

Heir to a Silent Song

Two Rebel Women of Nepal

Barbara Nimri Aziz

अन्य कीलमा त्यो घुसले फेटाउनला घाँडा,
बडा कष्ट मिलि जाला त्यो घुस निस्की जाँदा।
महिले मात्र पचेको छ भरे फले छैन,
सम्झि राख सत्य बचन् भुसो हुने छैन।

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Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies

Tribhuvan University

Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal

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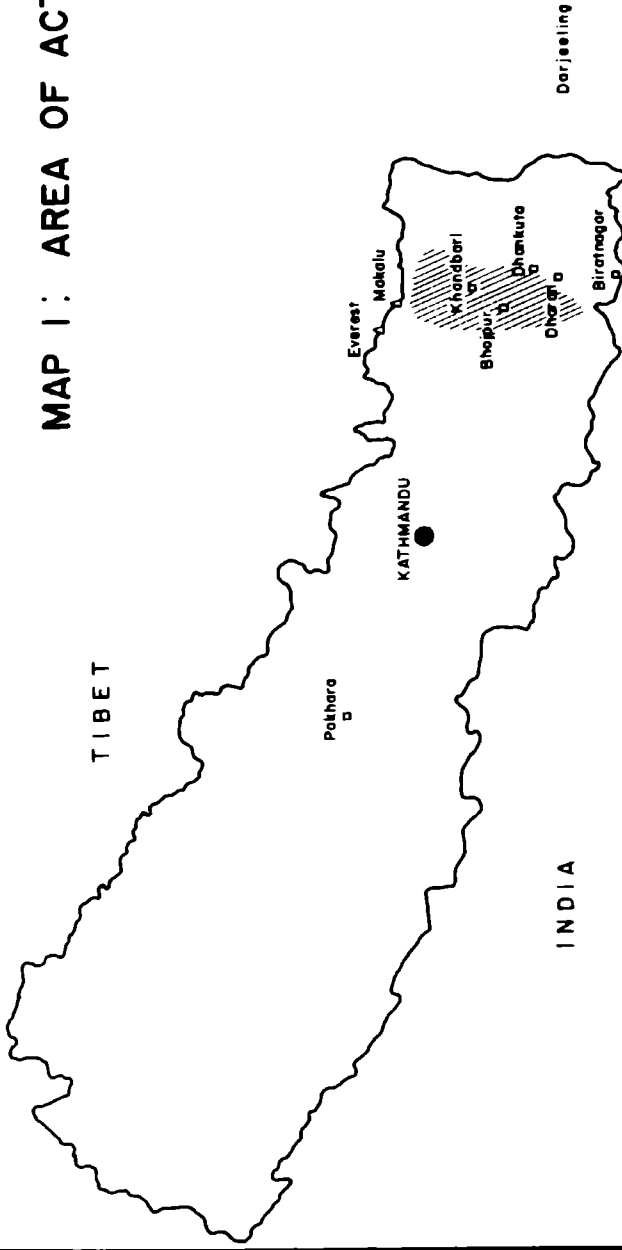
To
My Sitti Mariam Aziz and
my mother Nimri Aziz


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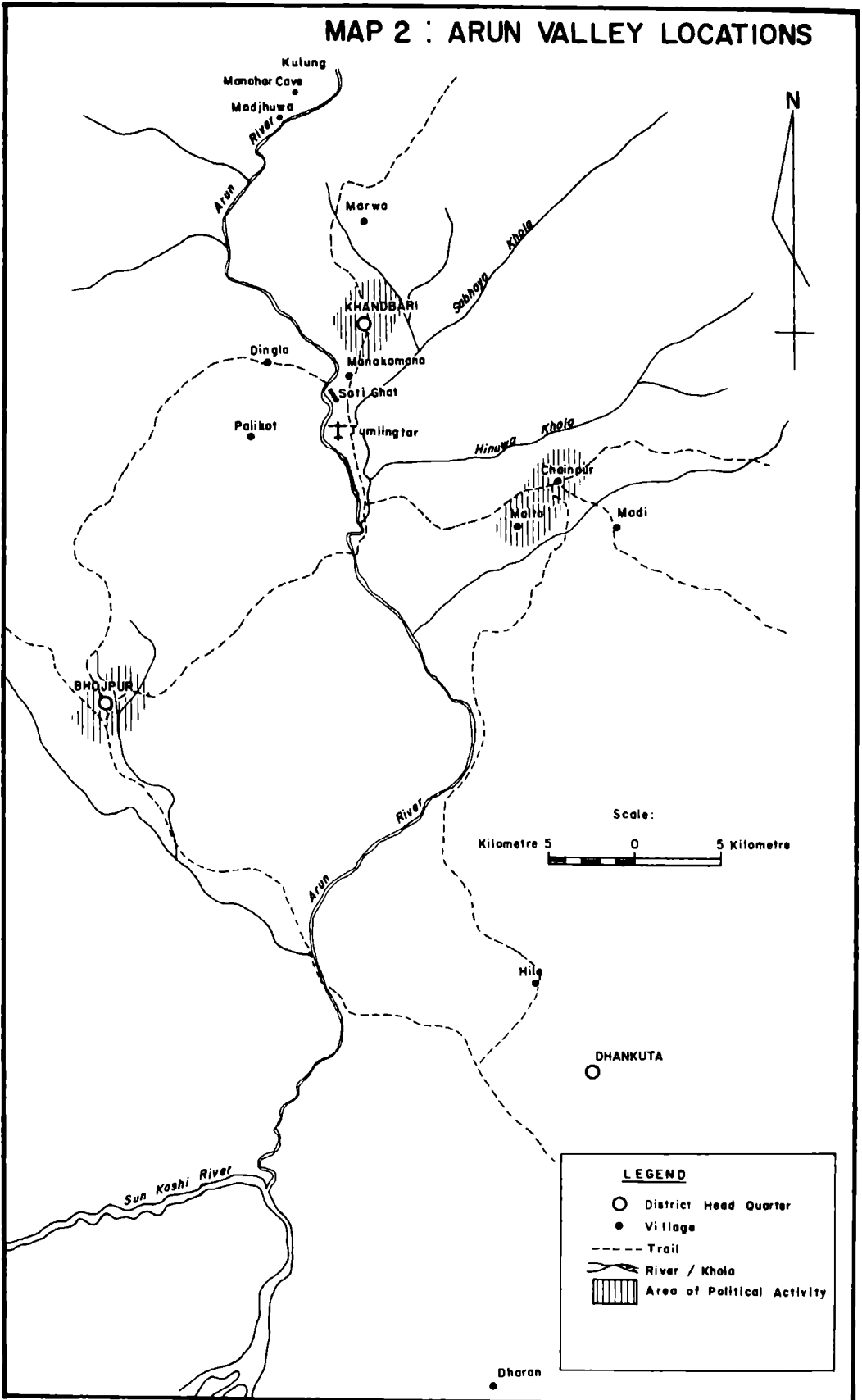
NEPAL

MAP I: AREA OF ACTIVITY

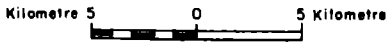


 area of activity

MAP 2 : ARUN VALLEY LOCATIONS



Scale:



LEGEND

- District Head Quarter
- Village
- - - Trail
- ~ River / Khola
- ▨ Area of Political Activity

FOREWORD

I am privileged to publish *Heir to a Silent Song: Two Rebel Women of Nepal* by Barbara Nimri Aziz and release it on the 29th anniversary of our Centre. I think it is a right occasion to recapitulate the story behind the publication of this book.

On the 27th anniversary of CNAS, on July 17, 1999 Dr Barbara Nimri Aziz's private collection of 603 books was formally handed over to Mr Naveen Prakash Jung Shah, Vice Chancellor of Tribhuvan University, who was the chief guest on the occasion, for the CNAS Documentation and Library. The collection includes the books on Nepalese Studies, Himalayan Studies, Tibetan Studies, Women Studies, Indian Studies, Chinese Studies, Japanese Studies, and Anthropology and Sociology. From the time Dr Aziz left the academy, she did not consider the use of these books. Dr Harka Gurung, her long-time friend, suggested the collection be donated to CNAS. Dr Ramesh Dhungel, who was then doing his doctorate degree at Columbia University, was instrumental in bringing the collection from New York to Kathmandu.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Harka Gurung mentioned that Dr Aziz had written the story of Shakti Yogamaya, a woman of exceptional ability, directly challenged the Rana regime and the Brahmanically-determined power structure prevailing in Nepal. The extraordinary movement and the personage of this rebel woman were almost entirely are erased from the history of Nepal. Dr Gurung suggested the publication of Dr Aziz's work would throw light on the obscured history and assist social scientists in exploring the role of women and peasant people in women studies in Nepal. Therefore, then and there, CNAS took on a commitment to publish the book.

On the 28th anniversary of CNAS, on July 16, 2000, Dr Aziz handed over the manuscript of her work to Chief Guest, Vice Chancellor of Tribhuvan University for the publication. Speaking on the occasion, she expressed her happiness and gratitude to CNAS for undertaking the publication her work.

Today, on the 29th anniversary of CNAS, I am highly honoured to have this wonderful opportunity to have this book released by Chief Guest, Vice Chancellor.

29th Anniversary of CNAS
July 16, 2001

Prof. Dr Tritha P. Mishra
Executive Director

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many women and men were involved in helping me with this study and with the preparation of this book. First and foremost, I thank the women at Mankamana: Bhaktini Aama in whose home I slept: Mahadidi (Vishnu Maya Dahal) whose recall of the details of Durga Devi's life in the courts were passionate and exhilarating, and so generously shared; Manamaya, expert in the *hazurbani* songs of Yogamaya, who insisted I be told all the details. She taught me with humor and patience; Mata (Damodara), head of the hermitage, who received me with complete trust and supervised my initiation. Altogether, thirty-two women embraced me, fed and sheltered me and made me want to stay and study with them.

I could not have accomplished this work without the dedication of two assistants, Jangbu Sherpa and Dharma Shrestha. Both young men were patient, loyal translators and supporters. It was Dharma who suggested I seek out Parizat, a contemporary poet in Kathmandu with a message similar to that of Yogamaya's. Parizat's trust and assistance were essential to my ongoing work in Manakamana. From her own dedicated circle came Uttam Pant, Murari Aryal, and Binti Subba. Aryal sought out followers of Yogamaya in Kathmandu and arranged for me to interview retired general Mahadev Shamsheer Rana, whose troops had arrested Yogamaya and her followers forty-five years earlier. Uttam Pant interviewed Lochan Nidhi Tiwari who was a first-hand witness and devotee of Yogamaya and who verified details about her activities. Murari Aryal worked with Parizat to prepare the translations of the *hazurbani* into English. Aryal's excellent translations made it possible for me to more fully comprehend Yogamaya's art and her political scope. I feel especially honoured by the quality of their work and dedication to this research. My thanks also go to writer Khagendra Sangraula for his additional translations of *hazurbani* which we include in the text.

I am indebted to Janaklal Sharma. Mr. Sharma, a historian at the National Museum of Antiquities, was generous with his research, and translated a passage from his book for my use.

This book is not simply the result of my visits to the Arun Valley over a period of five years in the early 1980s. It is the accumulation of my adventures in a long career and my enduring, enriching friendships in Nepal. Personal associates in Nepal's academic community with whom I have worked are Dor Bahadur Bista, K.P. Malla, Prayag Raj Sharma, Subhadra Subha and Ballav Mani Dahal. Most of us have been friends since 1971, and have enjoyed each other's companionship both in Nepal, and at various seminars. This includes the first, Seminar of Nepal and Himalayan Studies, convened in London in 1973 by Christoph Fürer-Haimendorf, my former professor and the doyen of imperial-Nepalese studies in the West.

From the outset of my career, I have enjoyed and benefitted from the boundless support, confidence and advice of Harka Gurung. We began our association when I was a graduate student in London in 1969 and our collaboration continues into the present with the completion of this book. Gurung contributed to my intellectual development in ways that are immeasurable and no words of thanks would be sufficient for his thirty-two years of friendship. Harka Gurung is an idealist but also a pragmatic man, and he saw to it that I had more than moral support, in the hills as well as in the academy. From the beginning of our discussions about Yogamaya, Gurung voiced the utmost confidence in the women at Manakamana. For him, they were the true custodians of this history. Both he and Parizat were especially insightful about their people and their literature. They knew that Nepal was capable of producing a Yogamaya and Durga Devi. They had no difficulty accepting the widows' reports.

Dr. Gurung also introduced me to Dambar Bahadur Basnet, who, although we met only once, shared little-known details and his own personal impressions about Yogamaya with me. Basnet was a former minister who originated in Kulung, the same village where Yogamaya was born. Some of his own relatives perished with her and, although he was a child at the time, his memory of the rebel was clear.

Basnet was unique among officials I met in his admiration for Yogamaya's work. He provided me with the quote: *"I am not only aiming at that tyrant. My goal is Point Zero."* He also told me her reply to the young herdsman who confronted her at Tordhapur Cave in the mountains: *"I am not a god. I am the very one discarded and despised by society. As such, I am compelled to prove my innocence."*

Mark Oppitz, currently director of the Völkerkundemuseum in Zurich, Switzerland, and Mimi Church who worked with Save the Children Fund, were residents in Kathmandu during the 1980s. Both hosted me in their homes, allowing me the solitude to reflect and to rest after hard weeks of research. I am especially indebted to Oppitz for encouraging me to explore creative ways to articulate our adventures with the people of Nepal.

Numerous others hosted me – farmers whose names I did not know – during my work in Nepal as I walked from village to village. I learned about their lives as I witnessed them at work in their fields, passed them on the trails, and ate and slept inside their homes.

Two special people, Parizat and her sister Sukanya Waiba, helped me comprehend in political and economic terms what I observed on the Nepalese landscape. In Kathmandu, I sometimes slept over at their cottage, and while there, learned the stories and histories of the men and women who arrived to ask for help and advice. Sukanya is a remarkable woman for her dedication to her sister, but also for her own political efforts and commitment to helping the poor, and educating children. In her and Parizat's busy, welcoming home, I witnessed her deep compassion for her people. I shall always remember Sukanya's cheerfulness and warmth and I thank her for our many joyful evenings together.

Later, back in the United States, I also enjoyed a close personal association with Manjula Giri who was completing graduate studies at the City University of New York. We often spoke about the politics and economic conditions in her country, including the critical 1990 revolt and the formation of a new democracy, and I learned a great deal from her about international politics in general. Being able to critically discuss the western women's movement with her was also important for my development. Fellow anthropologist Ramesh

Dhungal is another Nepali scholar who I knew in New York. He has been helpful in many ways. I also benefitted from my long association with journalist and publisher Kanak Dixit whose advice about journalism was especially valuable when I decided to move into that field.

Critical stages of this work was funded by various research organizations and I thank them for that support. A National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship financed my first two visits to the Arun Valley; awards from the American Philosophical Society and the American Council of Learned Societies helped me work on the translations of the poems and related research. From 1985 to 1986, I was hosted by the Tokyo University of Foreign Affairs Institute for Languages and Cultures of Africa and Asia. Their generous visiting professorship offered me the time and environment to ponder over my findings and experiment with alternatives to a pure 'scholarly' presentation of anthropology. I especially want to thank former director Najimi Kitamura and Shigeru Ijima for making that professorship possible. Thanks also to Hidehiro Okada and Junko Miyawaki in Tokyo, and to my longtime colleague E. Gene Smith of the Library of Congress who resided in India for many years while I was working there and in Nepal. Smith is one of the few 'Orientalists' who understood the quintessential power of songs in a people's history. He encouraged me to follow the 'traces,' however faint they seemed, in order to move into the heart of a culture.

I had help from others who freely gave their time to read various versions of the manuscript: Gabrielle Burton, Pat Caplan, Lionel Caplan, Patricia Graham-Collier, Veronica Golos, John Hitchcock, Ron David, M.B. Naqvi, Barbara Soros, Suzi Tharu, and Janice Willis. To all of them I owe my sincere thanks, and especially to Helen Giambruni for her attention to the manuscript and her encouragement in the early states of this project. Final preparation of the manuscript for publication was facilitated by Nirmal Man Tuladhar of CNAS, Tribhuvan University. His humour, grace and help with important final details made what may otherwise be a tense and painful process, a delight. He and his wife Padma also hosted me at their home in Kathmandu while I prepared the book for printing. I thank him for his kindness and support.

In the late 1980s, my membership in John O. Killins writer's workshop at Medger Evers College in Brooklyn, New York was important in my development and I am indebted to John Killins for inviting me, and to Anne Wilson, Bertram Baisden and other members of the workshop.

Much work is still needed so that we know the complete histories of Yogamaya and Durga Devi. To encourage ongoing interest in Yogamaya we have included one volume of *hazurbani* in its original Nepali edition as an appendix to this text. I hope all the *hazurbani* can be recovered and translated and that court records will come to light before long, so that other activists can expand this preliminary work and provide us with a more thorough account of this phase in Nepal's history. This is a task which only Nepalese people can do. And I am especially heartened to see so many Nepalese activists and scholars presently pursuing the history of Yogamaya. A new publication *Poet Yogamaya – Pioneer in Social Protest* (see Further Readings), devoted to the history of the Yogi and reformer, was launched on July 12, 2000, her birth anniversary in Kathmandu.

