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Poetics of Maithili Folk Songs: Redefining ‘Sita’ as a Maithil Feminist

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Abstract

This research examines Maithili¹ wedding folk songs sung among the women of the Kayasth community. The main focus of the analysis is how they reinterpret the mythical “Sita” as a representation of feminist resistance and empowerment. Maithil² women articulate their experiences expressing agency within patriarchal structures that have historically silenced them. The study uses a qualitative close-reading method to five Maithili folk songs, collected through oral transmission and family archives. The songs are analyzed through the intersection of feminist theory and empowerment theory. Drawing from Anne Donchin’s feminist ethics of structural injustice and Deborah L. Rhode’s feminist rhetorical theory, the analysis examines how the songs reimagine Sita as a figure of resilience for the women to look up to. Findings suggest that, while traces of patriarchy remain embedded within the songs, they bring out a distinct Maithil feminist consciousness, wherein Sita becomes a medium of self-definition and solidarity. These redefinitions reveal Maithili folk songs as more than cultural rituals, but as mediums to redefine what it means to be compared to ‘Sita’, and how it stands as a form of empowerment and feminist resilience.

Keywords: Empowerment, feminist, Maithil women, Maithili folk songs, Sita

Introduction: Folk Songs as the Narratives of Maithil Women

Maithili is considered the language of the Mithila region since the ancient times of Hindu mythologies, spreading from the foothills of the Himalayas through the eastern Tarai region of Nepal, all the way through the Ganges across Bihar, India, according to Richard Burghart (765, 763). Women of Mithila (Maithil women hereafter) region have been reciting lives and stories through folk songs for generations. Every milestone in life is celebrated with the communal singing of its own song abundant with vivid imagery and metaphorical implications. Edward Henry, in his ethnomusicology interpretation of Maithili folk songs, presents how Maithil women do not use music in their songs, most likely because they did not have any training or access, unlike their male counterparts (417). The theme of the song was not just a joyous celebration, as Henry claims, instead, it served as an

expression of helplessness that gradually evolved into an 'art' over the centuries, as a practice passed down through generations.

The Maithili culture spreads across different ethnic groups, traditionally inhabiting the Tarai region of Nepal. Within the broader Maithili community, social organization is shaped by distinct caste and sub-ethnic groupings, each carrying its own ritual practices, oral traditions, and modes of cultural expression. The folk songs collected for the sake of this research are sung by women from the Kayasth ethnic group of the Maithili community. In history, the Kayasth males were believed to be "scribes" and accountants, and the families were "closely associated with the court affairs" (Henry 423). The local women who sang the songs during the survey collection of this paper claim that there is a generational belief that they are the descendants of Sita, from the great epic *Ramayana*, originating from Janakpur city located in the mid-east southern part of Nepal. The *Ramayana* is a Hindu epic that narrates the life of Prince Rama who is considered an embodiment of righteousness, and his wife Sita, who endured exile, endurance, and moral decisions over the course of heroic endeavors.

'Sita' is conventionally regarded as an ideal woman, possessing all the qualities a woman is supposed to have. When 'Sita' is framed as an ideal woman, the definition of 'ideal' has been significantly tainted by patriarchal ideology. Consequently, her true nature, described in the original version of the *Ramayana*, is rarely taken into account. Instead, qualities like being submissive, decent, quiet, sigh, holding lesser power, and obediently following social norms and family rules widely come to the surface to define her. Therefore, when a Maithil woman is supposed to be ideal as 'Sita', she is expected to have these regressive and misinterpreted qualities. This is one of the many misrepresentations that clarifies how severely the community still functions under the suppressive system of the males. The folk songs of Maithil women are an underrated form of art that is significant to redefining what a woman should be and how they can regain their voice and power in society.

