

Narrative Reconstruction of Sorrow, Hope and Collective Consciousness in Nepali Dohori Songs

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Abstract

This paper explores how Nepali dohori songs function as sites for the narrative reconstruction of sorrow (dukkha), hope (asa), and collective consciousness (chetana) to highlight socio-political and cultural significance. The purpose of the paper is to outline how those dialogic folk songs, performed as improvised exchanges between male and female singers, articulate personal grief, social injustice, and political aspiration to foster shared emotional and moral awareness. Employing a qualitative method, the paper integrates textual analysis of songs, performance observation, and critical engagement with cultural theory, Gramsci's hegemony, and subaltern studies to trace individual and collective experiences. The analysis demonstrates that dohori songs reflect emotional, social realities and raise counter-hegemonic voices to challenge dominant narratives. Findings reveal that the songs' interplay of sorrow and hope cultivates ethical reflection, political consciousness, and communal solidarity. The dialogic structure embodies expressing voices and relationality. Ultimately, Nepali dohori emerges as a culturally grounded pedagogy of emotion, where personal expression, historical memory, and collective aspiration converge to enable audiences to engage in transformative reflection and envision possibilities for social justice and political transformation.

Keywords: *Consciousness, counter-hegemony, hope, sorrow, subaltern*

Introduction

Cultural artifacts express socio-cultural values and political ideologies. They are shaped by specific social and cultural contexts rather than existing independently. Literature, song, and other human-made creations emerge from everyday experiences and stimulate human life and behavior. Williams (1980) notes, "How we should feel and what we need to be, what we need to do and have in order to lead fulfilling lives" (p. 175). Popular culture, such as songs, guides feelings, actions, and aspirations. Songs reflect and articulate human emotions, and the beliefs of particular societies. It is interesting to know how people retell the story of *dohari* songs in Nepal. It seems like a complicated topic of politics and how singers use—and respond immediately. Stirr (2009) outlines, "it is both a question-answer song that

can be used in many folk song genres, and a genre of its own based on the sung exchange of improvised rhyming couplets” (p. 9). It is a dialogical poetic style of singing rooted in a cultural phenomenon and serving to tell the logical facts in songs. Bhatta (2024) remarks, “*Dohori* is typically performed by two individuals, often friends, neighbors, or family members, who take turns singing verses and responding to each other's lines. One person sings a verse, and the other responds with a related or complementary verse. This back-and-forth exchange of song continues throughout the performance” (p. 268).

Dohori song has a historical connection with democracy and the republican setup. Each song hints at how people saw the king's role and fought for freedom. It shifts the focus to the people, though it does not support the monarchy. The idea of Devi Gharti brought a song in a *dohori* competition to remark the demand of republican democracy. Stirr (2010), “Devi: *ajhai arko chha hāmro mana ta/ samāvesi loktāntrik ganatantra* (Still our hearts are in another place/ Inclusive republican democracy)” (p. 317). Even the song has uttered the words of hope and collective consciousness. The singer has appealed for *ganatantra*—it is a republic, but not a king's system.

At a time when politics felt shaky, folk songs used the word *loktantra*. Later on, the word tied the people to the Maoists. With peace talks on edge and elections up in the air, it made people anxious. For this, people depend on it, and sometimes even break it, all to promote their agendas. Those with lots of power or entire nations have a love for rewriting the script, picking and choosing what happens in the past, or hype up some stories to make themselves sound good or keep other people in their place. The singers use the past for one of two reasons: to justify what they are doing now or they have the authority to act this way based off of what they did in the past. They propose a new, honest, and wide-ranging perspective when it comes to looking at history and songs of *dohari*, especially those that emphasize moments of happiness, sadness, or great changes politically. Some people believe that if they truly examine history with an objective, they gain lots of ideas and knowledge from *dohori* song. People stop going in circles and make new, better, and fairer ways for themselves instead of continuing to make the same mistakes for what seems like an infinite amount of time.

