lama recorded her first song written by Bhupi Sherchan "Kina youwan udas chha" in 1961. Sachindra Mani Gurung supported her to record it. Amber Gurung was the music composer (Subba 4). She recorded the next song "Ye Kanchha malai sunako tara khasai deu na" with word and music composition of Amber Gurung. This song established Aruna in Nepali community all around the world. She became the

most loved woman singer in Nepali music. In 1962 she recorded two songs “Hera na era kanchha danda laai phool le dhakyo” and “Yeha phool nakhilechha.” With the popularity of these songs, Saran Pradhan as music composer also became popular (ibid. 5).

Saran Pradhan was emerging song cum music composer. Aruna and Saran got married on July 11, 1963. They enjoyed musical life. Saran would compose song and music for Aruna, and they would visit Bombay for recording. Aruna left her job for her singing career. In 1965 the Hindustan Recording Company recognized Aruna as Nightingale of Hill award. She met top singers and music composers including Lata Mangeshkar in Bombay (Subba 5). Her lyrical relationship expanded up to Narayan Gopal and other topmost figures in Nepal. She was achieving fame but she faced tragedies one after another. In 1971, she lost her father; then her mother died in 1973. She was in mourning of her husband who died in 1974 (ibid. 6). People wished to see Aruna again in public sphere.

Karma Yonzan visited her, convinced her mother-in-law, and she appeared on the stage again as before (Subba 6). It was hard to live by singing then. She was working as a teacher since 1965. She had left the job pursuing a singing career. After the untimely demise of her husband, she began to seek a job again. She had no other option for livelihood. However, she did not stop her singing career. She produced more refined songs, and achieved dozens of awards including Mitrasen Award from Asam. She got more honor and awards in Nepal. Her songs were celebrated in Japan, Manila and other countries. She would keep on coming Kathmandu from Darjeeling. Though she achieved multiple prizes and her songs remained evergreen, but she was living lonely hard life. She worked in Darjeeling for livelihood; but she had to come to Kathmandu for recording and ceremonies. Her daughter Sapana lived in Kathmandu, where she died on February 4, 1998. After keeping her dead body in Royal Nepal Academy for a day, her corpse was taken to Darjeeling via Pasupati Nagar, and kept in Gorkha Dukkha Niwarak Association stadium, India on February 6, 1998. Darjeeling city markets were closed for her funeral procession.

Aruna Lama used music particularly sad songs as therapy. At the end, towering intellectuals and good wishers pined for her success. Indra Bahadur Rai writes, “I feel I could never know her now, her talent; I was her teacher; she was shy. How sweet was her vocal- flat, sharp, not shallow; round, elegant, like *trantrik* music” (15). In the words of Rai, her voice is sweet in *tarasaptak* than *madyarmandra* like a light long string floating, dancing, on the air- the long string floating one end to another in voice, rhythm, liquid like expressions. Her vocal would express with self-confidence. She would make each word lively and musical. She gave life to Nepali *sugam* music. She sang songs filling full feeling of life (ibid. 16, 17). As Sanu Lama writes, “Aruna

fought alone with multitudes of hardships, but never compromised with her singing career” (20). In her songs we find inner wounds and pains and Aruna would often say, “when I get lost in singing then I forget my wounds and pains” (Sundas, qtd. in Subba 28). She could not be a friend of happiness; she became a friend of sadness, like a handkerchief of tears. She associated her vocal with humanity, the reality of the time. When sweet vocal gets sweet songs and music that creates either Aruna Lama or Narayan Gopal (Bhandari 37). She would sing from the womb, from the deep heart, not from the chest or throat (Waiba 45). She would sing since childhood; her Boju (grandma) would say that one day her Mitthu (Aruna) could sing in Radio Nepal and we could listen her songs via radio. Aruna Lama became a queen of vocal. But she never presented her pride; she remained an evergreen sad song singer from her later life. She is alive in her sad songs (Thakuri 50). So, Karna Thami suggests, “We have to collect songs of Aruna and present to the world audience” (55). She faced economic crisis. She got no helping hands in her hard times. Some people would call her unlucky. But, it was not easy to call Aruna lucky or unlucky. Rudra Raj Maskey addresses this ambivalence,

Aruna was very sick multiple times...nobody cared her at Darjeeling...even the artists did not care her- who others care her? She spent half of her life lonely. She might have cursed her life crying alone. But she never let her fame fade away- the quality of her vocal. Finally, whole Darjeeling participated her funeral closing the markets. No other artists have got such a respect after death as Aruna received at Darjeeling. But India Durdarsan did not publish any news about her demise and funeral. How lucky or unlucky Aruna? (62)