The word "Sita" in the songs has two meanings, one as the Goddess Sita, and the other as the Maithili 'Maithil' daughters (Henry 423). With their songs as the only medium to voice out, they re-imagine Sita as their ideal symbol of regaining their womanhood, battling patriarchy, and redefining feminism. Their folk songs are abundant with some poetic gems (Henry 415). The objective of this study is to closely read the portrayal of 'Sita' in Maithili folk songs. It addresses the research question: how does 'Sita', used as a synonym for 'daughter' in Maithili folk songs, redefine and challenge traditional perceptions of patriarchy, being a medium of women's empowerment and feminism? By analyzing Sita as both a cultural symbol and a set-role model for Maithil daughters, this study explores how folk traditions become spaces for resistance within the community.

Literature Review: Sita and Maithil Women's Yearnings

Scholarly research works surround the Maithili language, Maithili folklore, and women's expressive traditions. Together, these studies provide a critical foundation for understanding how Maithil women use folk traditions as spaces of cultural continuity, resistance, and self-articulation.

Burghart claims how the Maithili language has survived through generations and holds a much larger linguistic landscape and emphasizes the unique construction of identity and power dynamics for the Maithil women (765). The expressive nature of Maithili folk songs by women is described as a "concrete expression of tendencies", a quality rarely found in other languages (Henry 415). Perhaps the 'tendencies' here depict the actions these women sing about. Coralynn V. Davis represents women as a form of "talking tools" and "suffering servants," singing their stories to "defecate men" (267). With an abrupt, and powerful description as such, she portrays how these women resonate with resistance to the conflicted patriarchal nature put upon them by society (269). Davis's attempt to connect defining words for these women with demeaning descriptions like 'tools', 'servants', and 'defecate' is a representation of how women were seen through a stereotypical patriarchal lens. This can be connected to Henry's 'tendencies' as a reason for them to sing empowering folk songs within their tight-knit all-women community.

In the ancient epic *Ramayana*, Sita is described as nature herself, associating the power she holds to be worthy of comparison with that of nature. She is an earthly being from birth, lives most of her life in the forest, and eventually returns to the earth. Rituparna Sengupta elaborates on how Sita's consistent reunification with nature portrays her as a character who refuses patriarchal doctrines and transcends nature. Her return to the wild in different stages of her life and the return to earth after Rama pleads for her to come back after exiling her for mere rumors are seen as a rejection of patriarchy, a 'triumph', indeed (9). Maithil women lean on nature to test their resemblance and measure their power against Sita's power. The mythical and supernatural elements in Maithili folk songs that connect the identity of Maithil women to that of Sita can be reinterpreted by applying the concept of Indu Prakash Panday's 'pantheistic attitude', which describes how the special background of a culture does not come from history but is rather explained by legend (137). Sita is a 'godly figure' in a world of Maithil women who are taught to look up to Sita and expect their daughters to have the same attributes as she does; the attributes these women have been reading, telling stories, and praying for their whole lives. Connecting the 'God' Sita with women of their lives is a way of interconnectedness.

Davis, in her *Pond-Women Revelations*, uncovers "pond narratives" and their significance in Maithil women's storytelling mediums. Taking Maithili folk tales as examples, she showcases how they imply that "women have the power to shape the fate of men" (289). She claims that it is a symbol of 'ponds' as 'feminine fertility', being an evergreen oral ideology taught to women through their folk songs. Davis highlights how in these folktales, the implied outlook of how the patriarchal system lies only on the surface. But in reality, it is the matriarchy that is the closest to and holds the most supreme connection to nature. The interpretation of Sita's character in the songs represent Maithil women who seek comfort in learning and reciting folk songs. In the course of which, what 'Sita' means to them changes. It is their way of putting their voice into action, "re-establishing their attitude, identity, and significance in their community", and bringing out the ingrained complexities of the "micro-politics of their lives" (Davis, *Pond-Women* 290, 297). Davis also resonates on how in some Maithili folktales, 'women' carry the predominance in the family, and the men are controlled by the women figures in their lives like mothers, wives, or even mistresses (298). In this study, unlike Davis's focus on narrative authority within folktales, the analysis examines how feminist consciousness emerges through the rhetorical and performative dimensions of Maithili folk songs, where empowerment is expressed collectively rather than narratively resolved.