Many of the women at Manakamana who helped me, have since passed on to join their master in heaven. Parizat too passed away, in 1993. I am sorry they are not here to see this book in print, but I am certain they understood my commitment and were confident I would do my part in keeping their legacy.

Barbara Nimri Aziz

SOME BASIC FACTS ABOUT NEPAL

Cultural

Nepal's 21 million people are a highly diverse population. Several religions are practiced in Nepal. More than one hundred languages and dialects are spoken here. Nepali, the national language is used by almost everyone but it is the mother tongue of only 50.4% of the population.

Nepal is composed of three cultural/ecological belts: Tarai (plains along the south, bordering India), hills, and mountain regions bordering Tibet. Different combinations of people occupy each tract. Some tribes, such as Rai, who are the majority in the east, are not found in west Nepal. The Newar people, are mainly concentrated in Kathmandu valley, but live in towns throughout Nepal. Brahmin and Chhetri dominate across the west, but have penetrated through the hills – traditional homelands of the many hill tribes – bringing Hindu influence into the interior of the country.

The Arun valley of East Nepal is a dynamic region in terms of migration, trade, cultural diversity, land transfers, crop cultivation.

For centuries, Nepal has been subject to strong influence from India. Indian influence was furthered by the closure of Tibet after 1959, ending Tibet-Nepal trade and other trans-Himalayan interaction. Increased south-orientation stimulated the expansion of Hinduism. Caste, formerly strong only in the Tarai and the cities, has become characteristic of hill life in the past 200 years, although Nepal has been an official Hindu kingdom since the time of unification in 1769.

The national legal code, the Muluki Ain, adopted in 1854, was based on the classical Hindu caste laws of Manu. This law among other things defines rules of marriage and inheritance. Revised in 1963, its reform value for women was negligible.

Economic

Nepal opened to the world in 1951, and foreign influence grew steadily from then on. First, through mountaineering, then tourism, this affected Nepal's economy. Today, tourism is the primary industry in Nepal with handicraft, garment and carpet industries and mountain-related travel employing over 500,000. Most business is concentrated in Kathmandu valley which has swollen in size to about 1.3 million people. While the tourist related sector flourishes, agriculture, on which most Nepalese depend and where women are mainly employed, is in decline. Food production is decreasing and in contrast to ten years ago, Nepal is now a grain importer.

Huge amounts of foreign aid and expertise affect Nepal's economy and culture, though not always positively. Despite foreign aid the economy is in general decline and is characterized by corruption. Since 1990, 25,000 non-governmental organizations have set up in Nepal, with the declared aim of developing the country. An elitist class has emerged from corruption and foreign-aid largesse. Government schools are deteriorating and other social services are poor.

Political

Early period: In 1769, the country was united under Prithvi Narayan Shah, former ruler of Gorkha. The kingdom's political boundaries today are twice what they were then. Nepal was never colonized by a European or Asian power, although British influence in Nepal during its rule in India was strong. Nepal's then rulers, the Ranas, co-operated with the British. After that, Indian political influence over Nepal continued. The Shah family has long been the nominal head of state, but for 104 years, up to 1951, Nepal was ruled by a succession of autocratic Rana prime-ministers who passed on their office by primogeniture. Under their rule, vast areas of cultivatable land were taken from the original hill people to high caste Hindus. From 1951 to 1959 an elected parliament governed. In 1960, dictatorship returned, headed this time by the Shah king.

Democracy movement: In 1990, a non-violent movement of a coalition of opposition groups – conservative, communist and other

anti-monarchy parties– succeeded in overthrowing the dictatorship. Nepal became a constitutional monarchy. The king remained supreme commander of the army. The royal family also retained its estates and treasures, and other privileges.

1990 – present

A series of elected parliaments, sometimes led by a conservative, sometimes by a communist party, has governed Nepal. Citizens enjoy press freedom; ethnic-national activities are flourishing; there is renewed interest in ‘national’ languages.

1995 – present

A significant and growing Maoist movement has emerged and in five years has become a major political influence, with activities in at least 46 out of Nepal’s 75 districts. It is most active in the western, poorest regions of Nepal. There is wide sympathy in the country for their ideals, and negotiations are underway between Maoist leaders and the government.

Women

As citizens of a Hindu kingdom, Nepalese are subject to Hindu religious law which circumscribes women’s rights. In the 19th century, sati, widow immolation was banned. In 1963, the revised Muluki Ain, the national code, lowered from 45 to 35, the age when unmarried or widowed women are entitled to their property share. Child marriage was banned in 1963, but the practice is still common among orthodox Hindus. The Muluki Ain gives women inheritance and divorce rights; in practice, these are not commonly exercised. Abortion is against the law and women can be imprisoned for this. The rape of women goes often unpunished, and trafficking in women is significantly high. Polygamy, though not sanctioned by the Muluki Ain, is common, especially among higher caste Hindus. Members of parliament in the new democracy are known to have two or more wives.

Women were prominent in the democracy movement in 1990 and in earlier resistance campaigns. Women have held cabinet posts in successive governments since 1990. The new election law of 1991

stipulates that each party should include at least 5% in its women candidature. Women are active in parties but are not found in the leadership.

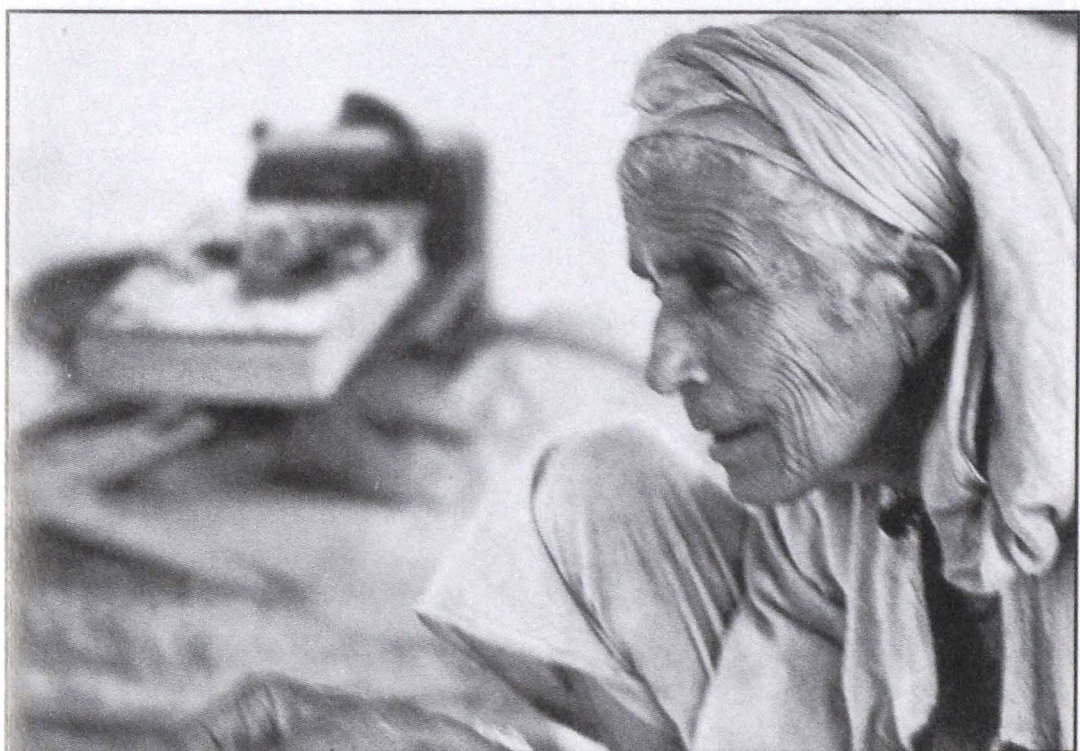
Being one of the poorest countries in the world, Nepal's women are correspondingly weak in economic power, literacy, health, and political clout. Women's organizations are numerous. Many donor agencies focus on women, but they seem to have had little impact.

***“I am not only aiming at that tyrant.
My goal is Point Zero.”***

Shakti Yogamaya



The author, left, with Damodara, right, at Manakamana



Sanyasi Nanda Devi, devotee to Yogamaya and resident of Manakamana



Damodara in meditation, Manakamana



Vishnumaya Dahal (Mahili Didi), left, companion of Durga Devi from 1948-1973, at her home in Manakamana with other sanyasi

PROLOGUE

Since 1970, I have been writing about the lives and the history of the inhabitants of Nepal and their neighbors. As a field ethnographer, I was trained to rely on observation and quantification of empirical facts. These 'facts' would be culled from thousands of interviews and observations of the minutiae of people's lives. The patterns that emerged would then be substantiated by local or academic authorities. Finally, they would be checked against the work of earlier anthropologists and historians.

Walking through the hills East Nepal in 1981, I came upon a history two rural women that would not fit the conventional methods of verification. Both women died some years before I arrived. Barely a trace remained of their achievements. Silence greeted my inquiries. The only people willing to talk to me were a group of religious ascetics (*bhaktini*), women leading isolated lives at a quiet riverside temple. Searching for 'facts,' I found myself involved with stories I could not verify by normal scientific means. The two women I wanted to learn more about had undertaken important political work. Their story was especially significant because they were dissidents, and fought for women's rights as well as justice for the poor and low caste people. Their names were Yogamaya and Durga Devi. These village women called for justice for their people long before the women's rights and civil rights movements in the West. They deserved attention. Their history emerged in the least expected place.

These Nepalese women's work was also significant because it revealed that these women, or anyone, could devise bold and innovative solutions to injustice. They confronted formidable opposition and oppressive regimes, and without international declarations or "human rights" commissions. In these tales there were less facts than in the slave narratives of African Americans. My main source of information was elderly women who, although once they had one been dissidents, seemed unlikely experts. I had to learn to trust their authority.

I had few facts to work with regarding the two deceased dissident leaders. The shrouded widows at the retreat where I would make my base, greeted me as if they had been waiting forty years to tell their story. But they did not begin by declaring "We were 2000 oppressed peasants, young and idealistic, looking for a feminist to get us out of our exploitative marriages, end patriarchy, criminalize wife abuse, and introduce a democracy giving us inheritance rights and equal pay." In their quiet way they began, step by step, to teach me about the lady they called Shakti Yogamaya and then about Durga Devi. Yogamaya employed religious ideals in a non-violent challenge to Nepal's Brahmanic patriarchy and the elitist structure the high-caste Hindus established across Nepal. She advocated social reforms for equality for women. Yogamaya was born in Kulung village, in the upper reaches of the Arun River. The center of her movement was at a nearby riverside clearing, Majhuwa. From there she dispatched appeals for justice to the then ruler of Nepal, Juddha Shamsheer Shah (1932-1945) who wielded absolute power. Although the number of Yogamaya's followers increased, the authorities dismissed her. But, after a decade long struggle, in 1940, it took an army to drive her to her death. Following her passing, the survivors moved down-river to a shrine, Manakamana. This is where I encountered the group of women who would tell me the story. Shrouded in threadbare saris, thin shawls covering their shaven heads, they seemed a stereotype of humility and passivity. Slipping barefoot along paths, repeating Hare Ram. Hare Ram. Ram Ram, Hare Ram, they prayed throughout the day. I did not suspect that they were anything but simple, illiterate women practicing what seemed like mindless devotion and servitude. Yet half a century earlier, when they were young and newly married with infants, these women had been political dissidents. From that remote mist-filled valley, they had challenged the authority of the palace in Kathmandu.

The second woman, Durga Devi, died only in 1973. She was from Palikot village, across the river from Manakamana. She pursued court cases, and waged a campaign against corrupt and indolent bureaucrats in local district offices. Petitioners regularly trudged to Durga's house seeking help, but she had no community of followers.

Although a widow, she was irreligious. She possessed legal skills and became an advocate for women's rights. She demanded competence and fairness from civil servants. She used the courts in a series of disputes. Both these women's voices had been quieted by the time I arrived in the valley in 1981. But they were loud enough for me to grasp.

Once convinced of their authenticity, assembling the stories about these Nepalese women had to be a People's history. This required different skills than the ones I had been trained in. I had to rid myself of my own patriarchal bias regarding who and what was an authority. I had to abandon the ideal of objectivity, an assumption that I as a scholar could witness things and events without any subjective feeling about them. Objectivity according to social science standards was an obstacle. I had to apply other criteria. This history demanded a devotion to my subjects – these two long-dead women. Early on, I knew the demands would be special.

On the first night at the shrine with the widows – I intended only to stop the night and then move on – I heard verses sung by the women. The next morning, the women inquired when I was born. Discovering it was within weeks of the death of their master, Yogamaya, they moved towards me. It was as if they had been waiting forty years to teach someone the story of the lady, Shakti Yogamaya.

Over a period of five years, from 1981 to 1986, I returned six times to the Arun Valley hermitage at Manakamana where these widows lived. My stays were almost like an apprenticeship. I gathered some details, then went away, seeking other authorities, only to return to sit with the widows and pursue my inquiries at their side, near the places where their champions had waged their struggles.

The essence of the reform movements I studied relied on the accounts of survivors. From them I gathered more traces of the story of the two women who had devoted their lives to opposing dictatorship, corruption and abuse, fighting for the basic rights of the peasantry and women. I collected the songs – verses which were the main medium of Yogamaya's campaign. The verses needed no historian to evaluate. One needed to know only the political realities of their time.

The need to gather the details of the story forced me to familiarize myself with the political history and economy of Nepal. Beyond the smiling Nepalese peasants carrying loads of grass through the forest; beyond the grunt of the porter plodding up a mountain; past the migration of children to the cities, right to the callousness of government clerks. I educated myself to comprehend the breadth of abuse, the absoluteness of Rana rule, the limits on women's rights, the tragedy of child marriage and widowhood, the dominance of Brahmanic right, the process of indebtedness and land loss. Only then did the early political campaigns of these women make complete sense. And, the forces those reformers were up against was formidable.

The experience of finding enlightened, energetic women in rural Nepal forced me look into my own history as an Asian woman – the child of peasant farmers from a corner of the Arab world. According to prevailing Western feminist thought, suffragettes did not come from *our* homelands. When I learned about the work of women in Nepal, I asked “Why not?” From the example of my grandmother and mother, I knew the capacity of Eastern women. I knew my ancestors' achievements and their dignity. How they were obscured by the prevailing ‘missionary’ attitude held by ‘experts’ about ‘other’ women. We were seen only as victims.