According to Kedar Gurung, “Tara Devi sang highest number of Nepali songs but Aruna is the best female singer in terms of her singing skills and aesthetics” (64). At Darjeeling female singers appeared and disappeared after few years of their singing career but Aruna Lama kept on singing throughout her life. Narayan Gopal once said, “I’m jealous of Aruna’s vocal” (qtd. in *ibid.* 65). Before her death Aruna said: “What can I say about my future? My life will finish in pain. I don’t have any wish, and plan in life. I have endured a lot of pain. All my relatives are also far away. I am completely lonely” (qtd. in *ibid.* 67). However, in the words of Man Bahadur Gurung, Aruna tolerated all troubles and did not dilute her from her devotion in serving Nepali music (71). She acquired a distinct identity in Nepali music. She did not transform her surname. She remained Aruna Lama throughout her life. She did not like cosmetic life. She lived simple life far from egos and snobberies. After the demise of her beloved husband Saran, she sang sad songs only; that shaped her identity (Adhikari 74, 76).

Aruna Lama was a serious singer. We never saw vulgar acts and feeling; she never sang dancing, throwing hands and legs, breaking bodies. She was living a life of a true artist (Yonzan Pyasi 83). As Purna Rai writes, “Aruna will be alive in each objects not only in Darjeeling with soft sweet songs but all around” (99). Nepali will never let her feel alone (Sharma 116). So, she mostly sang songs of loneliness but she never remained alone” (Ghimire 120), despite the fact that such a pioneering singer lived a life of poverty. Binod K. Pradhan’s appeal is noteworthy, “Let not throw our genius artists in the market!” (123). Obviously, the voice of Aruna was so unique and sweet that everyone wanted to meet her, work with her, and produce better piece (Dumi 128). For instance, Bali Subba had a dream of making Aruna sing in the music composition of Shanti Thatal, and “that song became the last song of Aruna” (132). In the words of Ganesh Sharma, “Aruna sang the last song sweetly though she was suffering from fever” (167).

From the bottom of struggle of livelihood, Aruna offered us masterpiece songs. Ishorballav believes “when poetic mobility a poem carries, it becomes a song” (35). So Ganesh Rasik writes about Aruna Lama as “Tista of Nepali music” (33). She did not perform low till her death. She got various titles from people. Karma Yonzan writes, “Aruna had really good voice, sweet and soothing; the titles people gave her look true, acceptable” (133). She kept on singing throughout her life (Ashu 137) in Darjeeling, spending her whole life here, “but Darjeeling could not respect her as Nepal did” (Sherma 157). In the words of Menuka Pradhan Lepcha,

After keeping one day in Royal Nepal Academy Kathmandu, Aruna’s dead body was brought to Darjeeling via Pashupati Nagar. It took a lot of time to arrive her dead body because people were offering farewell on the way; her dead body arrived at Pashupati Nagar at 3:30 pm; school children were standing on the way both side of the road; the market was closed; the vehicle on the road was stopped; her dead body was moved around the market. (179)

Aruna Lama did not stop her singing career, which was her greatness. She did not prefer material pleasure (Chhetri 183). Keeping her predicament aside she served Nepali music ceaselessly; she deserved to be honored. She got most of the awards from Nepal; her songs represented Nepal in three international music conferences. Ministry of Education Nepal indorsed her biography in grade eight-course book. Darjeeling could not do that (ibid. 194). As Puran Giri writes,

She was suffering from her lonely life. She wished mental peace- inner bliss. She was not honored as much as she deserved, however, she beared all these mental pressure that made her more mature in her singing career from suffering and humiliation; she got lots of titles and awards from Nepal but Darjeeling India did not as Nepal did for her. (196)

‘What Darjeeling does today, Nepal follows’ was the saying, Yam Rayamajhi laments, “but now we are doing just opposite; what Nepal does, we follow it; we could not keep market closed for some time; Aruna was taken to the *burning ghat* as ordinary individual; Aruna rather could get better respect in Nepal” (220).

Existence of Aruna Lama

Aruna Lama cannot be confined within a narrow boundary. As Pushpa Rai writes, “A renowned artist exists borderlessly” (239). She was born in Darjeeling; she belongs to Darjeeling, no doubt, but she exists among Nepali people. Her sweet songs, her soothing sound, touch everyone’s heart. All Nepali know her as the best female singer in Nepali music like Narayan Gopal. These both towering singers are our pride. Many such genius disappeared in the absence of appropriate atmosphere. But Aruna Lama appeared crossing over the antagonistic atmospheres (ibid. 240).