While existing scholarship foregrounds Maithili women's linguistic aspects, and mythic symbolism, this study steps aside from earlier readings by keeping Sita in the center, not solely as a religious or literary figure, but as a lived metaphor for Maithil daughters within women's folk traditions. This paper emphasizes how oral performance reinterprets Sita's image into a feminist form of empowerment.

Materials and Methods: A Qualitative Close-reading of Folk Songs

This research applies a qualitative research design through textual and interpretive analysis. Five Maithili folk songs, traditionally sung during wedding rituals, serve as the primary data for this study. The five songs analyzed in this study are as follows (which are also given in the Appendix serially):

1. Song of Perseverance for Siya (Siya Lagan)
2. Song of Perseverance for Daughter I (Beti Lagan I)
3. Song of Perseverance for Daughter II (Beti Lagan II)
4. Siya's Choice (Siya Swayamvar)
5. Song of Farewell (Samdaun)

These songs were collected through oral recitations of women in the author's extended family and local Kayasth community in Janakpur, supplemented by references from personal diaries. The informal documentation signifies how their gradual adaption to the lines assimilate to the time and

their lifestyle. Often, the lyrics are changed and improvised informally through generations. Each song was transcribed in Maithili and translated into English by the researcher. The analysis is a close-reading approach that examines diction, tone, symbols, and narrative voice, connecting each to theoretical frameworks of feminist and empowerment theories. Anne Donchin's notion of overlapping feminist lenses, which exposes moral problems and structural injustices, and Deborah L. Rhode's ideas of feminist rhetoric grounded in lived experience, are used to interpret how these songs serve as rhetorical spaces for women's agency.

Donchin argues that this intersection offers overlapping "lenses" to expose moral problems and structural injustices, calling for a reshaping of social norms (23). In this context, Donchin's "lenses" refer to feminist and ethical perspectives that allow everyday cultural practices to be read as sites where injustice is recognized and questioned. Similarly, Rhode highlights the methodological power of critical feminist theory in transforming gender roles through practices rooted in women's lived experiences (Rhode 1). This suggests that change emerges not from abstract ideals but from sustained engagement with women's daily realities. In the analysis, feminism is treated as an interpretive lens attentive to everyday practices through which women negotiate power and voice, and empowerment is understood as emerging through collective participation and symbolic expression. Rhetorical analysis focuses on how meaning is conveyed indirectly through metaphor, repetition, and performance.

Results and Discussions: Reverence, Resistance and Redefinition

The analysis presents different layers of the narratives that move between resistance and redefinition. They present moments of female endurance and subtle rebellion against patriarchal ideals. The songs serve not only as ritual components but as rhetorical spaces; spaces where these women can be outspoken and verbal. They reveal the dynamic tension between patriarchal expectations and women's evolving sense of self.

In "Song of Perseverance for Siya" (Siya Lagan), 'Lagan', perseverance, refers to the longing of Sita's parents, King Janak and Queen Sunaina, to find the ideal, worthy partner for their daughter. In this song, they discover Sita's ability to do an impossible act of lifting the 'Shiv Dhanush' that is unliftable by every creature until now: "Daughter Siya does the impossible / lifts the bow to mop its pavilion" (lines 3-4). There is a realization from the king Janak when he notices that the floor 'pavilion' where Dhanush sits has been cleaned.

The close repetition of the same verbatim now has a different tone: "Oh, daughter Siya does the impossible" (line 7). This is when the king, the father, finds out that his daughter is no ordinary woman to marry away; she needs a man who is worthy and equal to her abilities. Janak grieves the possibility of finding that man because he feels that such a man does not exist. He fears his daughter's life will pass before the man comes, "now my daughter will remain unwed / lifetime may pass her by" (lines 9-10). That is when Sita's mother, Queen Sunaina, overhears Janak's worry and comes to console him. She reassures him and advises that they must pray to 'Gauri', the wife of Lord Shiva, for one wish: "Light the lamp, we shall pray to *Gauri* / on and on, plead for one wish" (lines 13-14). Here, she does not say they will pray for a husband; they say they pray for 'one' wish. This implies that they do not think it right to dedicate their prayer to wish for a husband; instead, they wish for whatever may be the best for Sita and her impeccable capabilities.