We understand that every movement of *dohori* song is different and how it is affected by their societies. It invites the female/male opponent to create an answer in a rhyming pattern. The singers talk about individuals, societies, and nations for their entire lives. It has a connection with the indigenous, backward, and marginalized community, “representing a rustic version of modernity and the nation in Nepali society today” (Stirr, 2009, p. 6). Turning back to the music to understand this better, *lokdohori*, across the entire nation of Nepal, it is a popular song even from very far away in the village. For this, this dialogic song serves as an appreciation for what the people join in on the *madal* drum, and the performance speeds up again, moving in time with the beat. The singers regard it as vital, under what they call *dukha- ra- asha badne* (sharing sorrows and hopes). In this modern *lokdohori*, people share what they feel together in song and in sharp-witted lyrics. *Dohori* songs often pick up on the same sounds and singers make when they feel grief, happiness, and consciousness. It is the kind of sadness that anyone, anywhere, people understand without words. When the audiences listen, people end up

sharing that sorrow, almost like the music becomes an expression of sorrow. It helps people face their pain, not alone, but as part of something bigger. That journey—moving from grief to hope and creating consciousness—reminds people to get through hard and comfortable times. Here is a song between a mother and son:¹

Ama: Haha ... Eutai kura nakhoja pelnalai/Jau bho babu sathi sang khelnalai, Narou mayale

(Mother: Hey, hey... Don't keep asking for the same thing/ Go on, son, go play with your friends. Don't cry, my dear.)

Chhora: Haha... Janna ama khelna lai thau chhaina/ Hela garchhan bhaner bau chhaina. Narau mayale

(Son: Hey, hey... I don't want to, mom/ There's no place to play, and they tease me saying I don't have a father. Don't cry, my dear.)

Ama: Haha... Desh badalchhu bhanera ga'ka hun/ Dwanda kalma bepatta bha'ka hun. Narau mayale.

(Mother: Hey, hey... He went saying he would transform the country/ He disappeared during the time of conflict. Don't cry, my dear. (My translation)

These couplets remind audiences of the sense of sorrow, hope, and resilience. There is something wild about how music pulls people together. The song expresses sorrow through a mother's gentle restraint and a son's pain of loss of his father. His fellows tease him for the absence of a father. Hope appears in the mother's loving reassurance and endurance. Collective consciousness materializes in recalling political conflict, sacrifice, and disappearance. It awakens social awareness about the impact of conflict on families, children, and everyday innocence. In Hall's observation, this feeling is a part of "[H]egemony of trying to create some formation out of persistent, contradictory differences which continue therefore to need the work of 'unifying'" (1995, p. 69). At present, this ethos is common in Nepali society. It establishes a link between improvised and transformative expression, which is a sharing of the truth of sorrow and hope. Everyone is on the same wavelength, and it is like all the similarities among people and exist together. It does not just disappear when the music stops—it sparks to reflect real change, give a way of political transformation to act together.

Marxist historical materialism has offered a deterministic approach to the changes in societies from a structural perspective on how class struggle and economic development would implement a new society. It spawned the ideology of social democracy and put a lot of emphasis on the role of the state and the welfare movement for change and equality in society. This paper focuses on the concept of counterhegemonic consciousness as articulated by Gramsci (2005). Hegemony is a coercive form of state power and sustained through culture, ideology, language, and everyday social activities. The overriding class establishes its values and beliefs by bestowing them as common sense for imposing ideological control over subordinate groups. Within this broader framework, Althusser's concept argues

1 <https://www.facebook.com/reel/1296462608365043>

that the state functions largely as an exploitative apparatus. It enforces dominant classes and power in class struggle against the marginal groups through execution and ideological control (2014). It further draws on Spivak's idea of subaltern remains necessary to articulate the ostracized caste and classes (1988). It examines how *dohori* song represents the sense of sorrow to the formation of subaltern identity and develops resistance against hegemonic power that operates through both coercion and consent. It analyzes the social, political, and cultural functions of *dohori* song in generating hope by vividly representing the lived experiences and struggle of subordinated classes. In addition, it explores the socio-political conditions and power structures of the post-republican era to facilitate the emergence of collective consciousness as a counterhegemonic challenge to the dominant power bloc.