Aruna Lama is an indigenous Tamang identity. She carries a gender subaltern aesthetics. Regarding her position, she could not get good job or post. Her families- both parental and marital- had common socio-economic status of politico-cultural hierarchy. Kumar Yonzan writes,

Tamangs and Tamang women are taken differently. A lot of Tamang girls serve as workers- servants. Aruna deconstructed the confined image of looking at Tamangs and Tamang females. She raised Tamang women image...She married to Saran Pradhan but she remained Aruna Lama...because it is indigenous culture; the surname of Tamang lady does not change with husband’s surname...Aruna would be present in each annual program of Tamang Buddhist Federation India; a lot of people including non-Tamang would participate, despite the fact that she did not sing songs in Tamang language. Whatever she contributed, it was to the Nepali community; we are happy on her deeds. (295, 297)

In the editorial, in *Aruna Lama Smriti Grantha*, the editors write, *sangat nai sangeet ho* (cohort is music). Those who loses cohort, they disappear from the public in music world. Aruna Lama kept on good relationship with the senior and junior. She was a personality of softness and swiftness. Like the best musical composition make song and singer popular, a good cohort takes to a singer to the global forum. Aruna is one of the best examples, a shining star (i).

If we see from Dalsingh Gahatraj phase, since before 1960s, Darjeeling was presenting good pieces of art in Nepali music history. People like Amber Gurung and Gopal Yonzan left Darjeeling to live in Kathmandu. If they had not left their birthplace, Darjeeling could show better history with Amber and Gopal era. But Aruna led an era-

the Aruna era in Nepali music from Darjeeling. To establish an era one should sacrifice whole life without any break or dilution. Aruna sacrificed her whole life, 45 years without break. From the age of seven to the end of her life, she did not take break. Most of the female singers leave singing after marriage. Despite being widow, she did not stop singing (ibid. ii).

Aruna Lama is addressed as a tragedy queen. Though she sang few romantic songs, which are equally popular as her sad songs. But the abundance of her sad songs superimposed her romantic love songs. As D.S. Moktan writes, Aruna sang sad songs for four decades from Bhupi Sherchan's words (kina youwan udas udas chha mero), via Jitendra Bardewa (yeha phool nakhilechha), Bhairav Rimal (udas mero jiwani katha) then came floods of sad songs: 'bhagya le khushi khosera lagyo', 'bhetinu chhutinu ta ke ho ra', 'sabaile bhanthe', 'pohol sal khushi phatda', 'chautarima basera runa paun', 'hasihasi jali rahen', etc. Why song composers composed sad songs to her is an unanswered question (7). Our sweetest songs are those that tell the saddest thought, as Krishna Khati writes, "Aruna filled her life with sad songs as her own life" (35). Now Darjeeling image cannot exist without Aruna (Madhusudan Lama 36). As Dil Maya Khati writes, "Aruna was not only a pioneer singer but also a loving mother and a daughter in law, but she exists as an inspiration" (37). A woman to live single was not easy; the society looked a widow differently (Pradhan 55). But Aruna did not dilute her way (ibid. 56); however, in her words "Darjeeling did not give her enough respect, rather outsiders offered her much more respect" (57).

Aruna Lama was humble to everyone, Pemela Gurwacharya, writes "but she was conscious about her status" (49). Aruna would say Pemela, "It's not easy to maintain the status of success, and I say 'no' when someone wants to stand me on the studio humiliating me" (qtd. in ibid. 50). Pemela feels that Aruna exists in lifeless photos, radio and TV; She writes, "Aruna still stands carrying her smiles, tears as before in memories and dreams; I keep on meeting Aruna in my dreams and memories" (51). She kept on singing throughout her life for more than 45 years. She received Cinema Award (2043 vs), Urwarshi Award (2047 vs), Gorkha Dakchhin Bahu (2049 vs), Chinnalata Geet Award (2049 vs), Tisari Award (1980 ad), Bhanu Award (1982 ad). Apart from it, neither government of Nepal nor government of India respected her in her predicament. However, the artists do not go down in the absence of awards and support; Aruna is an example. The governments rather failed to respect and missed the opportunity to honor great artists like her (ibid. 21). As Dharma Raj Thapa writes, "Aruna kept on singing as god gifted natural songs" (29). In the words of Dhruvachandra Gautam, Aruna kept on presenting simple, compassionate, delicate voice through sad songs; her romantic songs also carry these qualities and survive with long-lasting impact" (34). Her songs offer high aesthetics, and touch everyone's heart.

Raman Ghimire writes, “Aruna is an expansion of borderless space... expand her career as wide as sea” (71).