When local women sing the songs narrating it explicitly towards Sita, implicitly implying their daughters, they are trying to portray that this is more than a song of giving one's daughter away. It exclaims that their daughter is worthy of the most ideal man who meets up to their capabilities. This song is sung before one's wedding to find the right person for their daughter to be wedded to. But at the same time, the singers are aware that a worthy man may be impossible to find. Hence, they wish for not just a partner, but a life that their daughter deserves, which may not be limited to a partner.

The search for an ideal man for Sita and the act of having found one are contradictory to these idealistic aspirations. As Linda Hess specifies, in the story of *Ramayana*, even though Rama is established as an "ideal man" among his contentions, there are multiple instances when that can be

questioned (1). There is a frustrating pattern of him judging and questioning Sita's loyalty and purity. Even the 'ideal' man goes ahead to show the conventional characteristics of disregarding a 'woman' by questioning their purity (Hess 4). When Janak dreads not being able to find the ideal man for his daughter, it does not end when they find Rama, even if it appears to in the beginning. After all, Sita rejects the oppression and sets off to the Earth because of Rama's untrustworthy instincts about her. This implies how, ideally, there is no perfect man for 'Siya', because the society itself is entangled with definitions of openly and unjustly questioning the woman. The embedded mindset of normalising the questioning of the woman's purity and integrity leads this song to be sung, claiming there is no 'ideal man' yet found in such a society.

From Donchin's perspective, this tension between ability and confinement illustrates a moral imbalance that feminist ethics seeks to expose: when social systems fail to accommodate women's capacities, empowerment becomes a moral necessity (23). The refrain "Oh, daughter Siya does the impossible" transcends admiration; it becomes a statement of collective pride and protest. These women, by identifying with Sita, challenge the very structure that defines her value through male recognition.

In "Song of Perseverance for Daughter I" (Beti Lagan I), 'Beti', which means daughter, and 'Siya', as mentioned above, replace each other as women recite the folk songs along with the rituals. 'Beti Lagan' refers to songs that specify their intention to long to find the right partner. The song lyrics begin with a desire to have a son but 'ending up' with a daughter instead: "Before I longed to have a son / then a daughter came along. // So I raised her with boundless love / adored her like a son" (lines 1-4). There is an obvious desire to have a son because of his masculine roles and obligations in society. Among the women, it is common to desire a son because a son stays with one for their entire life, the mother never has to culturally let them go. But having a daughter comes with the ultimate reality of one day having to give them away to another family. The song implies a desire to avoid the pain of letting go of a daughter.

"Song of Perseverance for Daughter I" is more of an intergenerational interpretation that is suspected to have been majorly metamorphosed from its original form several generations ago. There is a progressive intention to educate the daughter and only plan her marriage after she is 21: "Let her read, let her write, now she is 21 and all grown / the time has come for her to wed" (lines 5-6). After a long search, there is finally an ideal man found, "Nowhere could I find a worthy husband for my daughter / then, finally found one BA MA passed" (lines 9-10). Here, just like how in ancient times for Sita, her ideal partner needed to be at her level of the ability to lift the bow (lines 9-10), in this scenario, the ideal man for her daughter is the one who matches up to her academic level by directly referring to 'BA MA pass', implying that the suitor must have passed their Bachelors' degree (BA), and Masters' degree (MA), to be worthy of their daughter's hand. It is the local women's way of conveying that their daughters deserve nothing but the best partner out there who can compare to their daughter. Karen Pechilis puts the feminist consciousness forward by shedding light on there being critical awareness of how society imagines women, shaping a woman's life through the lens of religious and cultural imagination (9).