Literature Review

The linearity or cycle of history of *dohori* song has long been a topic of discussion from a philosophical and historical perspective. If history is linear, it means that we are constantly moving ahead and have the potential for greater things in the future. If history is a cycle, then it means a repeat, wherein similar things keep happening. One thing about history is that it can only be studied from a purely objective point of view, and we cannot totally dismiss the biased approach. The point is that this paper is also not meaningless, and we observe a better perspective on the experiences of mankind. We envision our own way in finding a direction for future improvements.

Bhatta (2024) introduces *dohori* song as a live traditional Nepali way of poetic storytelling of love, emotion, sorrow, hope and consciousness. It is a fresh approach to narrate events. She especially assumes for understanding the caring work of Nepalese grandmothers. She draws out deeper stories and reflects real emotions to outline hidden knowledge from older immigrant grandmothers. *Dohorigit*, culturally rooted methods with indigenous and minority groups, makes sure their voices do not get lost. Stirr (2010) perceives *dohori* singing competition on Radio Nepal and views how these improvised folk songs turn into a kind of poetic dialogue. She expresses, "A live *dohori* competition at Radio Nepal was almost as radical as the recent political changes. *Dohori*, a genre of improvised song duels between men and women, is problematically associated with many aspects of low culture. It celebrates female sexuality against dominant social norms, and its lyrics are sometimes risqué" (p. 300). She portrays *dohori* is not just about music, and it sparks a sense of collective hope. It opens the door to public space and allows people share political views.

The subjectivity of singers enables audiences to draw upon longstanding narrative tradition. Payerhin (2012) scrutinizes protest songs singing for pain, and explores how music channels advocate suffering into social mobilization. The songs foster hope and political awareness. They inspire activism to demonstrate the authoritative role of songs in shaping societal and cultural resistance movements. Subedi (2022) explores that the Nepalese musical heritage, the contributions of prominent musicians, and how these cultural memories reflect broader social, political, and historical contexts. Narrative reformulation emotionally persuades and stimulates personas' thoughts and behaviors. It enriches

emotional transformation within the narrative sphere of audiences. This shift from singers to listeners conveys arguments as a journey to alter the social assumption. Shrestha et al. (2021) analyze Trishna Gurung's lyric and foregrounds the complexities and marginalization of subaltern groups. They assert how Gurung's music expresses resistance, resilience, and socio-political critique in Nepalese society.

Dohori song highlights three main points. First, emotional fluctuation occurs as readers engage with a story. A narrative aspect of it begins with tragic events that elicit empathy or sadness, and gradually can evoke positive emotions. This emotional shift from pain to hope increases narrative impact and creates a deeper connection between the readers and the song's message. Second, it emphasizes the link between emotional shift and persuasion. When readers emotionally engage with singers and their characters, it fosters trust in the narrative agreement with its underlying messages. This trend demonstrates that narrative technique can enhance logical argumentation to affect both the mind and heart of the audience. Third, the type of emotional shift twists to impress, promote reflection, and embed the message more deeply in the mind.

Stirr (2009) previews Nepali *dohori* as a dialogic song. Its exchange shapes migration, gender relations, and national identity. She states how singing performances negotiate masculinity and femininity to voice migrant experiences and imagine the nation. She argues, "Making *dohori* into an official symbol of national essence required situating it in the center, rather than at the margins, of cultural life" (p. 208). The *dohori* performance stage becomes a public space where singers contest for power, identity, hope, and social change through improvised debate. Her observation establishes a link between musical practice to politics, economy, and life. It combines theoretical insights with presenting stories in controlled settings to measure emotional responses. The emotional shifts in narratives can influence not just entertainment experiences but also social, moral, and political attitudes. Overall, the study confirms the importance of emotional experiences in narrative persuasion. By understanding and utilizing emotional shifts, writers, educators, and communicators can more effectively deliver messages. Narrative reconstruction, therefore, functions as a powerful tool not only for storytelling but also for establishing emotional connection and promoting reflection, learning, and potential shift in behavior.

Songs as a Sight of *Dukha*

Contemporary Nepali *dohori* song of sorrow acknowledges the socio-cultural and political problems. It includes the real complexities of sadness and separation. As in the 1990s/2008, *dohori* song has remarked the deep observation of subaltern people. In this song, taken from "*maile chhoeko pani chaldaina*" (The drinking water I touched is considered unusable), it talks about the caste hierarchy that brings separation between males and females. Raju Pariyar and Bishnu Majhi portray:

Keto: Kolte pheryo yugle ratko/ Kura chha jata ra bhatako.