Once Aruna Lama said: “I’m lonely like a boat without boatman; for me my life is in complete darkness, however, I have come to the music world again collecting inner strength for our dream (qtd. in *ibid.* 71). Shanti Thatal in *Bagina* (Kartik-Paush 2030) writes, “If Aruna could survive singing, she could have produced further master pieces. Unfortunately, by singing she could not even candle her stove, how could she cook her daily meals by singing” (qtd. in *ibid.* 73, 74). Nevertheless, she devoted her life in music managing daily meals; the tired Aruna could give at least this much songs. So, Aruna would say, “My songs do not die even after my death” (qtd. in *ibid.* 74).

Further findings

While conducting this research, we found few more aspects that carry epiphanies in Aruna Lama as a singer and an individual. In the words of Kali Prasad Rizal “Aruna kept on carrying out her singing career ceaselessly. She sang indulging each in each word of the songs. Her voices hear as if a sound evolved from the high rock, as waterfall” (11). Her voices take us towards a sweet rhythm, making us eloquent, eager participant, as if swimming in the ponds of songs; her songs give such a sweet feeling.

Aruna Lama teaches us a culture of collectivism. She remained close to everyone, senior to junior. She became close to Saran Pradhan, a brilliant song and music composer. She dreamed to serve Nepali music with her husband; but unfortunately he died at the prime of youth; however, she kept a circle of Agamsingh Giri, Amber Gurung, Gopal Yonzan, etc. Darjeeling was already an established centre of Nepali art, music and literature. The movements run by Parasmani Pradhan, Dharanidhar and Surya Vikram Gyawali had deep impact at Darjeeling. Aruna had therefore natural interest in literature. So, she could understand the deeper meaning of the words and sang indulging in the essence of words. The singer who has no understanding the essence of the words can’t sing in such a sweet deep feeling (*ibid.* 12). She had natural voice. We hear the sounds of hills, jungle, rivers and rocks. She would sing the best but she would say that she is not able to sing better. The most notable asset was she had no sense of ego at all in her fame (*ibid.* 13).

Varsatility is another aspect in Aruna Lama. She is taken as a sad song singer. After the untimely demise of her husband, it’s true that she began to sing more sad songs. The song “Yespali ta manai phatyo” established her more significantly as a sad song singer that she sang after the demise of her husband. Before that also her sad songs “Udas mero jivan katha”, “Bhagyale khushi lutera lagyo”, “Sabaile bhanthe” etc

were famous sad songs. The songs “Hey Kanchaa malai sunko tara khasaideuna”, “Hera na hera Kanchha dandalai phool le dhakyo”, “Phoollai sodhye kaha gayo bhamara”, “Malai ankhama basauna pardaina” are few examples of her popular romantic songs. Her romantic songs present feelings of a young lady, her lovely feelings of youthful stage, and sweet yearnings. For an artist any limitation, confinement is problematic. Aruna also should not be confined as a sad song singer (ibid. 14). We know the value of an artist only after death, which is pathetic. The earlier we save artists from this disease better creations we get; better atmosphere we can create for art, music and literature (ibid. 15).

As Krishna Prasad Parajuli writes, “We feel vibration in each song of Aruna-softness and sweetness in her voice. She sings with poetic rhythm” (20). Aruna is mainly a singer, vocalist. But she composed few songs including “Hera nah era kanchha dandalai phool le dhakyo”, which as written in around 1993; her few published songs were also found, e.g *samjhanale pir batyulo/jiwanama timi timi pharkera aun/ashule mero nayan rujhayo/sukauna timi pharkera aun* (20). These versalities helped her to stand beyond boundaries.

Conclusions and recommendations

This paper explored the creative biography of Aruna Lama, a Tamang woman identity from Darjeeling, who crossovers the boundaries of gender subaltern position with the help of her available resources and agency. Unlike Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s notion of gender subaltern, who cannot speak as a woman amidst hegemonic structures, Aruna Lama speaks eloquently through her songs. But, she speaks with mild voice in the absence of resistance consciousness. However, her devotion in Nepali music and her natural voice that she sharpened by using available resources offered her a position beyond the boundaries. She remained Aruna Lama, a Tamang identity, through out her life, even after her death, not Aruna Pradhan. People of all class look proud of Aruna Lama. Her simplicity and versatility, aesthetic and ethical essence of her life struggle helped to secure existence beyond boundaries. Still both Nepal and Indian government have not invested their resources to archive Aruna Lama and her creations. Her biography presents potential space for the best biopic. Alternative public spheres of from the grassroots need to work collectively, which is the essence of indigenous aesthetics.

Acknowledgements

This paper is the part of the Faculty Research of University Grants Commission Nepal (Award number: FRG-79/80-H&S-02). We are thankful to UGC Nepal for this support. Similarly, we acknowledge Central Department of English and Central Department of Population Studies, Tribhuvan University for the academic and

administrative support while carrying out this research. Special thanks go to the experts and music lovers who supported us during the fieldwork, personal interviews, group discussions, presentations and interactions.

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