As "Song of Perseverance for Daughter I" proceeds to find that ideal man, there is a melancholic end to it. "Pulled me together to give her away, my lord / the tears keep falling like pearls" (, lines 11-12). Now that they worked hard to find that perfect man, letting go comes with tears that are like pearls. Owning 'Pearls' in the form of jewellery is considered a symbol of purity and wisdom in the community, according to the locals. The falling of pearls implies the harsh reality of having a daughter is letting go of purity and wisdom. At the end, the want for a son comes back in: "If I had a son, he would rule this house / for I had a daughter, now she belongs away" (lines 12-13). There is another moment of grieving the lost opportunity to have a son. If they did have a son, they would still be in the house, there would be no pain like this. Now that they have had a daughter, the pain of accepting the truth of her belonging away from the warmth of the mother almost sounds unbearable, and the narration returns to a desire for a son. The irony comes to a full circle here,

leaving a possibility of the arousal of the paradoxical question of whether the nonexistent son or the existent daughter stands in a higher ironic place of receiving love and admiration.

At the core, "Song of Perseverance for Daughter I" marks a shift from mythic Sita to the lived experiences of Maithil daughters. There is an emerging feminist awareness within the domestic space. Pechilis argues that feminist consciousness in South Asian religious narratives emerges through the "unreality of social categories," where women begin to imagine alternative versions of themselves (9). The mother's tears, "the tears keep falling like pearls", are not only sentimental but symbolic of knowledge and wisdom passed down through generations. Here, empowerment functions as emotional inheritance: the daughter is both loved and liberated, even as cultural rituals of farewell reinforce patriarchal continuity.

In "Song of Perseverance for Daughter II (Beti Lagan II), 'Dhiya' refers to daughter, a name that came to be as a rhyming word to 'Siya' because of their synonymous nature in the local context. The song begins, again, with the anxiety of the father to find the right person for their daughter: "Over at my lord's place, dhiya remains unwed / how can lord sit in peace?" (lines 1-2, my translation). Again, there is the anxiety of the father, as 'lord', in search of an ideal husband for his daughter. In lines 10-11, 'dhiya' is replaced with 'Siya' as she is described as praying to make her father's wishes come true. She doesn't pray for a husband; she just wishes her father's yearning to come true. She doesn't realise the true reason why her father is upset. She just prays out of her nature. She has no control over the situation and is taken by surprise by the end of it. In the end, they find the 'ideal man', and the action of the daughter being married is shown as "Stow *sindur* on the crown / take Siya away on your fingers" (Song of Perseverance for Daughter II, lines 1-2, my translation). Here, the stowing of vermilion '*sindur*' refers to turning her into a wife, or in other words, the man taking ownership of her. Taking one away on their fingers can signify a dominant and sudden act. Maybe Siya, or Dhiya, didn't initially understand their wedding was being planned, and now suddenly, they are being taken away. It is common in the culture for parents to decide whether a husband and a daughter are obligated to marry them. In these cases, the daughter rarely has a say in it. Throughout the song, the daughter has no control over the situation and is taken by surprise by the end of it. Her kind nature seeps through when she can't see her father upset and prays for him without understanding why he is upset.

Now, in "Siya's Choice" (Siya Swayamvar), Sita herself sends over a letter to a husband that she desires "On a Sorrel leaf, Siya writes a letter / sends it over at Ram's" (lines 1-2). She has a choice. When her father is searching all around in line 5, Sita is shown as a smart and decisive young woman who can find the right person for herself, even when the search is near impossible. Unlike the previous songs, there is a sense of power associated with Siya, the 'daughter.' She is in control, and her decision molds around to become the right decision that pairs her with the ideal man.

However, there is a conflicting narration at the end of the song when it is shown how when Rama gets the chance to marry Sita, he presents her with a 'garland of victory': "Rama Chandra endows Siya with the garland of victory" (line 9). When the male figure enters the picture, the dominance also strikes. The 'garland of victory' suggests that when the two individuals are paired, Rama, the male figure, perceives Sita as a victory, as a winning. The song builds up to show Sita's independence, control, and ability to decide the best for herself, but by the end, patriarchy overpowers when the introduction of the male figure is directly connected to winning and overpowering. Rama directly enters from the forest. He does not need a background narration to prove his power. He enters out of nowhere and becomes the dominant figure in dominance that takes the female figure as a victory award. The control that took Sita almost the entire song to have, it only took Rama one line at the end. Specifically, the intention of mentioning this symbolism in the song apprehends how the only reason why these women are in the position to sing such a moment of control by a man is due to their progressiveness and understanding of how their act of singing can evoke awareness of the control in their daughters too.