Yo juniko timro mai hu ni/ Kun papile banaya achhuto timro jat chhunai nhuni.

(Boy: The age has changed overnight/ Yet talk of caste and food remains.

In this time, I'm meant to be yours/ What sinner created this untouchability —your caste must not even be touched.)

Keti: Yugle pherer bhaina/ Samajbata chhoichhito ga'chhaina.

Agenako ago baldaina/ Hajur thulo ma pare sano jat maile chhoeko pani chhaildaina.

(Girl: Even if the age has changed sides/ Untouchability hasn't gone from society.

Fire still won't burn in the hearth/ Your caste high, I'm low—the water I touch is still forbidden.)

Keta: Nara-nari sansarma dyita jat/Aru sab hunmanchhema pakshapat.

Yo juniko timro mai hu ni/ Kun papile banaya achhuto timro jat chhunai nhuni.

(Boy: In the world there are only two castes Man and woman—everything else is human-made discrimination. In this time, I'm meant to be yours/ What sinner created this untouchability —your caste must not even be touched.)

Keti: Chhoddiu aba samajle thukchha/ Mero karan hajurko shir jhukchha.

Agenako ago baldaina Hajur thulo ma pare sano jat maile chhoeko pani chhaildaina.

(Girl: Let it go now, society will spit on us/ As of mine, and your head will bow down in shame. In this time, I'm meant to be yours/ What sinner created this untouchability —your caste must not even be touched. (My translation)

This *dohori* between Pariyar and Bishnu Majhi expresses deep sorrow rooted in caste discrimination despite claims of socio-political transformation even after 2008. The boy laments that although time has changed 'overnight,' inflexible ideas of caste and purity still control life. This man-made division in terms of caste has separated lovers. Rasik (2010) notes, "Nepali musical sphere because of its innovative singing and unique presentation" (p. 349) reflects suffering and pain. His assumption advocates pain and sorrow due to caste division. Baral (2022) recognizes, "[Nepali song] is against exploitation, economic inequality, and injustice" (p. 440). The girl's response carries heavier sorrow. She accepts society is cruel, and the stigma persists and harms both of them. Her words reflect submission, and the fear of social shame brings internalized suffering. Gramsci (2005) recalls, "The 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige and consequence confidence which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production" (p. 54). Together, their exchange of words exposes emotional loss, suppressed love, and the enduring injustice that turns intimacy into pain rather than hope.

The *dohori* song of Phulmaya K.C. and Badri Pangenj emotionally expresses the loss of people in the political movement from 1996-2006 and appeal to the leaders to bring change in the country. Stirr (2010, p. 310) incorporates the *dohori* songs to express the idea of sorrow as:

Keta: dherai roe ama ra buwa/ kati bhae baisaima viduwa

(Boy: Mothers and fathers cried so much/so many were widowed in the prime of youth)

Keti: kakhai rittiyo sir bhayo khali/ naya nepal bancha ki yas pali

(Girl: Children were lost, heads wiped clean [of vermilion, a sign of marriage]/will there be a new Nepal this time?)

This exchange of words exposes collective sorrow and suffering caused by conflict. The boy utters people's grief and loss of their women who have been widowed too early. In the words of Strinati (2005), "Gramsci defines ... the dominant groups in society, including fundamentally but not exclusively the ruling class, maintain their dominance by securing the 'spontaneous consent' of subordinate groups, including the working class" (p. 153). The girl excavates the sadness of orphaned children and women who have lost their identity. She questions about a 'new Nepal' reflects fragile hope. She asks whether such suffering finally leads to peace, justice, and socio-political transformation. The song demands justice for the destitute. It reminds those people who were imprisoned and those who never returned, and urge accountability and hope for a new Nepal.

The next song on "*bharaiya daiko bisaune bhari, sunamaya dadai ko chautari*" (The porter's heavy load resting on the hill) is about a story of life among poor peasants in the countryside. This song deals with the bonding of a Nepali society. The song revolves around the life of porters, who have to bear heavy loads to make a living:

Keta: Bhariya daiko bisaune bhari/suna maya dadai ko chautari.