It was up to us to reclaim our heritage. To celebrate the women of our culture who overcame and prevailed, and led a struggle for equality for all of us.

~~~~~

There were local obstacles to my research to overcome. By the time I arrived in the Arun Valley in 1981, Yogamaya had been dead forty years, Durga Devi eight. Among locals their careers were acknowledged. Yet, not publicly. Instead, their exemplary work remained a shadowy microcosm of ‘women's stories’ or rumors. According to the authorities, these dissidents achieved nothing.

It became evident to me that these women did not simply slip away into obscurity. They were pushed. Public dismissals of Yogamaya and Durga Devi as fanatics and troublemakers were deliberate. The efforts made to ensure that these women's history was

*never* known bring us face to face with a central issue in history making – the application of selective memory. Those in control– from the Rana despot to the officials, priests and teachers, judges and merchants – conspired to keep women as a whole out of Nepal’s history. Those in power placed themselves at the center and women at the edge. Not only did authorities refuse to acknowledge their own failures and the need for reforms, which these women highlighted– they denied these women. They were obscured.

The motives for the obfuscation of Yogamaya and Durga Devi were partly economic, partly political, and partly due to patriarchal biases. Neither of these reformers asked for funds to implement changes. There were no costly projects from which profiteers could gain. Yogamaya’s and Durga’s solutions offered no financial benefits to officials.

During our inquiries about Yogamaya in East Nepal and in Kathmandu, our leads to sources were cut off. Fear of a resurgence of her teachings? Or because of moral responsibility connected with Yogamaya’s and her followers’ deaths?

Yogamaya and sixty-eight men, women and children perished with her in a mass suicide. Most of them were Brahmin. According to the prevailing Hindu moral code, now as well as then, if suicides result from non-violent attempts to seek a dialogue with authorities, the government is responsible for their deaths. In Nepal, a Hindu kingdom, such suicides may be construed as ‘Brahmin murder.’ This may explain why the authorities banned all reference to Yogamaya following her death. It may also be why they covered up the episode sixty years later when I began my inquiries. The nation has never had a public accounting of the death of Yogamaya.

The secretiveness surrounding these women also results from misogyny, in the past and now. In this case, both Durga and Yogamaya threatened male-dominated institutions. Men found their challenges intolerable. They dismissed Shakti Yogamaya as morally inferior. Even today, rumours persist that “she was (just) a religious fanatic who threw herself into the river in an nihilistic fervor.” Sexual laxity was another characterization of Yogamaya. They say she was a prostitute and her followers were sexual deviants. The kindest rumour about

Yogamaya was that she was a communist. At least that appellation acknowledged her political character.

As for Durga Devi, she was brushed aside after her death. She was 'too smart' in the courts, and could not be compromised. But in the public's consciousness, Durga was made to appear 'mad.'

Of all Durga's causes, her last campaign, the pursuit of justice for a violated girl, was the chief reason for her profound obscurity. Had it not been for Durga's attention to that child, the girl may have 'disappeared,' or run away to India. Instead, thanks to Durga, the child stayed in her village, became a mother, and a citizen of the town which had wronged her. Her presence reminded people of crimes against girls. The community Durga challenged and shamed sought to deny her accomplishments,. She was a firebrand, a scourge in their otherwise unchallenged routines. For the women and other exploited peasants she championed, Durga was a heroine and saviour. She did not stop because of critics, and like Yogamaya, Durga was not intimidated by social convention.

If we have an enduring lesson from Durga, it's her example of extraordinary love of law. Although her style appeared to be militant, and her view of the courts irreverent, Durga's regard for civil law was profound. Durga had such respect for the system of justice she grew up in, that she was determined to make it work, even with its defects. She fought people who ignored or abused the law. Much of her efforts were over women's inheritance rights and in defence of wronged woman. It took Durga eight years to win her own property rights. According to the law, a woman can claim her share of her husband's property after his death. This is particularly important since many women are married as children and become widows even before they co-habit with their husbands. They are young and vulnerable and easily exploited by their husband's relatives. Even if she is not abused, a widow feels alone and helpless. She fears that if she does not comply with the family's demands, she will find herself without even a roof over her head.

To fight injustice in her culture and in her time, to be at all effective, Durga decided early in her life that she had to challenge people face to face, whether a brother-in-law (her *dewar*), a judge or a merchant or a simple clerk. That became her strategy, her style.



Durga was also a modest woman, despite her boisterous, confrontational manner. Dramatic accounts of her challenging people are many, but there are few stories about her tender-heartedness and generosity. She never turned away a petitioner. She bought the land at Manakamana when the widows approached her for help. Thanks to Durga's endowment, for thirty years Manakamana hermitage has provided a place where widows, abused wives, abandoned daughters, and other women in need can enjoy some security and independence.

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History books do not mention Yogamaya. Yet, Dambar Basnet, leading a secular life in Kathmandu, a man who had served in the king's cabinet before democracy was reinstated in 1990, was not afraid to speak of the Yogi. He remembered her with tremendous respect and love. No doubt hundreds if not thousands of others feel similarly.

In 1983, during my fourth visit to Manakamana, a woman took her life in the river. When the head of the hermitage, Mata, disclosed the news to me, she added quietly, "Some women step into the waters of the Arun even today. What they are doing is political, not religious." Mata believed that these women were reenacting Yogamaya's protest. But, if this were true, these deaths would never be recorded as protest, even if the woman openly declared her political intent. History and the authorities would take over to say: "These unfortunate widows. They are so devoted to God."

My young assistant and translator Dharma Shrestha accepted these dismissals before he began our work together on this project. He and many other local youngsters had been told Yogamaya was a frustrated widow, her suicide no more than a fanatical act. How could he know her campaign was a dream to move his country forward? Until he met the women at Manakamana shrine, how could he imagine that Yogamaya had any connection to his family, to him, or that she offered alternatives for his dear aunt, his lonely father's sister? Before he knew about Durga Devi or Yogamaya, he never perceived his widowed aunt as someone whose rights were denied her, or as someone with any rights at all.

The light is inside you. Look again.

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About the time Durga Devi was wrapping up her career in the early 1970s, western feminists were discovering that in Europe and the United States, many of their ancestors' achievements had been excluded from European and American histories. Their predecessors, they found, had accomplished more than was recorded in the supposed authoritative early European and American chronicles. Women had done far more than campaign for the right to vote, or tend the wounded and dying in past wars. They had plowed and built, navigated and taught, provided and defended, remembered and written. They ran the factories while men were at war and they led revolts of slaves. Findings by anthropologists showed the so-called hunting peoples were sustained not by the meat men brought back from their hunts, but rather by the gathering work of the women. Another observation revealed how perishables, the tools of women – straw, wood and pottery – could figure in the repositories scientists use to understand the economy of early societies. A deluge of books by scholars followed these pioneers. Each added more evidence of the biased western historians and scientists. They sought to right the record by subjecting those social and economic models to re-examination.

The feminists of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century began to document their history with new standards. Books by western women offered revealing self-examinations about western values, social structure and gender. They highlighted the link between the personal and the political. Moreover, western women's creative writing, and thereby literature in general, was propelled to new heights through that self-exploration. Many feminists were social scientists. They realized how narrow and male-oriented their training and research had been, and they began to reshape the nature of their inquiries and analyzes. Comparative cultural studies were given a major boost. With their self-discoveries, European and American scholars and journalists became zealous, and sought to export their idea of liberation. Anthropologists like myself took that excitement with us into our research fields abroad – to Asia and the Middle East and Africa. With new pride, we were eager to demonstrate the universal traditions of women thinkers and creators. This was not as easy as we supposed. We set out on a global mission before we really understood the obstinacy of our own cultural

values, and the persistence of Orientalist biases in our work. We were stuck in the same paradigms as earlier generations. We could not get rid ourselves of an attitude of cultural superiority. Our ethnocentrism lingered on.

When we arrived in Nepal or China, Guatemala or Nigeria, some of us launched into a campaign to document how bad, or, how much worse, things were for 'other' women. Many writers, in that phase of zealotry about their "enlightenment," assumed Third World women were left behind. We became intrigued by the biology and domesticity of other women as if they were "exotic." Studies poured forth documenting global women's puberty, their fecundity, their nursing habits, menopausal dynamics, their dowries and wedding customs, their mothering and cooking practices.

The original idea behind comparative women's studies was to find similarities to help women unite worldwide. Instead, differences often prevailed. In some respects, a western feminist replaced the Christian missionary, convinced she was bringing "advanced" enlightenment. Looking at their still "unliberated" sisters in the rest of the world, her attitude was "Let me help you, give you, show you – poor thing." That was global solidarity as defined by feminist "missionaries."

Limited and distorted views of global women was manifest in anthropology as well as journalism and political history. Before the 1980s, anthropologists' richly textured studies had largely ignored women. She might be a daughter-of, a mother-of, a wife-of, but this was all. The woman's father was our expert, her son was our translator and her husband was our storyteller. He was the farmer, the dissident, the migrant, the person with time to sit with us. "She does not know your language," or "She is too shy," said the men. Or she simply wasn't there (– because she was working in the fields, with the animals, with the children).

Occasionally an article or book profiled selected women in those distant places to show her possibilities as a secretary, a professor, a doctor<sup>1</sup>. If a non-European woman achieved high office, it had to be through some dynastic inheritance rather than by her merits. An Indian, or Arab, or Cuban businesswoman did not exist in Western

chronicles. Any farmer or guru had to be a man. Did we ever dream we might find a Bengali Mary Stanton, a Ghanaian Harriet Tubman, a Thai Emily Dickinson?

My own narrow assumptions about women worldwide were influenced by my education in western universities and from the writings of the new feminists. I didn't imagine in Nepal I might find activists similar to Mother Jones and Sojourner Truth, two early American dissidents and reformers. How could a woman raised in America and England, even though she was of Arab origin, imagine she might find her true ancestors in Nepal? I was only one generation removed from milking goats and cutting grass. I never thought to tell those villagers in Nepal my own mother grew up in a household like theirs. Or, that she could winnow as skillfully as they did; or how she toiled from the age of seven as they did. My mother wanted to forget and I did too.

Having been educated in the west, I subscribed to the notion that any worthy heroine must be from advanced, progressive Europe. Later I realized this was a myth.

When the time came for me to undertake my research with my new "feminist" awareness, I did not set out in search of the 'victim' model of the Asian woman. That was a misguided approach, one drenched with western academic bias. I simply made a modest commitment to spend more time with the women I would meet in Nepal, listen to them, speak to them as people having something in common with myself. I had no grand theory. I thought perhaps I could contribute a portrait of an ordinary woman – perhaps write a biography of a farmer, porter, or shopkeeper, girl or grandmother.

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1. Broughton Coburn's biography of a Nepalese Gurung woman remains one of the best of its kind. In 1982 he published *Nepali Aama*. Anchor Doubleday, and 13 years later, *Aama in America*, also with Anchor Doubleday.

Another notable collection is a two volume set of translations of Indian women's writings: *Women Writing in India*, edited by Suzi Tharu and published in 1986 by The Feminist Press, NY.

An African American colleague, writer Anne Wilson, told me how important African history was for her as a person of African descent. “We do not know what we are capable of,” she said, “unless we know what our predecessors have achieved in the past.” A colleague in Iraq, an archeologist at the National Museum in Baghdad, presented this same idea in another way. He was speaking about the importance of teaching Iraqi young people the accomplishments of their 6000 year civilization, even during these bleak years under siege. Professor Doni George explained “History is like a bow string which we draw back to create tension behind the arrow. The further back we can draw it, the swifter and farther ahead the arrow will travel.”

Perhaps women don't know our own capacity because we often remained ignorant about the basic achievements of women – village and urban women. Education, for example. Consider Durga Devi's ability in law. Durga received private education and extensive training from her father; Nainakala, Yogamaya's daughter, learned to read and write from her own aunt and later documented her mother's verses. In my own family, I grew up thinking my mother, all women in my family, and all Arab village women, were illiterate. Only after *Sitti*, my grandmother, passed on, did I realize she had been literate! She read her Holy Book every day. Her daughter, my mother, had not continued that tradition in the Arab lands where she was born nor had she attended school in the west where our family immigrated. In the process of resettling, she had to work to support the family. She was a young, strong woman and her labour was of more immediate value than her literacy. Somehow my grandmother's literacy in Arabic had been missed. It did not count into my history, until I made the connection.

Who will redeem the woman warriors, workers and scholars from the history of the Himalayas, the jungles and plains and cities, Egypt and Yemen, India and Nepal? As an Arab woman, I can also relate to the heroines in Western culture. Part of me responds to the social critics Simone de Bouvoir and Gloria Steiman, the novelists Toni Morrison and Margaret Atwood, for example. But they are only part of my intellect and part of my history. I need the Egyptian educators who fought against Imperial rule, Huda Sharawi and Nawal

el-Saadawi², and Khadija the mother of the Prophet Mohammed. I need Indian activist and actress Shabana Azmi, and Nepal's poet and activist Parizat. Their battles are class ones, economic, political and anti-colonial. These Asian women also embody something of my mother and grandmothers and their mothers, who, after all, cannot be omitted from my link to women in history.

Our Asian and African women possess long histories and abundant experiments in civilization. The lives of Yogamaya and Durga Devi, two Nepalese, demonstrate the leadership of which women are capable. Surely their histories are tangible and forceful examples of Anne Wilson's and Iraqi archeologist Doni George's points. Knowing *we* did this, *we* begin to fathom our capacity.

How can Yogamaya and Durga Devi nourish us—women and men – in Nepal and elsewhere?

We need look no further than the *hazurbani*, the songs of the dissident which Yogamaya composed and uttered when she came out of her meditations. They aroused thousands to come together and call for radical political change. Her verses could be a vital bridge between past and present. Today's protestors employ songs to inspire, to unite, and to propel them towards their goals. If now, why not then?

We will learn about Durga's response to the rape of a deaf child thirty years ago, and understand. Every Nepalese can recall an incident during the 1990 revolution for democracy when college girls demonstrated at their Pokhara campus, and some were arrested and taken to jail. When news spread that one student was raped, reportedly by the police, it ignited outrage across the land, that fueled more mass political protests calling for the ruler to step down.

Once I overcame my biases I could easily imagine the widows at the hermitage as twenty-year-old women with husbands and children, with girlfriends, and teen age brothers. When Manamaya and

2. *The Nawal El-Saadawi Reader*, a collection of this thinker's essays was published by St. Martin's and Zed press in 1997, and this was followed by *A Daughter of Isis*, Saadawi's autobiography in 1999, by the same publishers. Leila Ahmed, in her recent autobiography *A Border Passage: A Woman's Journey* (Penguin, 2000) gives us another important collection of the thoughts of an Arab woman, about personal and political issues.

Bhaktini Aama, two widows at Manakamana, spoke the *hazurbani*, I saw them transformed back to their youth.

And when poet Parizat, first read the *hazurbani* of Yogamaya, she declared, “Yogamaya is my ancestor and her verses my legacy.” I agreed. I titled this book “Heir To A Silent Song.”

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When I spoke to Mata, the head of the widows’ hermitage, during my last visit to her home in 1986, she was deeply troubled by the course of economic developments in Nepal. When we walked together along the sandbar or sat overlooking the river bank, watching women and men at their work, or seeing funerary parties arrive at the burning ghat, or passing travellers en-route to their homes, Mata remarked with compassion about their difficulties. She mainly talked to me about the corruption that continued to infest her country. She was angry about the ineptitude of government, seeing the swelling bureaucracy, witnessing ‘experts’ coming and going, and all the while the lives of farmers remaining static or deteriorating further<sup>3</sup>.