Here, while Sita is briefly granted narrative agency, she writes a letter, expresses desire, and chooses Rama. This autonomy is striking within a patriarchal epic tradition. Yet, as soon as Rama

“endows Siya with the garland of victory,” her agency is symbolically subsumed by the idea of male triumph. This tension captures what Rhode calls “the dialectic of empowerment,” where women’s self-expression still operates within patriarchal narrative structures (619). Through collective performance, they transform Sita’s choice that is constrained here into a recitation of shared awareness, that acknowledges how empowerment can coexist with vulnerability. Sita’s garland becomes more than a mark of victory; it becomes a metaphor for recognition, one that these women reclaim in their songs as both adornment and assertion.

In “Song of Farewell” (Samdaun) sung at the end of the wedding, the family must let go of their daughter to the in-laws. It is culturally sung by the family members, like almost every wedding folk song, even if it is written from the direct point of view of the woman. This is because traditionally, the bride is expected to be ‘shy’ and not too talkative or outspoken. Yet the song of farewell brings forward the perspective of the bride, even if it is expressed by her female relatives. Another reason for changing the expression medium may also be because other women of the family understand what she may be feeling at this point.

The song is a one-on-one conversation with the carriage that is used to carry the bride to the groom’s house. She seems not to know where she is being taken. Seizing the moment alone in the carriage, she melancholically starts asking the carriage: “From the holiest land of Janak, where are you taking me, oh, carriage?” (line 1). There is a sense of anxiousness and sadness in her as she questions why she is being taken from a place where she had everything. As the song proceeds, she starts worrying about her parents and relatives who may be sad and weeping because she is gone, grieving missed moments and remembrance from her closest people. By the end of the song, she specifically mentions how she is now giving up: “I sit here, giving up, oh, carriage/From the holiest land of Janak, where are you taking me, oh, carriage? (line 11). She is giving up on the fact that she now has no option but to confide in reality and let go of her old life. She doesn’t even have the control to sing the farewell song that is sung from her perspective. The woman who sings this for her understands the helplessness and the feeling of not being in control anymore, and so they sing it for her. Ihnji Job narrows down the feminist theory not just for its immediate focus on social justice but also for its ability to maintain normativity, meaning the political advocacy for social change (155). Jon specifically states how the interest lies in exploring how feminists have successfully blended normativity with modern openness. In this song, there is the empowering openness to become the voice of the suppressed women singing from the perspective of their daughter who is getting married. It strengthens the idea of moving beyond identity politics while staying true to their original motivation of addressing social inequalities (Jon 155). According to Jon, feminist theory maintains its relevance when it combines normativity with openness, the drive for justice with empathy for lived contradictions (155). This song embodies that principle as it reclaims the bride’s voice within a collective female chorus. The singing of the bride’s lament by other women is itself an act of feminist solidarity. It acknowledges the bride’s voicelessness while ensuring her experience is not silenced.

When women sing together, they enact a subtle but powerful reformulation of identity. Here, Sita becomes both goddess and daughter, both divine and ordinary. The power, here, is not borrowed, but rather born. As Davis points out in her paper ‘Pond Women Revelation’, “Maithil women are complex subjects, who, given the wealth of discourse, multiplicity of expressive forms, and complex systems of privilege and oppression in which they find themselves, ‘see’ the world contextually, ‘speak’ of it strategically, and act in it with tactical consideration” (36). The songs become a recitation of hope and power, challenging the norm of silencing women and advocating for autonomy in shaping the thinking of younger generations.