Kohi hune malika ta kohi hune das/kina hunna daharatima sabilai ekainas?

Kohile garne aish aram kohile ghamda dhasni/Kohi basne sadak peti kohi mahalma basne.

(Boy: The porter's heavy load resting on the hill/listen, my love, at the way on the hill. Some [people] become masters, others become servants/why can't everyone be equal in hardship? Some enjoy luxury and comfort, others strain under heavy loads/some live on the roadside, others live in palaces.)

Keti: Kaphnai parne barsha hiiud jhari ra asina/aphnai jyan palnai parne bagaudai pasina.

Sahuko bhari nabokesi chaina khana gharma/budheskalma bachnu paryo rasi, namlo bharna.

(Girl: We must endure summer, winter, rain, and hail/sweating endlessly just to feed our families.

Without carrying the moneylender's load/there is no food at home.

In old age, we are forced to survive/with ropes and head-straps as our only support. (My translation)

The song is physically taxing. Bishnu Khatri and Bima Kumari Dura depict the condition of hard work of poor people. There is a sense of 'sorrow, hope, and collective consciousness.' The lyric of the song vibrantly describes the countryside, which features places such as the resting *chautari*, located on the hill. It connects to adapt and shape the socio-political environment, which represents the

material world in *dohori* song. From this perspective, this song does not stand apart from the material landscape, and it operates through underlying relationships. Gramsci (1996) advocates, “It may be said that spontaneity is therefore characteristic of the ‘history of subaltern classes’ and indeed of their most marginal and peripheral elements” (p. 196). The ideological connection with the song of ‘porter’ establishes a relationship between society and social existence largely through its Marxist inheritance. The ideology of the ruling class grasped human beings as mechanisms to dominate ordinary people. Barker (2002) states that at present, capitalism is fundamentally transformed and functions as the primary revolutionary force of contemporary society. Within this framework, resistance is situational and strategic rather than a total or revolutionary tool. It is increasingly evident that even commodities themselves can become sites through which such resistance is expressed.

Rhetoric of Hope in *Dohori* Songs

This song of Phulmaya K.C. emotionally continues in the vein of both mourning and hope. It has an ideological connection with the happiness of Nepali people. The singer reminds listeners that much work remains to be done (Stirr, 2010, p. 311):

Phulmaya: Lyaunai parcha garibko satta/kohai jelma chan kohai ajhai bepatta

(Girl: We must bring the poor their due/some are in jail, some are still disappeared.)

The song circles back to theme introduced in ‘Song as a sight of *dukkha*.’ K.C. moves from remembering and celebrating the 2006 People’s Movement to reflecting on unfulfilled dreams, loss, uncertainty, and despair. It also suggests ways of dealing with the power of people to address the problems. This feeling of a singer, as Hunt (1990) argues, “Gramsci identified counter-hegemony, that is, the process by which subordinate classes challenge the dominant hegemony and seek to supplant it by articulating an alternative hegemony” (p. 312). Otherwise, it becomes increasingly harsh and violent. In the song, “Baburam *naya Nepal kuna charako naam*” (Baburam, ‘*Naya Nepal*’—the name of which bird is that) glorifies the rhetoric of hope. The singers Khuman Adhikari and Devi Gharti Magar sing as:

Keti: Teej aayo didi bahini maita jaane chataaro/haan didi bahini ho geet mai jhataaro.

Baburam naya Nepal kun chara ko naam.

(Girl: Teej has approached, sisters, rushing back to their natal home. Come on, sisters, let’s brush away our worries with a song. Baburam, ‘*Naya Nepal*—the name of which bird is that?’)

Keta: *Desh dukheko belaama mann maa shaanti chhaina/lau sun na Jamuna garchhu bayaan.*

Ae, Jamuna parkha Nepal banchha namuna.

(Boy: When the country is in pain, there is no peace in the heart. Listen, Jamuna, let me speak my mind. Oh, Jamuna, wait—Nepal will become a model.)

Keti: *Ae budha baba-aama ko naya Nepal herne mann/doko boki Batuli ko choli pherne kaam.*

Baburam naya Nepal kun chara ko naam.