Desperate and rejected women come to Mata for help and she is reminded by them of what difficulties women still face. She hears repeated testimonies about their husbands taking of a second wife, girls betrothed as children, widows losing their land, porters robbed on the road, and Brahmanic tyranny. Mata watches women and men trek to the riverside to beseech Lord Arun for the help they cannot find elsewhere. She does not believe in the power of the Arun river god or the goddess Manakamana and does not like to see offerings wasted on them. Yet, what choice do these poor people have? Many women come to Mata seeking a home at the temple. “How many can I help?” she asks.

म भगवान होइन । म समाजले तिरस्कार र घृणा गरेको मान्छे हुं।

*“Though I am the one who is despised by society, and discarded,  
I have to prove my innocence.”*

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3. See Chapter 7, Conclusion, for some notes about “development” in Nepal.

Mata knew the army still remained watchful and she worried the government would put down any resurgence of Yogamaya's powerful verses. Yet, each time I returned, she asked me if the *hazurbani* I had collected on tape and taken away had been broadcast over Radio Nepal, or in a distant land. Mata hoped to lay the ground for a new program that would somehow tackle the enduring ills of her people.

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Redeeming these women was an evolutionary process for me, connected with my re-education and my self-empowerment. At first, I was exhilarated by the drama of Yogamaya's and Durga Devi's lives. I found both women clever and heroic. I did not care if they were relevant or not to contemporary Nepal. Before long, struggling to document and understand their work, I was obliged to learn about political conditions. I looked more closely at the special difficulties of women, at the power of Brahmins. I asked: why does a farmer leave his fields to become a porter? Why are girls sent from home to the city? Why is a Nepal-made carpet so cheap, and how can children be employed as weavers? How is land lost, and why a teacher posted to a school in the hills feels lonely? How does money for a project disappear, and what do foreign humanitarian workers do with their salaries?

When confronting patriarchal restrictions in Nepalese society, I began to recognize them in my own society and how they worked on me:— in the academy, in the media, in American politics. Eventually, I found the academy too confining. Scholarly language was inappropriate for the biographical style called for in this research. I had to step out of the scholar's weighty garb to see, and then reject the role anthropology and history played in the mythologizing of peoples—Arab and Muslim, Nepalese and Buddhist. As I continued this work I examined the myths I had accepted about my own Arab people, and that led me to the Middle East, where I devoted most of my energy for the past decade. There I am engaged in self-education and journalism, and in the daunting task of trying to counter the myths and ignorance perpetuated in the west.

Whatever resistance and obstacles I encountered in assembling the stories you will read here, it only helped me pursue my immediate goals in Nepal more effectively, and with deeper understanding. This awakening happened over many years, and it continues. The moment of decision to enter on this path came when my translator Dharma saw how responsive I was to the *hazurbani*, and advised “when you reach Kathmandu, there is a political woman there you can meet. She writes songs which the young people sing when they move through Nepal, teaching the peasants their rights. Her name is Parizat.” That was the first time I had heard this woman’s name, although I had been concerned with Nepal for more than twelve years! I set out in search of Parizat.

So, one hot afternoon in 1981, after returning from my second visit to the hills of the Arun Valley, I found myself at the entrance to the house of the poet, in the quiet neighborhood of Maipi on the western edge of the capital. In those days the area was not as crowded and densely inhabited as it is today. There were only a few cottages scattered among the paddy gardens, and you reached them by way of narrow paths between the fields. The area was inaccessible to cars, so I left the taxi some distance away and arrived in the neighborhood on foot. Bushes lined the earthen path. As I proceeded along, I saw a rickety wooden gate, and behind it, more green shrubs on either side of a worn path that led to a small cottage beyond. Parizat was expecting me, and was waiting for me inside. But a man in a police uniform stood a few meters in front of the gate. He carried neither a weapon nor a stick. He was posted there because this was the house of an “enemy of the king.” He was there to note the arrival and departure of any activists or other ‘troublemakers’ – students, editors or poor women and men who came to this house day and night. Parizat was a dissident and a strong critic of the government. People arrived here in search of her counsel. Bulletins were drawn up and distributed. Poems and essays were collected and printed, assemblies and committee meetings planned. Men released from prison received succour. Poor people came for a few week’s work, or a place to sleep while in the city, or a small loan to pay for a bus back to their village or to stop the banker

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from foreclosing on their mortgage. A runaway girl found shelter and work.

The policeman stood to the side of the gate, not obstructing the passage. This fellow would add my name to a list of suspects, an archive of the hundreds of thousands of patriots determined to secure their freedom. I hesitated for an instant. Then I pulled up the latch on the cross bar and walked ahead.

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***“... Death will never perish.  
Peasants starve, landless die  
to become an endless column  
marching arm in arm, each hand a fist.  
Death becomes a bayonet, pointing  
to the oppressors. It strikes!***

**from “Mreetyu” by Parizat<sup>1</sup>**

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1. Translated by M. Aryal and B. Soros. Verses from “Mreetyu” appear in Chapters 3, 5 and 7.



# Chapter 1

## TO THE RIVER'S EDGE

In 1990, the Nepalese people launched a countrywide protest to win back democracy<sup>2</sup>, and end two generations of dictatorial rule. A remarkable demonstration of will and with no outside help, the Nepalese persisted, and prevailed. Farmers – women and men – and their children, graying mothers and indignant grandfathers, seething students and angry professors, lawyers and shopkeepers, weavers and milk vendors, doctors and unemployed lads and their sisters advanced towards the palace gates of Kathmandu. Many fell, stopped by bullets from King Birendra's guards. Twisted corpses of youth were dumped in mass graves; sticky brains and caking blood-stained sidewalks, while nearby, royal statues lay smashed, pulled from their bases by the crowds moving ever closer to the palace. Waves of protesters moved forward. Police beat them and bound them. There were so many whom they captured that t' army had to hastily construct prisons in open fields to cage them.

During those fiery weeks of 1990, mothers formed a human wall to defend their homes against the army, and liberated the whole town of Patan not far from the capital. The countryside erupted too, and across the hills, government posts came under siege. Offices of non-governmental organizations and the foreign embassies were strangely mute, and the representatives of western democracies and

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2. In 1951 with the end of the Rana dictatorship, a democratically elected government held power until 1959 when King Mahendra staged a coup and assumed absolute authority. This dictatorship was continued by his son, King Birendra.

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socialist nations alike stood silent<sup>3</sup>. Not until it was clear the ruler was doomed, would foreign press carry reports about the struggle. Doubtless foreign intelligence agents kept their capitals informed, but publicly none denounced the terror, and no embassy's foreign office openly commented on the actions of the king's army.

Resistance could not be wiped out. Even without CNN television coverage or human rights commissions, the Nepalese acted. City commerce came to a halt. Many protestors had nephews and grandsons and granddaughters enjoying freedoms abroad. But they wanted their own liberty at home. Doctors, retired lawyers and librarians joined sit-ins at town squares nationwide, and united with the crowds in their advance towards the palace. Communist marched with civil servant, poet with peon, travel agent with teacher. The palace gates themselves trembled as the crowds swelled and moved forward.

Finally, the King capitulated and called off his riflers. Young Birendra Bikram Shah, occupant of the Lion Throne since 1973, inheritor of the dictatorship, proved to be a man of finite cruelty. (Or was he ordered to acquiesce by an embarrassed American ambassador whose support for the dictator was finally challenged by the reports of corpses and by Nepalese petitions to Washington? A complete communist success in the Kingdom might also embarrass the U. S. State Department.)

But Birendra did succumb to the people's will. In a late night broadcast lasting barely a minute, the defeated king broadcast his decision to the people. "I shall un-gag the press and un-ban political parties and you may prepare for a democratic election." His voice quivered. Little was said, but it was enough. Marchers had already reached the twenty foot high iron bars of the palace gate, and they would have ripped them down. Some insurgents wanted to continue the assault, spurred on by rumors that the King had already sent his treasures out of the country and readied his helicopter to evacuate his

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3. This non-violent revolution lasted 50 days. Communists figured prominently in the movement. Only in the very last stage, when success seemed likely, did international media begin to carry reports of the events, and even then coverage of brutality by the police was downplayed. This was one people's revolution for democracy, the Americans were not keen to see succeed.

family and his councillors. Those protesters argued that the monarchy must be done away with altogether. But others, supported by the middle class, who had land to protect and who had survived a quarter of century in exile, decided to compromise. The conservatives prevailed and halted the march. Exhausted men and women dispersed to collect their children from the streets and search for their comrades in the prisons and morgues and mass graveyards.

Could that kind of revolt have happened fifty years earlier? Was such freedom ever dreamed of or demanded until then?

In fact, many men and women had dreamed and died for equality before 1990. The two Nepalese women described in the following pages called for reforms from their homes in the Arun Valley. They belong in the history of the struggle for justice in this nation. They belong to the hidden history of women who were cast into the shadow and denied their rightful place in history. Unearthing them and tracing their campaigns became a lesson for me.

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In the 1970s when I was in Nepal for research with the Tibetan people there, I heard from colleagues at the university about an armed rebellion in the hills. They said it was led by opponents of King Mahendra, (1955-1973) who held sway over the country with an iron fist. The revolt erupted in a place known for its 'troublesome peasants,' Okhaldhunga town, a major hill settlement east of Kathmandu. That uprising was snuffed out so swiftly it could not be confirmed by journalists, or even members of parliament. How many rebels were killed was unknown, and none discussed the real nature of the uprising. The government's brutal actions went unchallenged, and appeared to have put an end to any opposition movement.

In 1979 protests again erupted. Demonstrations for a Free Press occurred in the main street of Kathmandu and culminated with the burning of the National Airlines office and the shooting of protestors by government troops. Although the army's crackdown against the demonstrators was reported in Nepal's press, the problems that motivated the revolt – elitism, corruption, and the absence of

justice – were buried. The whole episode was treated in the press as a skirmish. Then came a melee at the university where students were badly beaten and jailed. Some were tossed off balconies by police who stormed the campus. The authorities closed the university for many months in order to quell the discontent.

Had those outbursts anything to do with the basic conditions and lives of the masses of the people of Nepal? Press comments and reports focused only on the leftist student movement, and ignored the more fundamental issues – domination by the Brahmin class in the universities and the civil service, no freedom of press, no right of assembly, one political party, graft at all levels of government service, overtaxed farmers bent in their fields, malnourishment of little boys tending their cows, young girls labouring in carpet factories, mistreatment of women who bore no sons, tea vendors in debt, trafficking in women, the illegal transfers of land. These were the very same injustices that drove the successful 1990 revolution, and the same abuses that the women rebels, Yogamaya and Durga Devi struggled against in the Arun Valley two generations before.

Without institutional avenues through which the government could be pressured to reform, any public protest, however peaceful, was bound to be met by violence from the King's side. Still opposition inevitably erupted again, and when it did, it was again swiftly crushed by the police, or by the royal troops. The authorities portrayed these outbursts by civilians as capricious and marginal. And life would be restored to its seemingly Buddhistic tranquility and mountain splendor – a supposedly stable and certainly a more profitable scenario.

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In recent years, especially after the institution of democracy in 1990, public discontent persisted. But now, the administration had a new tact. Instead of using force, it invoked benign institutional responses to criticism. Under the guise of a Seminar in Development, usually sponsored by foreign assistance, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) gathered to “study” one economic problem or other. These agencies had nothing to do with political protests, but



helped make it appear as if the government was responsive to public needs. "Experts" were called together. Economic and social surveys were launched. Western or Japanese or Indian aid agencies allocated funds for whatever solutions the "experts" recommended. More seminars and more seminars, all with ample budgets. The problems were put on an agenda and for the most part that was where they remained. Where these 'solutions' failed, the military and police and the prison wardens had theirs. But the dissenters would not be mollified. Those who escaped the police fled via the underground to mobilize once again. No one knew where opponents would next make their appearance. As the Nepalese critic and poet, Parizat's song above suggests, the poor, who were already sacrificed by the society would sacrifice still again.

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In 1981, when I began my inquiries about the history of the Arun Valley peoples, the nation was untroubled, at least on the surface. By the early 1980s, tourism was growing at a rapid rate, along with mountaineering expeditions; UNESCO was undertaking the restoration of ancient temples; monasteries were flourishing and foreigners were seeking "shangrila" in increasing numbers; anthropologists were welcome to set up their 'studies' in just about every valley and hilltop. And the monarch and his court appeared to have everything under control. So I was not motivated to come here by any sense of an impending crisis. I was unfamiliar with the poet Parizat at that time and I knew nothing about her many comrades in prison and in the underground.

In universities in England and the USA where I studied and worked, I thought I had gained an expertise in the culture of the Himalayas, which included Nepal. I was in college during the late 1960s when campuses in Europe and the U.S. were in turmoil and African Americans were amassed in the streets demanding their human rights. My colleagues and I vigorously protested Washington's war against the Vietnamese people. Yet, I somehow remained grossly naive about the People's history of Nepal throughout my graduate studies in

London. This lasted even into my early research forays in Nepal in from 1970 to 1980 when I did extensive field research in the hills, working closely with Tibetan refugees⁴. I confess that I knew nobody who was engaged in political dissent. Even though I saw poverty was widespread, and civil rights were limited, I was unaware of the degree of discontent across the nation.

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Passing through those terraced valleys as I walked into and out of the hills, if I thought about people's rights, I supposed that any idea of justice or a program to end inequalities couldn't possibly take hold.

Villagers I encountered seemed preoccupied with simply holding on, and I assumed that was all they could manage. How could anyone living in such isolated places think of change – really basic change? Change originates in the modern educated world of human rights projects and literacy courses and population control. Costly development programs are needed, sending virgin city boys into the hills to educate mothers about birth control, hiring foreign graduates to count trees in order to establish a royal parkland in place of a forest where farmers harvested fuel. This kind of wisdom arrived in Nepal by way of Kathmandu, the capital city, whose importance and wealth has grown alongside the expansion of tourism and foreign aid.

Kathmandu lies some three hundred miles west of the Arun River. Although it's political arm reaches deep into every corner of the countryside, the capital city has economic connections to the world beyond Nepal. Kathmandu represents an international link to India, and East Asia, then to Australia and Japan, Europe and the USA. From those countries flow development contracts, tour groups, high altitude climbing records, and orders for tens of thousands of handwoven carpets flow back to Nepal. Movies and city buses arrive from Bombay, cloth and paper and pipes from Calcutta, kerosene and oil from Patna, tin and plastic and furniture and computers and light fixtures and canned foods from other parts of India and beyond.

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4. The result of this research is reported in *Tibetan Frontier Families*, 1978, Vikas Publishers, Delhi, and numerous scholarly articles.

Kathmandu Valley houses the carpet, cigarette, garment and brick factories where malnourished women and men and children find low-paid work. The tour offices who recruit porters and buy the tents and food for expeditions and walking trips are here. Most of Nepal's foreign income arrives in Kathmandu and here is where it stays. Most of the budget for a rural project will be dispensed in the city as well. More fine restaurants and private schools serve the growing Nepalese middle class and the battalion of international experts and their families. American diplomats and businessmen in Kathmandu maintain their "Lincoln" school. The British have theirs. So do the Japanese.