Conclusion: Redefining Sita, Redefining Maithil Women

Maithili folk songs are more than traditions, they are a collective archive of women’s lived consciousness, passed on and transferred through generations. Maithil women reinterpret Sita not as a symbol of submission but as a living embodiment of strength, compassion, and resistance. After

analyzing five Maithili folk songs, this study finds that by redefining Sita, Maithil women redefine themselves. Their songs blur the boundary between myth and lived experience, transforming what was once prescriptive into something liberating for themselves. By voicing Sita's agency, they reclaim their own agency along with it. The selected songs thus stand as powerful feminist texts that both critique patriarchy and embrace intergenerational resilience. The Maithil women assert their right to equality and teach their younger generations to stand beyond the stereotypical societal image, introducing them to the true form of Sita that they look up to. A form that is empowering and defies the 'ideal' definition of a woman. The Maithil folk songs not only empower the women singing but also act as a mechanism for communal healing from the generational oppression.

Beyond their ritual function, Maithili folk songs become instruments of social education, teaching younger generations that empowerment is rooted not in rebellion against culture but in reinterpreting it. By bridging feminist ethics with folklore analysis, this paper repositions Maithili women's folk songs as active sites of gendered knowledge production, offering a corrective to literary and religious interpretations that marginalize women's voices within oral cultures.

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Appendices

Appendix A

सिया लगन I

जनक मुनि चलला नहाय,
धनुष आन्गुठावल हे

एक अजगुत सियाबेटी केलनि,
धनुष तर निपल हे

जनक मुनि एला नहाय,
धनुष तर देखल हे

आहे एक अजगुत सिया बेटी केलनि,
धनुष तर निपल हे

एही बिधि रहब कुमार,
जनम बिति जायत हे

घर सँ बाहार भेलि सुनयना रानी,
एहेन कुबोल नही कहियौ हे

लेसि लिय दिपही आरति पुजुव भवानि हे,
घुर्मी घुर्मी गोर लागब वर एक मागब हे

My Translation:

Song of Perseverance for Siya I

King Janak goes to bathe,
the bow lays unbudged, unbothered.

Daughter Siya does the impossible,
lifts the bow to mop its pavilion.

King Janak returns from his bathe,
startled by the cleansed pavilion.

Oh, daughter Siya does the impossible,
lifts the bow mops the floor under.

Now my daughter will remain unwed,
lifetime may pass her by.

Overhears and soothes Queen Sunayana,
do not speak the unfortunate, my dear.

Light the lamp, we shall pray to *Gauri*,
on and on, plead for one wish.

Appendix B

बेटी लगन I

छल मनोरथ बेटा एक होयत,
भयगेल बेटी के जनम यौ

बहुत जतन स बेटी हम पोसलाहु,
बेटा जेका कायलहु दुलार यौ

पढिए, लिखिए बेटी, एकैस वरसक भेलि,
भएली ब्याहन योग यौ ।

दिल्ली हम खोजलहु, बम्बै हम खोजलहु,
खोजलहु सागर बिहार यौ

धियाके जुगुत वर कतहुने भेटल,
भेटल बि. ए., एम. ए. पास यौ

कन्यादान करय बैसला बाबा,
मोती जेका झहरनि नोर यौ

बेटा जँ रहि तहि राज चलैबतै,
तोहे बेटी भएल बिरान हो

My Translation:

Song of Perseverance for Daughter I

Before I longed to have a son,
then a daughter came along.

So I raised her with boundless love,
adored her like a son.

Let her read, let her write, now she is 21
and all grown,
the time has come for her to wed.

I scoured Delhi, scoured Bumbai,
scoured the entire Bihar.

Nowhere could I find a worthy husband for
my daughter,
then, finally found one BA MA passed.

Pulled myself together to give her away,
my lords,

the tears keep falling like pearls.

If I had a son, he would rule this house,
for I had a daughter, now she belongs
away.