(Girl: Oh dear, even the old parents long to see a *naya* Nepal. Carrying baskets, changing Batuli's blouse—endless chores. Baburam, 'Naya Nepal—the name of which bird is that?')

*Keta: Batuli ra Suntali Harke yaha samaan/haami Nepal banaauchhau chinta na maan.
Ae Jamuna parkha Nepal banchha namuna.*

(Boy: Batuli and Suntali, Harke—we are all the same here. We will build Nepal ourselves, don't worry. Oh, Jamuna, wait—Nepal will become a model. (My translation)

This song bears a dialogue between a girl and a boy that reflects everyday life, hope, and political transformation in Nepal. The girl's lines are rooted in *Teej*, a festival of women who desire to go to their natal homes. Through her recurring question—'Baburam, *Naya* Nepal, the name of which bird is that?'—she exposes doubt and irony about the abstract political promises of 2006. The boy answers with the pain of suffering and optimism to assure the Nepali people. He persuades her that Nepal will become a model country. Together, their songs connect generational hopes to suggest that common people themselves should be a part of 'New Nepal.'

Songs enhance human emotions, feelings, and hope. People across the world merge music and songs in every phase of their life. Street (2012) assumes, "the potential of music to constitute identities and communities . . . create organisation and institutions . . . embody ideals and values" (p. 173). With a nod to the value of emotional balance, the singers convincingly endorse the transformational condition of building a 'New Nepal'. The female singer's final couplet contrasts with the ideas of the male singer. The event blends multiple layers of social and political interaction, balancing the traditional conventions of *hope* and *consciousness*. This dynamic performance mediates diverse emotional engagements and reflects the rhetoric of hope in *dohori* song. This *dohori* song (2006) bears the glory of hope from the album "*ki laas chahiyo ki saas chahiyo*" (We want living bodies, or corpses). Here, Bishnu Khatri and Devi Gharti Magar picturize the situation of a decade-long conflict as:

*Keta: Timra pani babuaama holaan, timra pani baalbachcha holaan. Timilaai tyastai paare bhane/
samjhanaamaa kati rolaan?
Maanchhele nai maanchhelai kasto byabhaar garna sakne/ Raavan raakshasle jastai Sitalai
jastai haran garne.
Kati kathor hundo raichha yo maanchheko mann/ki saas chaahiyo ki laas chaahiyo, khai uni
kahaan chhan?*

(Boy: You have parents too, you have children too. If the same cruelty were done to you, how much would they cry, even in memory?

How can one human treat another like this?/Like a demon Ravana abducting Sita. How hard the human heart can become. We want living bodies, or corpses, where they are now?)

*Keti: Sabaile bolna paaunu parchha, kuraa kholna paaunu parchha/Janatale chaahе jasto naulo
bihaani aunu parchha.*

*Na ta yahaan daaile jitchha, na ta yahaan bhaile haarchha/Thaaha chhaina Nepaalile Nepaalilai
kina maarchha.*

*Kati kathor hundo raichha yo maanchheko mann/Ki saas chaahiyo ki laas chaahiyo, khai uni
kahaan chhan?*

(Girl: Everyone should have the right to speak, the right to open their hearts and tell the truth.

A new dawn must come, shaped by (people) will?

Here, no elder truly wins/and no younger one truly loses. I don't know why Nepalese kill another Nepali/how hard the human heart can become. We want living bodies, or corpses, where they are now? (My translation)

This dialogic song turns suffering into a quiet and persistent rhetoric of hope. The boy begins by appealing to shared humanity. He reminds the listeners that family, memory, and grief bind everyone. His words are not accusatory. They carry the hope that empathy can still awaken even the hardest of hearts. The girl's reaction transforms this moral appeal into a collective vision of political transformation. By insisting on the right to speak and welcoming a 'new dawn,' she reclaims hope as something shaped by the people themselves. Even amid violence and loss, the *dohori* song refuses silence. Spivak's critical concept incorporates on subaltern representation (1988). She contends, "Subaltern cannot speak" (p. 308), representation is "re-presentation in art and philosophy" (p. 275), and observes, "The intellectuals' solution is not to abstain from representation" (p. 285). It suggests that hope comes from representation in the belief that Nepalese need not remain enemies to one another.