For farmers, the capital is a place to sell their labour, peddling rickshaws, hauling loads on their backs, cleaning hotels. For foreign aid employees, carpet and curio dealers, tourists and climbers, Kathmandu is a dream world. To the visitor from abroad – there are 400,000 of us a year – this Himalayan land is part of our own imagined landscape. The poverty is undeniable. Yet, some tourists manage to interpret the hardships of ancient hill people as something dignified – 'traditional', they call it. Even the ubiquitous royal portraits, hashish shops and men sleeping in their push-carts, help support our romance-of-timelessness and tolerance. From Kathmandu city, one cycles eastward a few miles to stand under the great, calming eyes of Bodhnath Temple. From these muddy city paths we can follow the ancient routes still used by porters. Golden-faced and cheery, young and old, the Nepalese sing, "We are a traditional people. No outsider colonized us." Alert and witty, they speak little about their king, Birendra who, from his occasional radio broadcasts, seems to be a humble man. There are rumors about his wanderings incognito through the hills to witness their simple lives. If he does make these expeditions, Birendra might feel as gratified as the foreigner does, when half-clad, underweight children return his wave with smiles. But how can the hill porter or the grass-gatherer wave back, bent under an enormous basket, both hands clutching their tumpline to balance their load?

The present Nepalese dynasty, intact for 231 years, appears to be removed. Whatever hardships these dispossessed subjects may

endure, their sad-faced king and his wife surely is not to blame. It's the agitators. Any act against the throne, like those carried out against King Birendra's father Mahendra, was said to be the work of communists, enemies colluding with Nepal's foreign foes. India, who had already forcibly absorbed the once independent states of Sikkim and Goa on the fringes of its land mass, was suspected to have similar designs on Nepal, and was surely the source of any political trouble here. Why should the Nepalese be discontent? According to the nation's high priests, their ruler is the incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and, if his subjects worship him, he in turn protects them. What further justice would these people need?

Let's keep our gaze on the splendid mountain landscape. Do those lofty, terraced fields look like a dictatorship? Where on the mountaintops do you see tanks and helicopter gunships? Do you read any reports of disappearances or torture in Nepal's newspapers? Their pages are full of felicitations to the monarch.

This comforting image of calm and timelessness can be exotic and alluring, and it is profitable. The picture succeeds year after year in drawing anthropologists like me and trekkers and meditation students to Nepal in ever greater numbers. But our needs and gratifications remain isolated from any local disaffections and political turmoil. It is not in the interests of donor agencies and tour companies, or scholars to lend credibility to a nasty struggle for justice.

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Nothing in history books about Nepal suggests that anything of global significance happened here, except perhaps that a tall British chap named Hillary scaled the world's highest peak, Sagarmatha – the one foreigners call Everest. In the populated villages of the hills, the rhythm of life is said to be timeless and motionless. The sublime landscape, the sloping sides of the Arun valley and orderly terraced fields are described as if history stood still here and always would.

Here are simple people enacting timeless rituals, repeating the entrenched rites of their long-dead ancestors. Women and men arrive from their farms seeking a powerful river deity. Some cut boughs of

simal leaves and insert them upright into the sand at the river's edge. Father stabs a chicken's neck and offers its blood to Lord Arun in gratitude for small blessings the family has received. Petals of Himalayan blossoms flow from farmers' cracked hands and float down the current of the great river. In a field of golden ripening rice, little girls with sweat staining their blouses, look up from their work. Youths pass carrying hundred-pound loads of supplies on their backs so tourists can travel in comfort.

But no people, neither women nor men, remain motionless in history. Many of these villagers have travelled to Calcutta, Gauhati, Darjeeling, Gangtok and other parts of India. Many hill residents have adult children who live in cities where they work as engineers, clerks, teachers and health workers, and labourers in the lowest paid sectors. Some of the older generation of men and women are themselves migrants to the hills. Many inhabitants are actually recent generations of hill farmer, the children of men and women to come north from India seeking land and a new life.

Ownership of the fields on either side of the Arun River is dynamic as well. Wherever the river valley is flat and wide is now largely occupied by high-caste Brahmin and Chhetri immigrants. They are called Khasa-Bahun because their ancestors arrived in the Arun River region via West Nepal, from north west India. (The royal Shah family originated there as well.) The early Brahmins and Chhetris carved out water channels and sculpted vertical rows of paddy terraces for rice cultivation. Being good farmers, they saved, and acquired more land. Their farming techniques may be more efficient than others, but the newcomers also used political links to their advantage. Today their descendants hold sway over the longer-settled people.

The indigenous hill people are called tribal people by anthropologists⁵; in the eastern hills they are Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Magar, and Gurung, each with their own language, whose farming styles, diet, religion and customs are differ from that of the Hindu settlers. They once owned the fields in the fertile lower flat sides of the

5. See *Faces of Nepal*, Jan Salter and Harka B. Gurung, 2000, Himal Books, Kathmandu.

valleys where they grew maize and millet. Today we find the homes of Nepal's tribal inhabitants squeezed along the scrappy slopes, pushed to the margins. They moved uphill and grow their grain on the steep hillside, on plots which are ravaged by the monsoon rains which wash away their topsoil which is then deposited on the wide, open slopes owned by Brahmins. These are some reasons why the occupants of the elevated areas have a thin harvest, while the fields of the rice growers are lush and dense with grain.

This flux is not confined to the Arun Valley. Immigrants still arrive into the Madhesh, (or Tarai, the plain stretching along the southern border of Nepal). Families pour across the border from the more populous villages of India, and take over jungle land inside Nepal. On the country's distant northern frontier, it abuts Tibet. Migration is ongoing there as well. Even the Bhotia Sherpas of the Upper Arun probably did not originally live near the confluence of the Arun and Barun rivers where find them today. Some say they arrived there from Tibet. Another explanation is that they came from Solu-Khumbu to the west, which is still heavily populated by a Sherpa people, but whose language little resembles theirs. It is also possible that the Arun Valley Bhotia have no Tibetan origins at all, but migrated from lower valleys northward, perhaps splitting off from a larger Rai tribe, and changing their culture and language during years of interaction with Tibet, when commerce across the northern passes was more intense than in recent years.

The origin of the Bhotia who live in the upper Arun intrigued my companion Jangbu who, as a Sherpa himself, was making his first visit to this valley. He conversed with these people in Nepali because their 'sherpa' dialects were not the same, but he learned that they nevertheless shared some words, farming methods, and clan names. The more time Jangbu Sherpa spent with them, the more questions he had about his own people's origin.

These dynamics are another demonstration of how this forested valley is hardly a backwater as first appearances may suggest. Arun Valley is in fact an axis of civilization along which people and ideas and culture travel.

Migration is a common feature of history. People move in waves, following invaders who have broken ground by conquest, economic or military, and as one people departs, another follows to take its place. Borders are subject to political as well as geographic vagaries. Sometimes they open and close to allow movement. Other times they confine populations. At the beginning of this century some mountain passes between Nepal and Tibet were cut off by glacial shifts. In late 1950s, due to China's policies in Tibet, the high plateau was forcibly sealed off from the south, and Nepalese such as the Sherpas who had earlier been regular visitors to Tibet, became south-oriented. It took only one generation to break those northern cultural affiliations that had seemed so deeply ingrained. For example, young people like Janbu speak and write in Nepali, whereas his presents are fluent in Tibetan. Both generations still use their Sherpa language at home, but Jangbu's three sons, who have been raised and schooled in Kathmandu, hardly speak Sherpa.

This flux is part of the character of the region. It shows how misleading the notion of 'timelessness' is. The rebel women whose histories we will explore in later chapters were part of the flow of people into and out of the region.



Ever since the unification of Nepal under Prithvi Narayan Shah, after his military conquest of Kathmandu Valley in 1769, Nepal became the nation-state we know today, with Kathmandu as its capital. Sometimes Kathmandu opted for a laissez-faire agreement with local leaders. The central government allowed governors considerable independence. However, the central authority maintained a military presence, ready to impose order in a stroke.

When Kathmandu made a commitment to universal education in the 1971, its presence across the land became ubiquitous. Photos of the monarch were pasted everywhere. The portable radio, carrying state-controlled programs produced in the capital, became common. An effective vehicle of imperial rule, the radio helped the palace reach every citizen. Roads were built to link the towns across the south to

Kathmandu. The administration became more centralized. Where roads could not penetrate, airports were the link between the capital and its administrative outposts⁶.

Hilltop airstrips around the country sprouted in the middle of jungles. They seemed to be a convenient commercial link between city and village, or a way to get tourists to their mountain lookouts. But the link was more complicated. Once an airlink was established, other infrastructures followed: an army post, radio transmitters, administrators. These gave the administration, and those benefitting from government contracts, access to every settlement across the nation. This was the history of Tumlingtar, the small airport where I alighted from plane on my second visit to the nearby shrine at Manakamana where I pursued my inquiries.

Tumlingtar, built in 1971, was one of these outposts of government authority. In 1981, when I had begun visiting the Arun Valley, Tumlingtar Airport was just a wide grassy track, abandoned most of the week. A simple concrete shed with two rooms, one for baggage and the other for the ticket clerk, was located at one side of the field. There was no phone and no radio tower.

Villagers who gathered at the airlines office are relatives of arriving passengers, or outgoing travellers returning to their home in the Madhesh plains bordering India, or to the capital. Officials and shopkeepers came to the strip from surrounding villages of Palikot, Dingla or Bhojpur on the west side of the river, or from Chainpur on the East side, or upriver, at Num and Kulung. They arrived to receive a document, or cash for the local bank, or other items that enhance their influence.

In 1981 Tumlingtar closed down during the during the monsoon months but the rest of the year, two flights landed there every week. Whether or not many passengers disembarked, a landing drew spectators since the Tar lay on a well travelled footpath between Madhesh in the south and the higher hill settlements. Porters—men and women, but mostly men—passed this way, walking northward into the

6. By 1995, phone lines were installed into every town housing a chief district office. With the installation of satellite systems in the near future, phones links will be possible to every village.

hills or descending en route to the road-head at Dharan, three days to the south. Seeing activity at the airline shed, they paused, smoked a cigarette, and leaned on one of the posts marking the edge of the field to witness the aircraft's touchdown. Judging by the bemused look of the boys and porters, they might have viewed this technology as if it had little to do with their life.

They are mistaken if they thought so. Then and now that nineteen-seat airplane represents a critical political link between the palace and local administrators, between the rich commercial centers of the country and the impoverished villages up and down the length of the valley. The air-link into the interior meant that troops could be hastily flown into any "trouble spot" anywhere in the country. It meant instant radio contact between the capital and regional centers of power. Because of this link, officials could more effectively represent the central power and vice versa, and with easy backup from the capital, local officials might have felt less need for local support.

The aircraft sat on the grass for a quarter of an hour while passengers disembark and embark and the ticketer's assistant unloads and loads a few bags. Within moments of the plane's takeoff, the field empties, the teashop is shuttered, and the onlookers disappear up the road to their farm, to school, the land office, the market in Dingla town, or to their sister's house somewhere on the hillside. The sound of the engine in the air is heard for a moment, and then everything falls quiet once more.

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During successive visits between 1982 and 1986 I arrived in that same Twin Otter plane and felt the soft bumpy touchdown on this ledge above the river. Before we began to descend, we skimmed over a succession of high ridges that separate the rivers – moving above the Sunkosi, the Likhu Kosi, deeper and deeper towards the lush hills. I felt excited and I pressed my face against the window looking for the shrine somewhere below. Halfway through the voyage from Kathmandu I spotted Okhaldhunga town. Soon after, I peered down at

the Dudh Kosi River, and two ridges beyond, I finally sighted the great Arun waterway itself.

From high above, the river is just a thin brown strip cut into green mountainside. It leans east, then curves south like a fragile ribbon that has floated from the sky and lies strung out haphazardly where it landed on the earth. The river seems to be a delicate, fixed track on an otherwise rolling, ragged landscape. How odd, I thought, since it is what really moves, and with ferocity.

The brown shine of the waterway is visible before I can identify a prominent hill, or a cluster of houses, or a mountain path, and before I can catch the glint of tin off a school roof. There are no roadways or canals in this region, but as we begin to descend between the hills, I recognize the few places I know from my previous treks by foot: Dingla town halfway up a hill on the west side of the Arun, then the white dust of a school playground visible on a spur of land, then the thin street of Khandbari stretched out on a narrow ridge. Below the airstrip is the footbridge, then the narrow gorge where the canoe ferry crosses the river, and further upriver, the stony beach that is the burning ghat and nearby, the shrine of Manakamana.

No boats navigate the Arun except the humble ferry. The boatman who ran it charged half a rupee per passenger in 1982, and a whole rupee for a man and load. The boatman and his assistant are Kumal, members of a fisherman caste who inhabit villages near the bank. In the early morning they cross the current by jumping over rocks, then toss their nets into deep pools where fish gather. Any boys playing and swimming in the river are certain to be children of the Kumal. How they love the river, although it sometimes lashes out in fury and consumes them. Not long before I arrived here, one of these lads who was helping his father steer the ferry canoe was swept away in the waters when it capsized. The boy was lost forever. The ferry boat is just a rough dugout log. When one sits deep inside it and it is released into the current, it rocks as if it is completely helpless, and passengers cling tightly to the wooden sides of the vessel. Somehow, the Kumal can steer it safely to the far bank – most of the time.

By 1985, flights were more frequent. With reliable radio contact between centers, weather conditions in the hills were monitored, so planes could land here even during the monsoon months. Officials posted here from other parts of the country built houses beside the airstrip, and their wives moved from their homes to be with them. This meant more business for local shops. A second teashop opened where the men could play cards late into the night. Then a hotel was built. By 1989, an electricity line from the south would reach Tumlingtar and Khandbari, opening the way for television and other amenities, and by 2001, the motor road from Dharan was to extend to Chainpur – just some of the development projects that offered employment for a few of the country's graduates and profits for local contractors.

Other activity moved along this route. With the growing popularity of Mount Makalu on the border of Tibet directly north of here, many more trekkers flew into Tumlingtar airport. From there, they made their way 23 miles by foot to the peak's base camp. Land prices in the area began to rise.

The most profitable land deals were made in the vicinity of Khandbari, an hour's walk from the airstrip. Khandbari was the new Sankhuwa-Sabha district headquarters. As such – it was already a thriving commercial center – Khandbari would flourish. Farmers arrive in town from villages all around, carry the cash their daughter sent from her factory job, or a son earned carrying loads. Each unfolds his measly roll of rupees, and hands his cash over to the cloth merchants, the iron and plastic sellers, and the spice vendors, the tailor and ironworker. They come with their tax payments, their court affidavits and appeals, license fees and land deeds. They hope that perhaps, when their son graduates from school, he will secure one of those chairs in one of those offices, so he can find his father some reprieve from the dizzying bureaucracy, and prevail on his fellow clerks to spare him just a little.

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Each time I step from the plane after it lands on the ledge above the river, I am stunned by the utter silence in the air. It is this

silence that tells me I was somewhere else. That silence is a kind of chamber I pass through where I am stripped of the garments of the culture which I left behind. No newspaper. No reference library. No academic circle. No jostling through the busy market lanes of the city. No European pastries, no Tibetan noodles or spicy Nepalese meats. No tick of taxi meters, or clack of carpet looms. The silence prepares me for a new order of things. This outpost, which is one of many strategic specks on an army map, becomes the center of my life. It is the center of the lives of my teachers, and the tunnel through which I will arrive at the history of two local women, both reformers, who called for justice a generation ago.

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I arrived at the Arun River by foot after a walk of several days on my first visit here. Descending into the valley of the Arun near the iron bridge below Tumlingtar airstrip, I crossed the great river, then trekked north over the flat river terrace. Passing the airfield, I joined a path used by farmers and porters, officials and merchants, pilgrims and troops.

The monsoon ended a few weeks before my arrival and the valley of the Arun River was steamy hot on that September afternoon in 1981. But I walked through its torrid embrace making my way innocently to my destination.