Appendix C

बेटी लगन II

बाबा के अंगना मे धिया छथि कुमारी,
सेहो बाबा कोना सुतल निशचिन्त हो।

एतबा बचन जब सुनलनि बाबा,
उठल चेहाई हे।

काखही लेलनि धोतिया,
दहिन लेलनि पोथिया,
चलि गेल मगध मुंगेर हे।

सागर नगर बाबा घुमि घुमि एला,
धिया योग्य वर नही भेटल हे।

एतवा वचन जब सुनलनि सिया,
पुज्य लगली गौरी हे।

दशरथ घर चाईर कुमार हे।

कोन रंग लक्ष्मण, कोन रंग राम चन्द्र,
कोन रंग भरत दुनु भाइ हे।

गोरे रंग लक्ष्मण, श्याम रंग राम चन्द्र,
गोरे श्याम भरत दुनु भाइ हे।

तिलक चढाओल हे।

भेल वियाह परल सित सिन्दुर,
सिया लिय अंगुरी धराई हे।

My Translation:

Song of Perseverance for Daughter II

Over at my lord's place, dhiya remains
unwed,
how can lord sit in peace.

When the realisation strikes my lord,
he gets up startled and discerned.

Tucks apparel under his arms,

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carries his books with his right hand,
heads off to Magadha and Munger.

Scoured far-away towns over and over,
no where does he find a worthy husband.

When Siya hears his yearnings,
She prays to Gauri to mend her father's
wishes.

Over at Dasrath's, there are four bachelors.

What colour must Laksham be? What
colour Rama Chandra, '
what colour must be Bharat two brothers.

Fair is Laksham, dark is Ram,
Fair dark are Bharat two brothers.

To make a promise of life.

Stow sindur on the crown,
take Siya away on your fingers.

Appendix D

सिया स्वयम्बर

सिहुली के पात सिया चिठी लिखल,
भेजिदेल राम जी के ठाम हे।

राजा जनक कठिन प्रण ठानल,
शिव धनुष यज्ञ करावल हे।

देश हि देश के भूप सब आयल हे,
धनुष नही सकल हिलाय हे।

बिकट जंगल स एला दुनु भाइ,
धनुष देल राम उठाय हे।

सिया जयमाल पहिराउ राम चन्द्र हे।

My Translation:

Siya's Choice

On a Sorrel leaf, Siya writes a letter,
sends it over at Rama's.

Sage Janaks takes a pledge,

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to wed Siya with one who can thrust Shiv
bow.

Kings from far-off kingdoms arrive,
no one could move the mighty bow.

Two brothers appear from the forests,
only Rama can lift the bow,

Rama Chandra endows Siya with the
garland of victory.

My Translation:

Appendix E

समदाओन

परम पवित्र भुमि जनक नगरियास,
हमरो के कहाँ लेने जाइछा रे कहरिया?

केरवा कदम गाछ, पिपर कलश पात,
सुन्दर सब वन छैक रे कहरिया

परम पवित्र भुमि जनक नगरियास,
हमरा के कहाँ लेने जाइछा रे कहरिया

अम्मा मोरा रोबत होइहे बसिया के बेरियास,
पिताजी रोबत पुजा काल रे कहरिया

परम पवित्र भुमि जनक नगरियास,
हमरा के कहाँ लेने जाइछा रे कहरिया

भाभी मोरा रोबत होइहे भान्साके बेरियास,
सखी सब रोबत होइहे ठिक दुपहरिया

परम पवित्र भुमि जनक नगरियास,
हमरा के कहाँ लेने जाइछा रे कहरिया

आइमाई आबत होइहे, अम्माके सम्झाबत होइहे,
हमहु बैसल हिया हारी रे कहरिया

परम पवित्र भुमि जनक नगरियास,
हमरा के कहाँ लेने जाइछा रे कहरिया

My Translation:

Song of farewell

From the holiest land of Janak, where are
you taking me, oh, carriage?

Away from the banana trees, away from
kadam trees, away from pipal urn leaves,

Passing by the beautiful forest, oh,
carriage?

From the holiest land of Janak, where are
you taking me, oh, carriage?

My mother must be weeping since the
morning,

Father must be weeping during the puja,
oh, carriage.

From the holiest land of Janak, where are
you taking me, oh, carriage?

My sister-in-law must be weeping during
the time to cook,

all my friends must be weeping as the
afternoon strikes.

From the holiest land of Janak, where are
you taking me, oh, carriage?

The neighbours must be coming to console
my mother,

I sit here, giving up, oh, carriage.

From the holiest land of Janak, where are
you taking me, oh, carriage?