In the *dohori* song, hope is exalted as an indispensable emotional and cultural element in people's lives. *Dohori* song has long been linked with sadness, enjoyment, pleasure, love relationships, and change in politics. These aspects combine to foster a sense of hope that inspires the human heart and mind. In this way, through dialogue in singing, the *dohori* song forms a platform where hopes, emotional expression, and communal enjoyment are freely aired and shared. Hope is clearly manifested during communal gatherings on *dohori* stage publicly. In such social environments, *dohori* song provides an outlet where people share their feelings and emotional expressions to promote social and emotive togetherness and belonging. In singing and replying to the singing, people demonstrate hopes for connection and continuity in social and cultural traditions. The performance takes place in groups of girls and boys, in semi-remote natural and urban areas such as hillsides, banks, forests, or *mela* (fair). The lyrical dialogue focuses on persuasion, challenge, and wit.

Collective Consciousness

In his theory, Sen (2009) resists that questions of justice focus, "First, on assessments of social realizations, that is, on what actually happens (rather than merely on the appraisal of institutions and arrangements); and second, on comparative issues of enhancement of justice (rather than trying to identify perfectly just arrangements)" (p. 410). Hence, "social realizations are assessed in terms of capabilities that people actually have" (p. 19), and injustice is analyzed through evaluating individual

deficiency. This *dohori* song bears the magnificence of collective consciousness in “*Ki laas chahiyo ki saas chahiyo*” (We want living bodies, or corpses). Here, the singers Bishnu Khatri and Devi Gharti Magar portray the situation of a decade-long conflict (2006) as:

Keta: Aparaadhiko dhaakchhop hune, kasto ho yo deshko kaanun/aatmahatyaa hundai haina, kata lage uniharu le jaanun? Nidho haamilai chaahiyeko chha, jasari ni yasai paali/haina bhane jagaune chhau Mechi Mahakaali. Kati kathor hundo raichha yo maanchheko man/ki saas chaahiyo ki laas chaahiyo, khai uni kahaan chhan?

(Boy: What kind of law is this country’s that shields criminals?

It isn’t a suicide—where did they take her, let them say.

We need justice, somehow, this very time;

Otherwise, we will awaken the land from Mechi to Mahakali.

How hard the human heart can become.

We want living bodies, or corpses, where they are now?)

Keti: Na ta kohoiko suraksha bho, na kohoiko bhalo pani/jata heryo andhakar janmiyeko thalo pani Samvidhan sabha basi aba, yaha kehi hola/tesai kher jana dina hunna sable unko cholo. Kati kathor hundo raichha yo manchheko man/ki saas chahiyo ki laas chahiyo khai uni kaha chhan?

(Girl: No one’s safe, no one’s well-being either;

Wherever you look, even the place of birth is steeped in darkness.

Let the Constituent Assembly run—now something must happen there;

We must not let their sacrifice go to waste.

How hard the human heart can become.

We want living bodies, or corpses, where they are now? (My Translation)

These are the lines that resonate with the collective consciousness of Nepali people. They express the struggle of the people against injustice, dignity, and accountability. The boy asks that the law shield criminals. This line is an expression of collective exasperation from the village levels to the city. It shapes identities and demands accountability. It embodies values and serves as a vital source for understanding history and cultural identities. In conceptualizing to the state’s circumstance, Althusser (2014) asserts, “The state apparatus, which defines the state as a repressive force of execution and intervention ‘at the service of the dominant classes’ in the class struggle waged by the bourgeoisie and its allies against the proletariat, is well and truly the state, and this well and truly defines its basic ‘function’” (p. 70). With this sense, the singers appeal to people to awaken themselves from Mechi to Mahakali is an expression of the unity of the nation. These are the lines that remind us that injustice in one place is an injury to the rest of people. The voice of the girl is an expression of the collective insecurity that even one’s homeland is a dark and insecure place. The reference to the Constituent Assembly gives hope that this institution will still address the pain of people. The refrain that begins with ‘we want living bodies, or corpses,

where they are now? ' is the collective expression that strengthens moral burden.