A thousand feet above me, cool air swept across the eastern ridge. I could have pressed on, to stay at the town on the crest of the hill, en-route further north. For reasons I cannot explain, my companion Jangbu and I continued along the dusty path of the *tar*, the river terrace, which dipped through the jungle, and took us to the river's edge. A hermitage was located not far upstream, set in a grove of trees and hidden from the main track, well away from any village. Perhaps we would find lodging there.

Knowing nothing about the settlement or its residents, we headed in its direction. We hoped this retreat would offer us respite from the crowded farmhouses we stopped at each night during the course of our long walk eastward from Solu-Khumbu in the central

hills. I started from there with Jangbu, who had quit his teaching post in the district headquarters to join me. He disliked the atmosphere of the town where the school was located, and decided to become a guide in order to travel through the countryside, and eventually to seek work in Kathmandu. During our journey, the farmhouses we sought lodging in were invariably occupied by large families, but the house would double or triple in size with neighbors and their children soon after our arrival. Wherever we stopped, we were an occasion for fellowship and conversation. Although surrounded by warmth and kindness, we got little sleep. At the riverside shrine ahead of us, we hoped to rest for a night.

And, we looked forward to bathing in the river, dozing undisturbed during the hot afternoon, to be lulled to sleep by the soft devotional praises of holy women.

We reached Manakamana and were welcomed by the head of the hermitage. The keepers of the shrine were high-caste women, ascetics, numbering thirty-two. When we met, they were pursuing a simple life of religious devotion. I would soon learn their origins were radically different.

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Chapter 2

THE BASKET CARRIER

A line of four men emerges from between the trees. Without breaking their stride, they step into a dusty gully, then up again, hardly noticing the ditch. The route seems a mere path; sometimes it's barely three feet wide. In fact this trail is a transnational roadway, the main highway between thousands of Nepal's hill villages – the markets where consumers live – and the commercial centers of Chainpur, Khandbari and Bhojpur from where goods are distributed.

The men walk it in file, behind one another, as if trained. Or chained. Each man moves forward with head down, but his eyeballs are upturned, scanning the road for dangerous obstacles, an overhanging branch, a jutting rock along the inside wall of the road, the protruding root of a tree.

Every one of the men wears a hat – the traditional, rimless topi. Even if threadbare and stained with sweat, the hat makes the men dressed, despite bare legs and shoeless feet. The second man in the line is also watchful. He too must step to avoid the same dangers. A third, in turn, is close on his heels. A few meters behind comes a much younger man, perhaps sixteen. His legs are thin and still sinewy because he's new to this work. He too is barefoot.

Manu, climbing out of the gully, is really a Nepalese truck. Only, this truck hauls one basket-load every trip it makes. Manu balances the load on his shoulders, taking half the weight with his neck and back muscles, the other half with his legs and feet. Brown thighs, the heaviest parts of his body, bulge above his knees.

The cone-shaped net of bamboo is set high on his shoulders. Made by all farmers here, the doko is so characteristic of the Nepal

hills that vendors sell it in the capital as a tourist souvenir. Tour shops also sell ten inch high dolls with a topi on their heads, outfitted in jackets and tight-calved pants with those cute coned baskets sewn into its back.

The real basket is a handcrafted tool. Extraordinarily lightweight, its construction applies the engineering genius of these indigenous people, the knowledge of generations of craftsmen. It can hold up to 70 kilos and it may last a porter more than one season. The design is efficient and pleasing to the eye. Loaded, it needs skill and strength because a full doko is top heavy, and not easy to balance. Every farm boy and girl learns to keep a firm grip on the lines on either side of his head to stop the load from swaying and tipping. Manu clutches the line tightly. Sometimes he clenches his jaws, as if his neck muscles are tearing at his mouth, like the bit between a horse's jaw.

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*Despite his load, each porter moves smoothly. It's too early for a smoke break. None of the men can stop before the convoy reaches the ridge half way up the hill. None will rest until sunset, after they cross the bridge at Num. Num is their regular stop, on the fourth day of the six-day job – for a hundred and twenty rupees cash.*

*The men encounter another convoy. Only two men there, rushing towards them and downhill, heading back to the roadhead. They carry no loads, so the salty tumplines lie loose across the men's chests. Whump, whump, echo the flapping empty baskets on their shoulders. The limp strap is the only ornament they can wear on this job. It's flapping sound is soft to some ears perhaps. To these men, it feels like the infinite wind moving through bare trees. It is an echo that flails the backs of these once young and hopeful farmers.*

*Those porters are returning to Dharan, to reload. They step quickly, but it is no dance. It's hunger. Each man runs to find work, to earn a few rupees to buy food. In just two days, he descends the space he needs six days to climb under a full basket. He does not wait for his friends as he descends. He's hurrying, to find work. At the roadhead, he hopes to locate someone from his village to travel with, back through the mountains, back with another load.*



*Downward he rushes. The men say "One night in Dharan, then out." Dharan is no village, no town, no city. It's just a grubby depot at the roadhead. From India to Nepalese cities such as Biratnagar on the border of Nepal and India, trucks bring supplies of kerosene, and rice and sugar and biscuits. At the roadhead depots everything is loaded into go-downs. Those warehouses are operated by fat men – the bosses.*

*"Yes hazur, no hazur, hazur hazur," says the desperate porter.*

*The radios of these fat men and their sons blast music into the streets; late into the night they broadcast cheery Nepalese tunes that can set a man's wrists dancing. But not these porters. For them, Dharan is a hungry, cheerless place.*

*These farmers stay here only as long as it takes them to find a load to carry. At night they congregate along the roadside near the warehouses. Their eyes move along the street and back again. Waiting, one man washes his alternate pair of shorts while another hand-stitches the strap on one of his sandals. The first turns to a boy he recognizes and asks him who is hiring laborers tomorrow. Two men converse about their village and, if they can locate a common relative, they begin to be close, feeling the other will not rob him on the road. They sleep early, lying within inches of one another for comfort, and for safety. When they awaken, each folds up his blanket, and silently joins the line of foot-truckers. Each walks under a laden basket.*

*Before sunrise, every morning the paths out of Dharan are dense with men like them, moving one behind another, in a single line, ascending into the hills.*

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In the village, everyone carries a basket. They need their basket to haul fertilizer from the cowshed, to gather grass for the house animals, to transfer seed to the field or bear an ill relative to the clinic. It's the Nepalese farmer's pick-up truck.

Hauling a loaded basket for wages is another work altogether¹. No farmer intends to become a porter. But from year to

1. Its weight is normally 70 kilograms, more than the weight of the porter.

year, the people who once lived from farming their land cannot grow everything they need, and the bartering system between villages has broken down. So everyone needs cash. The children need pencils; a radio needs batteries. The family is accustomed to sugar in their tea. For a wedding, or a funeral feast, they must serve rice.

Cash. Manu needs cash too. He has no more surplus corn to sell, no extra millet.

His physical strength is his only source of cash. So he sets out for Dharan in search of work. One by one, farmers join others selling their hillman's muscle.

A man's feet, not his load, betray the life of a farmer who has taken to portering. As the years pass, his neck muscles swell and his feet begin to flatten. His feet are doubly wide at the front, toes permanently spread, to grip the soil, shaped by the ground he walks on under those loads. Month after month, over trails of gravel, through silt along the river's edge, pounding boulders, kicking sand, gripping mud, the skin of his sole grows thick; and like the pad of a cow's foot, it is numb, numb to cold, numb to heat, numb to gravel on the path, numb to the knife edges of rocks and the prick of branches.

But this man is not a cow. His feet are not hooves, not dead leather. Eventually the skin on his feet will crack, the blood vessels underneath will break, and the raw nerves exposed in his skin will scream. But he's got to keep walking. If a sore dries one day, it splits against a rock the next, pressed under the weight of two men—himself and his load.

Manu, the porter, hates this pain because he can never forget it. When he removes his load and sits on a roadside and eats, when he fords a stream, when he sleeps, he feels his feet. He feels them more than he feels the weight of his load, more than the pressure of the tumpline across his forehead. The awful sting in his feet would keep him awake if it were not for his utter exhaustion at the end of a day's trek under that load.

Sometimes, the sting disappears when he sleeps. Then, as soon as the load is in place on his back and his feet flatten out again on the path, the feeling of knives in his soles returns. Pus seeps from the abscess between his toes and sticks to rocks. Bits of sand mix with

blood inside the sore.

Only three more days. He thinks of the packet of cash waiting for him. He calculates. "From my hundred and twenty rupees, I must put aside ninety to carry home." He knows every anna of every rupee he can spend during the six day contract: "four for cigarettes, twelve for tea, nine for the pair of sandals, five for that café meal. The ninety rupees remaining must cover the family's purchases from the market: oil, sugar, salt, matches, a piece of lumber for the door frame, a few tablets, a meter of cloth. Beyond this, until the harvest is in, there is only debt.

As he walks forward, Manu is planning. "Oldest daughter is seventeen; we need her to work the fields while I am away, yet she must also marry. We have been asked for her, and the boy's family will take care of her. It is a good chance."

Manu keeps moving, one foot, then the next. If he slowed down, he would break the momentum and the load will only seem heavier when he starts up again. He peers upward, to the pipal tree a hundred yards ahead. He can rest there and adjust the strap that is cutting into his shoulder. He moves his feet mechanically, propelling himself along the dusty path, towards the stone shelf he knows beneath the tree.

Manu and his cousin Kanchha often travel together from Dharan to Dingla. Kanchha is a good companion and Manu feels they keep each other safe. Nowadays a good travelling partner is not easy to find.

Kanchha is fifteen years younger than Manu and he carries the same load at a faster pace. Still, it is noon and by now Kanchha should have caught up with Manu. Manu does not want to sleep alone tonight.

Manu finally sights the roadside platform and almost stumbles up to it. Slowly, he eases the basket on his back against the hillside. Manu's neck muscles loosen as the basket bottom touches the stone behind him. For the first time in two hours, Manu can pull the tumpline off his forehead. The salty cord drops and rests across his collarbone, and now Manu can hold his head erect. He lets the air come out of his lungs.

The sting on the bottom of Manu's feet rise to his brain. He winces.

Another porter arrived plodding uphill towards Manu. His face seems familiar. He doesn't stop but as he passes he says quietly, "Was that your partner down there in Basantapur, the one who was tipsy last night? He's moving fast, only an hour behind; says to wait for him at the ferry."

Manu nods to the messenger. He feels relief. But another worry pushes into that space in his mind—his daughter. "I cannot send her to carry baskets from Dharan. Only Sherpa women porter nowadays. It's not respectable. It is shame for a Rai man to send his daughter to work on the roads, carrying oil." Manu heard stories in Dharan about the labour brokers and the girls. Sometimes a girl stayed back, thinking she could get an easy contract, but Manu and his friends knew what happened to her.

Last year, Karma's middle daughter never came back. They sent four men from the village to search for her. Even if she had fallen off a bridge, someone would have seen her. No. When a woman disappears, it's always to India.

"Maybe," Manu thinks, "if little Mina can find work in a carpet factory, she can earn enough to pay for her own dowry." He had heard about those factories in the capital whose bosses are foreigners. "The foreigners protect the girls. They give them free rooms too."

Manu resolves that he will send daughter Mina to the factory. He remembers the merchant at Chainpur who helps find jobs for the farmers and sends the girl's salary direct to the family. He can trust this man.

Manu bends to pull the tumpline onto his forehead. He fixes it in place, adjusts the basket into the shape of his back, and straightening his knees, steps forward onto the path.

It's another hour to Khandbari on the ridge but Manu will not stop until he reaches the flat road of the marketplace. He passes the airfield, and starts to climb again. Soon, he sees a group approaching – they are tourists with little green or orange backpacks and steel walking sticks. In the front are two old men, laughing with their Sherpa guides. He feels jealous of these Sherpa men. "Those are not Arun

Valley Sherpa. They are from west Nepal. None of them carries a load! They come here with the foreigners because the Sherpa broker pays the local bosses. We must not allow them to work our trails. The bosses take a commission; what do we get? We can haul those packs, tents, blankets, tables and sun-chairs, boxes of toilet paper and trays of eggs." Those jobs are easy compared to carrying loads from Dharan, and many men from here beg for a tourist contract even if it's only for a few weeks a year. Not Manu. He doesn't want to take orders from any Bhotia guy. He doesn't want to watch them swim naked with the foreigners below the bridge. Anyway, four months' work a year is not enough, not enough ninety rupee clumps of money in his pocket.

A white-skinned man in a green sunhat and with a camera in his hands jumps in front of Manu. He points his camera at the porter and snaps a photo. He gestures for Manu to wait while he sets his meter to take another picture. Manu can't stop. The foreigner moves behind him and Manu can hear clicking. Maybe he's taking a picture of Manu's thick legs, or the old sandals dangling from his basket.

The tourists and their helpers disappear down the path and Manu quickly forgets them; he's got to watch the traffic ahead. Three water buffalo loom above him. A herd boy grunts as he urges the animals forward. The beasts step heavily down the rocks towards Manu, moving as if in slow motion. "Water buffalos are stupid creatures, so stay clear of them," say the farmers. "Without warning, they will charge you. The load goes, then you."

Manu steps well clear of the path of the oncoming animals.

Halfway up the hill is a teashop. It's the rest stop where he often waits for his partner, and Manu knows it well. Three men are sitting on the bench in front of the shop but they do not nod an acknowledgment. Manu is just a porter while they are 'officials.' Each wears his civil service uniform, a tailored suit-jacket over his fold-over shirt and cotton trousers. Each has shoes and socks while Manu is naked except for his undershorts and his soiled T-shirt. He hears no "Ho, bhariya!" No "ali kati arak liu hos." (Come oh porter! Have just a sip with us.) The men continue talking to one another.

Manu plods on, stepping on rocks as he ascends. His body moves rhythmically, the momentum from one step helping the next one.

He mustn't stop.

Finally, the path widens. Another five hundred feet to the ridge where the path is smooth and free of boulders. He passes the new hospital; no electricity yet, but they have a real doctor. Doctor Sahib has the authority to requisition a plane seat on the Twin Otter for any patient and that's as much power as the C.D.O., chief district officer. This hospital and the doctor increase the prestige of the town. Land prices on this side of the hill shot up by fifty percent even before the building was completed. A doctor is an important man here.

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*Manu reaches the ridge where the path moves to the east side of the mountain and he can see the entire valley and beyond, if he looks up. A magnificent panorama of the Milke Danda ridge lies on the northern horizon. But the porter does not seem to notice. His eyes glance to a row of three buildings against the mountain wall. He cannot remember seeing them before. They must be new. The second story of each structure has rooms that open onto a balcony. The shops on the street level are open. In front are children in soft blue school uniforms. The boys and girls run and shriek happily as they move towards school. They skip around Manu. For them he's part of a moving landscape. All porters are bent and silent as they slip across the mountains. No one hears their voices or looks into their tired eyes.*

*Manu passes the new shops. Glass jars in one store stand side by side along a shelf and they sparkle in the sun. Each is filled with something sweet: candies, biscuits, chewing gum. Their colors are pretty. A bead of sweat from Manu's scalp is running along his neck. He wants to scratch it but cannot take even one hand off the tumpline.*

*He smells something fragrant. Is it the flowers on the balcony ledge, or the ladies standing there?*

*Above the shops, women lean over railings of the balcony outside their apartment doors. Each watches her children skip along the path until they have disappeared from view, then smile over at the other women. More lonely wives of clerks. One by one, the women turn away and in a moment each returns to the balcony with armfuls of bedding. Each spreads out her quilts to air on the rail, as the sun now*

*comes full force above the Milke Danda.*

*A man steps from a door in the row of shops and enters the path. Manu understands the man's sense of self importance and he slows to let him pass, then falls quietly behind. The clerk's flowered topi and civil servant uniform are fresh and crisp. The blue cotton clothes of the man reminds Manu of a suit of his own, now folded inside a wood trunk, up in the village. Manu wears it only at festivals nowadays. Was it two years ago Manu last unpacked it? Was it for Dasain festival? Or was it his young brother's wedding?*

*For an instant Manu remembers the feel of that soft cotton on his arms. When he wore it, his people said, a spirit entered Manu. "Watch out for Manu," they tease. "When he dances, Manu is a killer." Yes, Manu loved dancing and, although he moved his body ever so slightly, one arm folded behind, and the other in the air, his wrist gently spiraling above his head, even older women giggled. His wife protested half-joking. She herself had fallen in love with Manu when watching him dance. Recalling her gaze then, Manu sighs, and as he does, his grip on the tumpline of his load relaxes.*

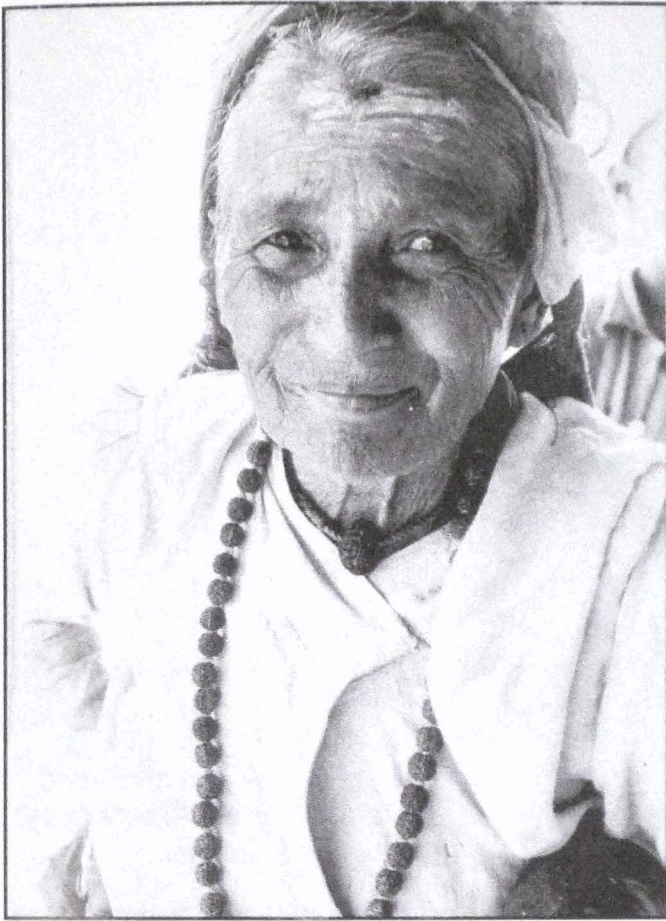