There is a perfect blend of music, nature, and expression to create a deep sense of sorrow, pleasure, and consciousness. Badrii Pangen and Anjana Gurung (2007) voice on the album “*Janatako sasan*” (People’s rule) to raise the voice of political consciousness as:

Keta: Mādhav Nepal, Girijā, Prachanda, Bāburām —

Viśrām lina na khoj sakioko chhaina kam.

Ajhāi nirankus dhlyā 'chhain hai.

(Boy: Madhav Nepal, Giriya, Prachanda, Baburam—

do not take rest; the work is not yet finished.

Authoritarianism has not yet fallen, you see.)

Keta-Keti: Janatako sasan chalya chhaina hai.

Ajhāi nirankus dhlyā 'chhain hai.

(Boy & Girl: The people’s rule has not yet begun.

Authoritarianism has not yet fallen, you see.)

Keta: Bhutanilai ghar farkau, kamaiyalai jagga chahiyo.

Chuwachut antya garau jati duḥkh paunu paiyo.

Ajhāi loktantra a 'ko chhaina hai.

(Boy: Send the Bhutanese back home; the *kamaiyas* need land.

Let us end untouchability, after all the suffering endured.

Democracy has not yet arrived, you see.)

Keta-Keti: Janatale bhane jhai bh'eko chhaina hai.

Janatako sasan chalya chhaina hai.

(Boy & Girl: Things have not happened as the people wished.

The people’s rule has not yet begun. (My translation)

This is an impassioned political statement that expresses the awakening awareness of people since 2006. In pointing to prominent leaders, it holds them directly accountable and reminds them that the political struggle is yet to be completed. ‘The authoritarianism has not fallen’ is also repeated in this anthem to indicate the collective consciousness of the people. Demands for repatriation of Bhutanese refugees, land for *kamaiyas*, and ‘an end to untouchability’ demonstrate that democracy is tied to social justice and equality.

The idea that comes in the *dohori* song at the individual level connects heart and mind. The singers sing from a personal position to answer the queries of social existence. Jacobson (1999) asserts, “Formulaic, conventional couplets can express personal, individual sentiments, but the slippage between the personal and formulaic is always implicit” (p. 343). The *dohori* game played in such lyrical dialogues

is definitely not flirting. It can symbolize the hope and dreams of the young generation for possibilities. The competitiveness, combined with the cheerfulness, evident in the *dohori* song, symbolizes the hope in dialogue rather than conflict. During performances, people identify and highlight the flaws of others and turn them into lyrics to be sung. Indeed, instead of hurting feelings, *dohorigit* brings laughter and joy to everyone. It embodies the musical rhythm and singing performance.

Conclusion

This paper shows that the Nepali *dohori* song is a dynamic site for the representation of sorrow (*dukkha*), hope (*asa*), and collective consciousness. Drawing on cultural theory, Marxist perspectives, and subaltern studies, it establishes that *dohori* is not merely an aesthetic or entertaining folk form of song but a lived socio-political practice embedded in everyday Nepali experience. The improvised dialogues between the male/female singers translate individual grief, social inequality, and political frustration into the shared social space of *dohori*. Turning private voices into a public performance that is collectively read across different shared experiences of everyday life in Nepal. A close analysis of narratives articulate experiences of caste discrimination, loss of people during conflict times, exploitation in the society, experiences of women's pain and inequality. The failure to realize the problems shows that the affective politics of hope is inscribed across the dialogic performance act. It addresses both the singing voices and the assembled crowds in the public sphere of the performance act to negotiate the dialectics between pain and hope, silence and speech, and darkness and light.

In this public performance act, the dialogic song inscribes the idea of political transformation negotiates the differences between the singing voices to create different possibilities across different social relations. The *dohori* song enables pain to turn into hope that forms the collective consciousness to resonate with Gramsci's notion of counterhegemonic consciousness. Performed in both professional competitions and spontaneous communal settings, *dohori* song creates alternative social sphere where hierarchies can be questioned, and relationships reimagined. In this sense, *dohori* performances function as affective public spheres where historical memory, social realization, and future imagination intersect. Ultimately, Nepali *dohori* song should be read as archives of lived history and instruments of social mediation that illuminate the intimate politics of everyday life. It affirms their enduring capacity to translate private sorrow into collective hope and transformative consciousness in contemporary Nepal.

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