*Suddenly, Manu stumbles. His basket! It begins to tip. He steps sideways under it to rebalance the weight. He pauses, jolted back to the present. Sweat is dripping down his face. But he presses ahead faster and can regain his momentum. Another fifty yards and he steps around the bend of the mountainside and towards the village square. Men and women and children are crisscrossing the open space around him and a shudder of fear overtakes him. Perhaps someone from the village will see him bent under his basket, dressed only in these undershorts and a sweaty topi.*

*He walks across the grand, hard-packed square as if on a stage. But Manu needn't worry; he's invisible.*

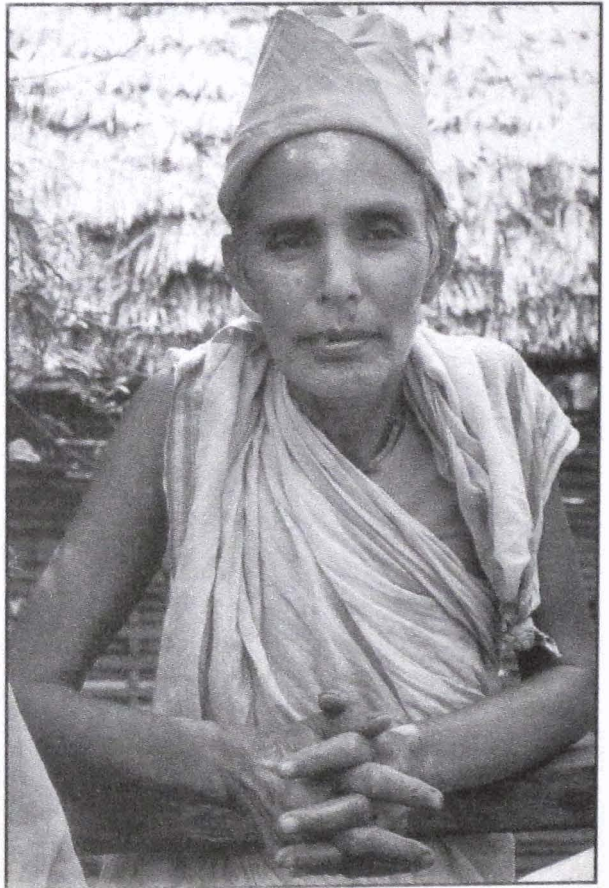
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*It happened on a mountain bridge.
A cradle on her back, she crossed
to barter beans for salt.
Unsteady from hunger, she stumbled.
Abh! The cradle slipped.
The baby toppled,
screaming,
Abh, into the greedy waves of Kali.
That was death.*

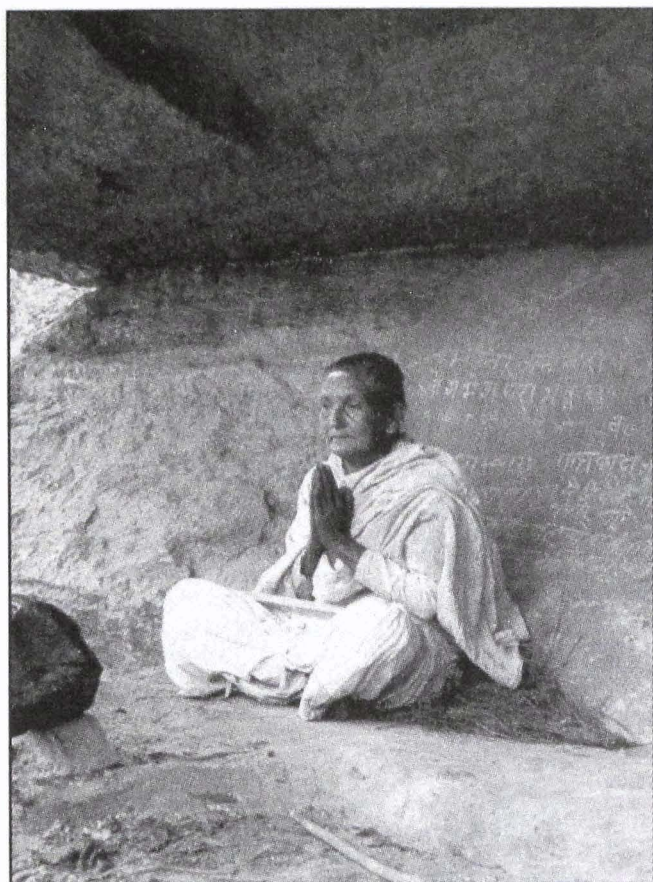
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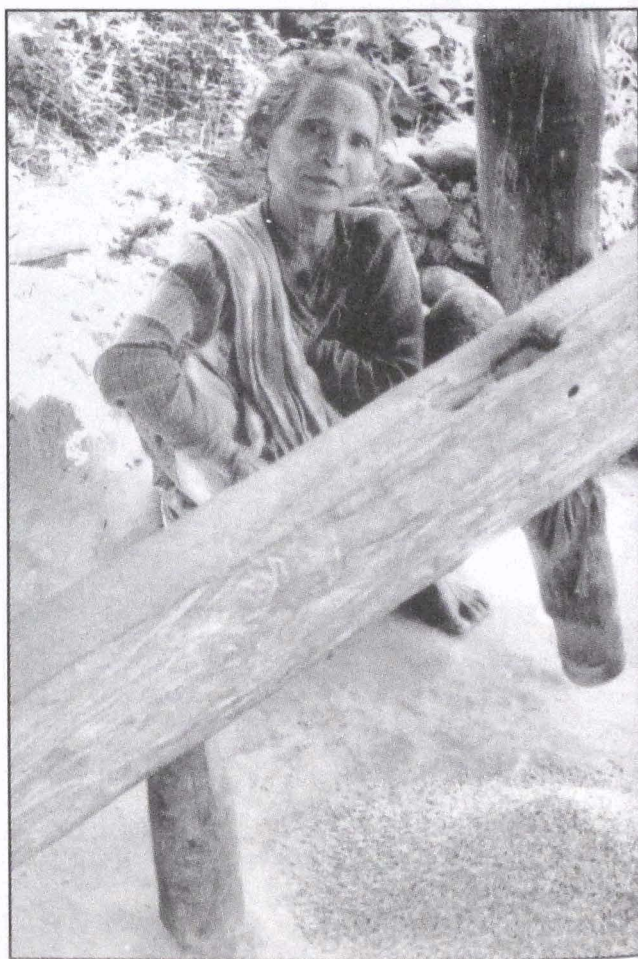
*Bhakti Aama, devotee of
Yogamaya and resident of
Manakamana*



*Damodara, Sanyasi and
Mata of the Manakamana
hermitage*



Gaurini Cave near Kulung where Yogamaya meditated in 1920s is still visited mostly by women sanyasi



Manamaya, expert in the hazurbani

Chapter 3

YOGAMAYA: Poet, Teacher, Insurgent

तेरा काखको मै नानी,
मेरा काखको तै नानी ।
दोस्रो त अर्को होइनन्,
तेरै आँखा भित्र देख् पानी ॥

*I am the child in your lap.
You are the babe in mine;
There is nothing between us, nothing at all.
Your eyes have tears, just like my own¹.*

"Yogamaya had a two-pronged agenda, not just one," explained Manamaya. "Her first target was our Brahmanic system, propagated by Brahmin priests, that gives privileges to a few and makes rules that enslave the rest, and women of all castes. Her second object was our ruler, the Prime Minister², who along with his generals allowed corruption and inequality to prevail. Our master, Shakti Yogamaya, showed us how these two evils are intertwined, and she feared neither." With this, Manamaya uttered another of Yogamaya's compelling verses.

ब्राह्मण् भई सर्व चिज्को विक्रि गरेको,
मालिक् भई दुःखिहरूको वृत्ति हरेको।
अहिले गछौं भलाद्मिहो आफ्ना खुशइले,
भित्र जरा हालि सक्यो लोभि घुसइले॥

*Nowadays Brahmins, live as you wish,
Like lords, you plunder the poor.
How corrupted, you sell your trust.
How deep, the roots of your greed.*

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1. My translations throughout are loose interpretations. The Nepali text is excerpted from the book of Hazurbani (See Appendix). Although the originals may contain a few errors, we have left them untouched.
 2. From 1769 to 1951 Nepal was ruled by a succession of hereditary Prime Ministers of the Rana family. Juddha Shamsher Rana (1932-45) was in power when Yogamaya was active, but her campaign began during the rule of his predecessor Bhim Shamsher (1929-1932).

In these two quatrains lie the essential teachings of a woman who launched a brilliant and a daring political campaign from her base in the hills of East Nepal. It took place during the 1930s, and ended in 1940 with her death, along with sixty eight of her followers who one by one followed her into the thundering current of the Arun River. After leading a campaign for reform and justice, Yogamaya finally confronted the ruler with an ultimatum: “If you do not grant us justice, we will die,” she declared. Juddha Shamsheer responded by sending his army to round up the protesters.

The tragedy that resulted remains a stain on the government. The Nepalese authorities covered up the episode and banned all mention of her. Her campaign was thoroughly expunged from the nation’s historical record and almost lost to its political consciousness. But the powerful verses composed by Yogamaya – the *hazurbani* – survived. And therein lies the story.

I am the child in your lap, / You are the babe in mine.

On the surface, these lines may appear to be politically innocent. They are not. They embody the very principle of equality and the anti-Brahmanic message central to Yogamaya’s teachings. They call for parity and mutual respect. Couched in the metaphor of a child, defined by two equal partners, Yogamaya’s words appeal to the humble, common origins of each of us.

“*There is nothing between us, nothing at all.*” In a society in which people are strictly and irrevocably distinguished at birth according to the caste membership of their parents, this invocation is sheer heresy. Her ideal of intermingling was possible only if caste differences were abandoned. Yogamaya called for her people to engage in unfettered reciprocity, through nurturing, marriage, and all other social exchange.

“*Your eyes have tears just like mine.*” Her words are a tender reminder of the sensitivity of all of us. We have common needs, joys and suffering, she said. Perhaps the tears Yogamaya speaks of here are the laments of men and women, bound against their will by society’s caste rules. Those laws destined some to be lower, and poorer, and to thereby suffer many deprivations.

Caste is a system of defining the social world of humans in terms of a hierarchical spiritual scheme, with the ‘high-born’ Brahmin

representing the head of Lord Brahma while everyone else (not born a Brahmin) is ranked below. Considered to be “pure” by virtue of their caste status, Brahmins are segregated by social rules which especially affect Brahmin women. They may only marry Brahmin men and they cannot remarry, even if the boy they are betrothed to dies before they take up residence together. Caste rules were laid out in the Hindu scriptures long ago. The system continues into modern times and defies all attempts to end it. In India it seems as firmly entrenched as ever. During the past century in Nepal, caste practices have spread with the growing influence of Brahmin priests. They have penetrated almost every corner of the country, converting Buddhist and shamanic believers and incorporating them into the caste hierarchy. The Newar and many Gurung, Tamang, Magar and other tribal groups have adopted the Hindu system of segregation. Since caste ideology bestows privileges and moral authority on those deemed higher in the social hierarchy, people accept the ideology hoping to win a high status and the privileges that go with it. Most converts find themselves in the lower ranks. Their efforts to challenge the system are opposed by the priests, the public, and the government. Yogamaya not only rejected her caste status. She attacked the priests.

अठार पुराण नौ व्याकर्ण,
यही सचेत् जिव्को सबै चाकर
ब्राम्हणको छोरो बेद पढ्छ,
म थाङ्गने लाई भेट गर्छ॥

*Eighteen puranas, nine vyakarnas;
He who knows these is well served.
Sons of Brahmins, go read your vedas.
For us ragged ones, they're of no benefit.*

Yogamaya accused the priests of hypocrisy. Their teachings, she said, served only to gain privileges for themselves. The power of Brahmin religious authorities was intertwined with the ruler's, and Yogamaya's attacks embraced the Prime Minister (referred by his subjects as Teen Sarkar) equally boldly as her assaults on the clergy.

धन्य हो रजा तिनू सर्कार,
सलामि दिन्छु बारम्बार।
माकुरो कपास्को कमाइ नलाउने,
धार्गै धागाने र उह्रि घर भर्ने॥

*Teen Sarkar, you are so great;
Again and again I praise you.
Like a spider who neither ploughs nor sows,
Yet swells rich, and richer still more.*

She called for the end of the fateful alliance between religion and state. Religious practices would not absolve the corrupt. They would not shield them from Yogamaya's attacks.

हरिका तिर्थ हुन् महिमा गर्नलाई, *Visiting tirthas to cleanse their sins,*
जान लागे सब वाहि मर्नलाई॥ *Tyrants and cheaters rush there to die.*
अघि त निर्धाको सम्पती हरे, *Plundering the poor and stealing their food,*
क्षत्रमा बसेर खर्च त्यै गरे॥ *With that loot, paying their fare.*

Yogamaya warned those seeking redemption through religious rites to beware. Theoretically speaking, should a worshiper die during pilgrimage they are assured a more favorable rebirth. As the rich approach old age, they attempt to improve their chances of high rebirth with abundant ritual observance, including visiting *tirtha*, holy paces. "You can't win redemption by paying with what you've stolen from others," said Yogamaya. "Instead of winning rewards in the next life, you'll be punished for your crimes."

The four verses cited above summarize the Yogi's basic message. They are formidable for the era in which she taught them, and daring in today's political climate too.

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In 1981, when I first heard these poems, they were sung and I could not understand the political implications of such creations. I was after all, illiterate in Nepali language and quite unaware of their simple but metaphorical message, being also ignorant of the political history of the region. I was a mere transient, intending to stop only for a night at the hermitage in Manakamana which initially appeared to be a sleepy retreat inhabited by feeble women who had come here to escape their personal problems or the ailments of their society and government, and pray together.

हेर्न केटा तमसुक्मा येति बडेको      *Any child knows an inflated bond.*  
अनतरयामि प्रभु देख्छन् धर्म छोडेको।      *So our Lord is witness to fraud.*  
लोभर अन्यायका अक्षर लेखौं,      *Some play blind to greed and injustice*  
आफु सत्य भगवान्‌ले रछ, देखेको॥      *But never, our Lord.*



Enchanted, then smitten, then compelled to pursue what lay behind verses I heard that first night, I stayed on, and then returned to work with those women. Manamaya would be assigned as my teacher by Damodara or Mata, the head of this hermitage. She welcomed Jangbu and me the first time, when we walked out of the hot afternoon sun into the shade of the prayer hall. We bathed in the icy river, then ate, and rested in the prayer hall. That night, my companion slept in shelter of the open prayer hall where male visitors were bedded. I was taken to the hut of one of the women. Before I slept, I heard her singing the verses. I was stirred by their force. These were not the normal praises to the divine, either Hindu nor Buddhist, I had heard living among Tibetan nuns and monks and visiting Hindu ashrams in the course of my travels through India and Nepal. They were unlike the jolly folk songs of the Nepalese hill people. These verses possessed an elegance and a rhythm completely unfamiliar to me. I also felt they carried a special message because the woman who sang them seated in the dark next to me, uttered the words with an energy that seemed to lift her from her piety and old age. I sat up and listened as she continued, and I could not sleep for a long time, as they repeated in my mind. Outside the jungle air throbbed with the calls of night insects and the Arun River flowed with a rumbling *chalung, chalung* sound.

धिरेधिरे यो कलिका स्वभाव टानेछन्,  
 माहा राज्का पल्टन् सबै सपेत पार्ने छन्।  
 जान्ने त म जान्ने हुइन यति भने लौ,  
 अहिले हत्पत् गर्नु छैन पछि बुझ्ने छौ॥

*An evil man's rule cannot last.  
 His army is certain to crumble.  
 Powerless though I am, I'll say  
 Your reign will end.*

Early next morning I went directly to Mata and asked what were these songs I heard in the night, and she replied quietly, "These are the teachings of our guru." She leaned her head back against the trestle fence. "Hazur<sup>3</sup> is our leader," she sighed. I did not know Mata but when she said this, she seemed to be unburdening herself of a long held secret.

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3. Hazur is an honorific title for a man or woman, secular or religious. Yogamaya's followers referred to her as Thulo (great) Hazur, and Shakti (holy) Yogamaya.

Mata had already decided that my arrival here was divine provenance. My attraction to and curiosity in the *hazurbani* now convinced her of this, and she received me as if it was her duty to help me. In the coming days, and on my subsequent visits, she saw to it that I had every assistance from her companions at the hermitage, who proved to be the only reliable source on Yogamaya, and the only people willing to risk teaching me.

Mata, like the other inhabitants of Manakamana, spoke about Yogamaya as if she was still among them. I saw no outward sign of Hazur Yogamaya, no photograph on the wall below an image of Lord Vishnu or next to the color poster of the monarch or alongside the portrait of a local notable. There was no distinguished dwelling, no sign of a monument. "Where is your guru now?" I asked.

"Hazur went to heaven. In the year Vikram Sal 19974." I said nothing, and Mata added: "The gates of heaven opened for her."

This guru was not a man but a women, they also called Shakti Yogamaya. Being a revered woman yogi poet still did not explain the aura of mystery that surrounded this woman. "And the *hazurbani*?" I asked.

"These words are the teachings of our master." She did not call them prayers. Before you came, no visitor asked about the *hazurbani*," she said with a warm smile. "We are glad you are here and we will help you." Then she asked a puzzling question: "Are you not afraid?"

यसै लोभले गर्दा अन्याय परेको,  
मालिकहरूले आशा राखेनौ भरेको॥  
प्रभु देख्न लागे त्यो निर्धो मरेको,  
मालिकहरू हो यो के काम गरेको॥

*All this greed makes more injustice.  
Oh Master, you promised us hope.  
God, we watch the helpless die.  
Oh Master, what is it you do?*

Mata's head was shaven and a thin covering of white hair was visible around the edge of the orange cap she wore. She was clad only in a light cloth sari, the dress of a Hindu ascetic<sup>5</sup>, a *sanyasi*. Mata was

4. 1940 AD. The Nepalese calendar is calculated starting 57 years before the Gregorian calendar.

5. Renunciates are called *sanyasi*. Women renunciates are also known as *bhaktini*

68 at the time. A few years before, she had taken complete vows of asceticism. She lived at the shrine, independent of her family, tending a small garden patch beside her hut. She ate only once a day, and never touched meat, milk or eggs. She ran the hermitage but spent most of her hours alone in prayer. Occasionally her sons and grandchildren visited her. I saw how others respected her, the women here, local farmers and other visitors to the hermitage. Despite this status, and even though she was gentle and generous, Mata seemed to me to lack real calmness and inner peace. Later I concluded she regretted she had not accompanied her master through the gates of heaven over 40 years before. Becoming a *sanyasi* did not seem to reconcile her decision either. So now, was she somehow redeeming herself by trusting me?

Mata did not undertake to teach me. But she knew precisely who among the other women with her would be most helpful for my research. "Come," she said, standing and extending her hand to me. "You will meet Manamaya and Bhaktini Aama. They will teach you about Hazur."

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Manamaya had an energetic voice and was known for her ability to recite the *hazurbani* uninterrupted for many hours. She sang verses for me during those first days, and with Jangbu's help, I recorded many of them on my small tape recorder. Although, without translations, I was unaware of their full meaning at that stage. I was however convinced they were something very precious. I noted how, when either Manamaya or Bhaktini Aama sang them for me, they did so in the privacy of their small dwellings, and at night. Why did they not sing these lines in public?

The night before I was to depart after this short visit, Mata called me to her hut, and as if to seal our bond, she gave me a gift. She unfolded a small parcel bound in cloth which she pulled out from under her mattress. She peeled back the cloth wrapping to reveal a sepia brown booklet. She lifted the book from its protective wrap and she extended it to me, cradled in both of her palms. "Take this, along with the recordings you have made."

I turned the book over in my hands. It was not a manuscript but it was something very precious. Mata said, "In here you will find Hazur's teachings." I leafed through the book; it began with a few pages of prose, then sixty pages of verse, all in quatrains, and each one numbered. All were in Nepali language. On the back cover was stamped the name of the press. It was not published in Nepal but in north-east India.

Those few days and a handful of verses began a long inquiry, where, verse by verse, episode by episode, I began to piece together an ephemeral, fragmented history. I learned it only slowly and haltingly.

At the beginning, these women spoke about Yogamaya's spiritual powers. The first verses I learned appeared to extol a state of bliss. Her followers referred to her "fearlessness of nature" and they praised her "meditations in the icy river."

"Hazur accepted no authority but that of the divine," they said. "She worked for *dharma raj*," they told me. *Dharma raj*? *Dharma*: religion; *raj*: ruler. Was this rule by religion? Was she advocating that the ruler be a priest? If so, how could she be anti-Brahmanic?

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Manamaya, who was a frequent resident at the shrine, became my chief guide. She did this primarily by reciting the *hazurbani* for me, because, she said, these embodied the teachings of Yogamaya.

यक् वर्ष दिन्का दुई भाग लगाई,  
गर्ने विधि आफ्नु रितू जनाई।  
गर्मि भए मा पनि अग्नि तापून्,  
ठण्डि भए मा जल भित्र पस्तू

*Parting the year in two,  
Accordingly I preform my rites.  
In summer, favor a scorching fire;  
In winter, delight an icy river.*

Praise of nature. Also love of land, or homeland.

पर्वत माहाँ मुख्य भनेर, भन्छन्,  
हिमालययै देखि नदी बहन्छिन्।  
नाउँ अरूण हो संगमा बरूण छन्,  
इन्द्रा वती फेरि च्याहि मिसिन्छन्॥

*Supreme among peaks, this our Himalaya  
From where waters flow, Arun merges  
And with Barun, flows on  
To mingle with Irkhuwa.*

Here begins a hint of her vision of equality. Manamaya explained how Yogamaya, through her long meditations in the caves and on the bank of the great Arun, overcame distinctions; not just physical ones but social ones too.

From my studies of Tibetan and Indian ascetics, Milarepa and Pha Dampa Sangyas, I had learned about women and men who renounced social life with its burdens of attachments, material and emotional, and escaped to mountain caves, removing themselves from temptations and attachments. They invented techniques to achieve and test their detachment. Yogamaya's verses, by contrast, seemed to be about creating attachments. She invoked images of her jungle surroundings. But viewed from the perspective of an ideal of equality, the verses become transformed. "*As the rivers Arun and Barun mingle,*" Yogamaya declares. People must merge into a society of equals. We suddenly grasp her political goal: to move towards equality. She and her followers needed a supreme confidence to face those they would challenge in pursuit of this dream. Public rebuke, threats by the priests, and arrest by the general's troops would follow.

लोभले गर्दा धर्मको नष्ट पारी,  
नियाँ त्यसको थियो लियो घुस हकारी॥  
दोहोरो त्यो दण्ड त्यसैमा लगायो,  
थियो जित्ने मुद्दा त्यो मुद्दा हरायो॥

*Virtue, stained by greed.  
Justice, undone by bribes.  
Though innocent, we lost.  
Thus, we're twice punished.*

Eventually, Yogamaya's teachings became a comprehensive utopian ideal, linked with a non-violent political strategy she devised to bring it about. It began four decades before the United Nations sponsored an international convention on women, before the current generation of American feminists was born, and even before Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent Quit India movement was underway, a campaign to rid India of British occupation. But Yogamaya's movement went further because it included a call to end injustice against women and girls.

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Manamaya was a superb choice as my teacher, and Mata, who had instructed her to assist me, was gratified with our progress. On my

second visit in 1982, and during my stays between 1983 ad 1986, Manamaya was there to take me step by step back into history. This time Jangbu was not with me, but I was lucky to have another assistant, Dharma, a young man from Khandbari town. He came to stay with us in the hermitage and work as my interpreter. As it turned out, he became attracted to Yogamaya and asked the women to teach him the *hazurbani*. In turn, they treated him like a grandson, and I noted how this modern young man, who was not a Brahmin but a Newar, was completely at home with the lady hermits. Dharma was a faithful translator, but I think his overriding value to our project came from his growing love of Yogamaya, as together we learned more about her campaign.

By day we worked with Manamaya gathering together the disparate fragments of this mysterious, brilliant woman. At night, I retired to the hut of Bhaktini Aama, and after the flames of the hearth faded to a glow, still reclining under her cotton cover, in the dark, she began to recite more *hazurbani*. We would then rekindle the fire, and I would watch her glowing face transform as she sang. Her eyes were moist and her body was lithe. It was not difficult to imagine this 82 year old woman as a young militant fifty years earlier, beside her guru.

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| घेटिया काम् नभै दौलथ् जम्दैन, होइन भन्नता कोहि पाउदैन। सम्पति हुनेको तिर्थमा छ फल् दुखिले गर्दछौ आत्मा चिन्ने बल्॥ | <i>Wealth cannot multiply without fraud No one says this isn't so. The rich make pilgrimage to garner benefits While we poor go in search of our souls.</i> |
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Bhaktini Aama stirred the air with her hands, her fingers flicking, her voice rising. She had been one of hundreds of young people who took their children and traveled upriver to sit near their master. There, they were able to name the villains, and to declare their equality.

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| बिन्ति गर्दछू, सर्कार मान्नु होस्, अव ता धर्मको स्थिति बान्नु होस्। लोभि लुब्ध चाल् सकल टूट्नेछ, उल्का लोकमा ज्यादा उट्ने छ॥ | <i>When greed and malice fade, The earth will tremble, the corrupt will fall. Teen Sarkar, hear my verse. It's time for justice.</i> |
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While Bhaktini Aama recited Yogamaya's verses in private, I continued to rely on Manamaya to explain the rationale of the Yogamaya's teachings and career to me. Manamaya was a feisty and frank woman without restraint when speaking about the past or the present. She had not yet taken her *sanyasi* vows and so she did not shave her head, eschew her jewelry and don the simple cotton sari. But she did receive Mata's permission to build a hut at the hermitage, and lived there a few months each year. "What can I do? I must go home to hoe and plant my fields." A year earlier, she told me, forty years after they had first wed, her husband decided to take a second wife. Why? Because Manamaya had only birthed girl children. When he brought his new wife home, Manamaya, almost sixty, disapproved and refused to be silent. She insulted him and broadcast his abuse and she cursed the old man in public. "I must divorce him and take my land. I cannot live in my own house with his new woman. He expects me to help her. Phuh. My children cry, my grown daughters and their husbands are ashamed of their father. Yet what chance have I in these courts where the Brahmin priests tell our judges how to rule. Phuh. Where shall I go? Shall I become a servant cook? So I am here, with Mata's permission and kindness. I spend winter here. In summer I must go home to harvest the paddy and thresh the rice. I cannot trust anyone to collect my share of the grain and carry it to me here at Manakamana. If I harvest it myself, I take my real share, and I will have enough surplus and put my money in a bank."

Unless she obtains a divorce, and that would be very difficult, Manamaya has no control over the family's land. She could not dispose of even a square meter of it. If she remains in the house, she may use the produce of the fields but she must also cultivate them. Most women do not challenge ill treatment from their husband or his family. If abused, they tend to submit, fearing they will be turned out and find themselves completely homeless and penniless. They tolerate the indignity of receiving their husband's second wife because of that same fear.

Manamaya had loving daughters, but staying with them was not an option for her. Each girl lives with her husband and her mother-in-law. "My girls come to see me at Manakamana. Sahili here is my favorite daughter." Sahili wears a flowered print skirt, and like her

mother, she decorates her hair with a blossom plucked from the jungle each morning. When she visits Manamaya she brings her little girl with her. “Look,” said the grandmother. “Even now, Sahili worries that if she bears no son, her marriage might end the same way as mine.”

But about her guru, she was animated and undespairing. “I was newly married and determined to hear Shakti Yogamaya. Each time we went upriver to Majhuwa, more boys and girls from our villages joined us. I took my sister with me since my husband would not come. Bhaktini Aama took along her husband and her daughter to Majhuwa. Mata's husband would not join us, and he even tried to stop her; but Mata went anyway. She accompanied her brother and his wife, and all their children. Shanti Nanda joined us too. See how feeble Shanti is – she has more than four score years. Then, she was young, and strong minded. Bharat Dhoj with his new wife, and his uncle and aunt were with Hazur.”

Manamaya spoke of the gatherings at Majhuwa as if they were political rallies, which in fact, they were. These men and women were Nepal's 1930s equivalent of contemporary American or European protest marches and teach-ins. This Nepalese grandmother talked about them the same way that I hear sixty-year old Americans who took part in their anti-Vietnam rallies speak about that era and the civil rights movement by African Americans which preceded it. “We were discovering the truth, and we convinced our friends and cousins to join us, certain that Yogamaya's words would change them too. Our numbers grew and we became more fearless, and then our master began to move towards the ruler himself.” Doubtless the young rebels were emboldened by their growing numbers and the conversion of women and men from well-known families. As Manamaya explained: “Some of our people heard Yogamaya teach at Pashupatinath in Kathmandu and left their houses (this was around 1935) to follow her to Majhuwa and they joined us. Often we remained at Majhuwa through the night, singing with our master.”

छाप यिन्का जाहां लाग्यो ताहां लाग्यो चीनु,
हुकुम भइ गो त्यस्लाई रस्ता खुला गराइ दिनु।
मस्तक्बाट निस्केको जिव् प्राप्त हुन्छ, बाहिं,
छैन त्यस्को देह रहँदै न कहीं॥

*Your seal is sovereign; clear any path.
Your order is supreme; name any wish.
Unopposed, you decide, you rule.
So go on: Command. Decree. But not
forever.*

Dharma asked: “What drew you to Shakti Yogamaya when you were so young?”

Manamaya replied, “I was fifteen, newly married—a planned marriage like everybody else. I knew other women were also forced into their unions. Old men take young girls just because a man must have a Brahmin virgin. We endured those unhappy unions and said ‘*Ke garna sakchha?* – what can one do? It is our life.’ Who dared shout that it was unjust. And we destined our daughters to the same fate by marrying them when they are so young. If a boy died, he left his widow as a mere child. What should be done with her, poor thing? We let the priests answer, and they said she must not marry again – imagine, even though they had not lain together and she was still a virgin – since that would bring disgrace on the family and the Brahmin caste, if a man of lower caste should touch her. So we keep her at home or send her to India to work as a cook, because some think only a ‘pure’ Brahmin may prepare their food. Serving as a cook is all she can do, they say.

“Some of our girl children kill themselves because they cannot bear the loneliness, the abuse in an unkind home, the ordeal of serving others all their life. Even today, some women step into the waters of the Arun to join Hazur. Do you know?”

“The first problem is the priests. We allow priests to dictate who is right and who is wrong, who is pure and who is not, who is strong and who is weak. They work with the ruler to make laws and they use those laws for their gain. Whoever ruled, this was the way. So our master’s aim was not to oust a boss man. We know that another guy, maybe worse, would replace him. She showed us injustice was not a mere man who ordered the army to imprison us. Yogamaya’s object was to throw out the political system and Brahmanic laws, and the priests. The whole system had to be undone. That’s what she taught us.”

Through her verses, Yogamaya was able to imbue her followers with extraordinary courage. Some even dared to abandon their caste. Manamaya told me how the Yogi applauded a widow who defied caste law and remarried. She said, “Let Brahmin and Limbu unite. Let the babe in your lap be mine.”

“Shakti Hazur did not give speeches. We did not have to be taught. We felt her guidance through the *hazurbani*. All our Yogamaya’s teachings are in the *hazurbani*.”

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Those teachings and the assemblies around the Yogi at Majhuwa between 1930 and 1940 mark the later stages of Yogamaya’s work<sup>6</sup>. Before her rise, she endured many years of difficulties, starting with her banishment from her village, Kulung. In the early years of the century, when she was still a girl, she had to run away because of her liaison with a man. She went to India and only returned home when she was in her thirties. After resettling near her home, she wandered alone through the jungles above the Arun River and spend long periods of isolation in caves.

Her campaign may be compared with other political protests. But Yogamaya’s strategy was unique, although it clearly belongs to Asia in its religious idiom. “She was deep in meditation night and day,” said Manamaya. “We sat nearby, above the bank of the river, and waited for her to emerge from her meditation, because that was when she would utter her *hazurbani*. Sanu Hazur (“little master,” Yogamaya’s daughter Nainakala) was as her mother’s side and she wrote out Hazur’s utterances. We did not have to be taught. We heard her words, and the spirit arose from within us.”

दौल थिया हुनु भयो त्याहि निर्धा बाटे,  
आसामिले कर्जा तिन्यो तमसुकछ ठाडै।  
तोरो थियो बालख बाबु मरेछ,  
लोभि साहु माग्न गयो तिर्नु परेछ॥

*How riches grow by trickery.  
You say the debt still stands!  
I know the dead man paid his due--  
Yet to his boy, you say 'give more.'*

Yogamaya’s repeated reference to corruption and trickery were directed at the Brahmin class, those families who used their high-caste positions to intimidate the hapless peasants. Meanwhile they

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6. During my research I estimated Yogamaya’s birth at between 1870 and 1880, her return from banishment around 1925, and the start of her political campaign five years later. New research has established her year of birth as 1868. See Bhandari et al in Further Reading.

themselves escaped the law because of their alliance with the government.

Until three hundred years ago, the lives of most inhabitants of the eastern hills – Rai, Limbu and Magar peoples – were subject to the powers of earth and water spirits and mediated by local experts called shamans. Some women and men still use shamans to communicate with those spirits. They appease divine forces with the blood of goats and pigeons, or fire; they call on the earth and water and mountain gods to remove afflictions, to bring them sons and to keep away the hail. In the Arun Valley, villagers offer goats to Manakamana goddess to win a boy child, or they come to the riverbank nearby to make gifts asking for Lord Arun to help women conceive a boy, or pass an examination, or regain their health. Brahmins and other high caste people frown on these beliefs. Meanwhile Hindu influence is spreading into those areas through teachings and admonishing by priests. Even tribal peoples now seek help from the Brahmin priests who claim to possess the solutions for their afflictions. These new experts introduce social rules and order people to obey them as if they were state laws. They dictate to villagers what they may not eat, whom they may not marry, what is pure and impure, and what will befall them if they break these rules. Before 1854, it was usual to refer to the county's different ethnic groups or caste usages to maintain law and order. Under increasing Brahmin influence social behavior was regulated according to the ancient classical Hindu caste laws of Manu. Then, in 1854, these rules were collected and systematized into a national social code for all Nepal – The Muluki Ain (Law of the Land). Now each group's allocated place in the hierarchy was spelled out in the code. Grounded in the Hindu idea of ritual purity, the Muluki Ain regulates the lives of every citizen from birth to death, just as shari'a is adopted as the legal standard in an Islamic state, and archaic Hebrew laws apply to citizens of Israel, a Jewish state.

When Hindu priests in Nepal succeeded in consolidating their authority, the political ruler – the king – became its divine figurehead. To be divine, a ruler needs religious sanction and this in turn requires the service and authority of priests. Thus the ruling Ranas and later the Shah monarchs found themselves dependent on priestly sanction and

ceremony. Even with the restoration of democracy in Nepal in 1990, this alliance endures. Indeed, Nepal's Sacred Kingship became unassailable, encoded as it was in the new 1990 constitution. Even though democracy arrived after a hard-fought revolution, it did not wipe out privileges of the Highborn. Not even a popular secular revolution which restored democratic processes and elections removed what Yogamaya so fiercely and bravely campaigned against half a century earlier.

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An important feature of Yogamaya's early success was her close association with high-caste women and men like herself. She was Neupane Brahmin, and most of her followers were either Brahmin or Chhetri, members of Nepal's most privileged communities. Few of them were poor. "Who else could do this work but a Brahmin?" retorted Manamaya. "Any protest from the Rai people would end in a stroke," she said emphatically raising her arm and bringing it down with a thud, like a heavy *kukri* knife striking the ground. "If *they* tried, they were wiped out."

The woman was surprisingly pragmatic. "Because *we* are Chhetris and Brahmins, we are protected by the law against Brahmin murder. The government could not harm us. It could not strike Yogamaya or Mata down like they could Rai and Limbu women."

I struggled to understand this logic, and I gradually appreciated the power of the taboo against Brahmin murder. Then I could grasp the implications of Yogamaya's call for self-reform. As I struggled, Manamaya sometimes grew restless with me, but her impatience proved useful. "Listen to me, White Didi. Our call for change arose from within. We had to change ourselves first. '*Look again, the light is inside you.*' That Rai woman does not know child widowhood. She does not care what our priests say. We have to pay our priest a thousand rupees and a cow to burn our father's corpse. But she just brews a bottle of strong *rakshi* for the shaman and he will speak to her father's spirit. If we throw our caste away, the whole system falls apart. See, the Brahmin loses all his power and his wealth!"

Yogamaya insisted that social status was a fabrication. Rules enslave a woman, all the while purporting to protect her status. "We."

said Manamaya, thrusting her forefinger at her own chest, “we have to understand that we are not special, and we must reject those rules which try to claim we are special and separate. *We*, Brahmins, are the ones who refuse to marry. It is we who refuse food from others, who order others and expect them to obey us because we think we are better. Our *sarkar* could put an end to this if he were not in the hands of those priests.”

Yogamaya knew the reform-minded Brahmin rebels who supported her felt a strong sense of responsibility. Her appeals were therefore made to her own people to abandon *their* sense of speciality and *their* privileges, and rid themselves of the idea of purity. Only then, she taught, would they grasp the meaning of justice. Her religious idiom was appropriate in her time and culture too, a wise strategy few Western people appreciate.

“At that time Nepal was a religious-based regime. The best way to attack it was from inside, with its own logic,” explains Nepalese social critic and geographer, Dr. Harka Gurung. Gurung is a strong advocate of peasant rights in his country and he is an outspoken critic of caste privileges and monopolies. Even though a secular man, he fully comprehends the political dynamics of his country. “Rebellion had to come from within the Hindu community,” he says. “Brahminism itself gave rise to anti-Brahminism. Yogamaya was born Brahmin, and so she understood their logic. She knew the system well enough to design an effective strategy.”

Manamaya elaborated. “If a Rai guy marries a widow, the government doesn't care. His people say nothing as well. But when we defy the law, the Palace trembles. We are shaking the top of the social order. If a Rai girl runs away with a Sherpa, a month later, the couple can return to their house, and the families drink *rakshi* and dance all night. We? We are banished. Finished. *Bhayo*,” she said wiping her hands with the air. “If we run away with a lover, our Brahmin family performs our funeral. They consider us dead.” This is why Hazur said ‘*Look, it is inside you. See, there is nothing.*’ When we were with our master we lost our fear of the rules and the priests. Hazur taught us to completely purge ourselves of fear.” Her practices in self-discipline which took her beyond death, so that she could face the privileged

class and the inevitable wrath of the government. Steadily and unwaveringly, she was moving towards them.

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Perhaps Yogamaya's anti-Brahmin campaign is more comprehensible if we compare it to the call of contemporary Western feminists for consciousness raising. Women wanting real change first had to reflect on their role in social institutions which placed them second. We must examine ourselves, they said, in order to understand the system we are part of and to which we contribute. Only when we know our role within western patriarchy, can we comprehend the dynamic of our oppression. The 1970s feminists women taught that exploitation was not the action of single men, but derived from a system in which women and men were embedded. Fighting that institutional oppression was a large task because women had to change themselves, their brothers and fathers, their teachers and sometimes their mothers too – the very people they loved and depended on. "*You are the babe in my lap, I am the child in yours.*" The struggle has not ended in industrialized countries where education levels are so high.

Gandhi, when he was mobilizing his followers in the early stages of his Quit India campaign, advocated dropping caste rules. The great Indian reformer sought to unite his people by calling on his followers, many of whom were high-ranked people, to perform what they considered unclean acts: to take food from anyone, and to clean their own latrines. Those were profound acts of defiance, and difficult enough for Gandhi's closest associates to accept. Yogamaya went further than Gandhi. She instructed high-caste men and women who joined her to cohabit as they wished, to remarry, to accept food from any hand. Hers was a formidable proposal, so anathema to the society around her, that onlookers denounced her for advocating prostitution.

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Yogamaya's understanding of caste injustices began with her own painful experience as a child. Hardly ten years old, she found herself a child widow because the little boy to whom she was betrothed died. As a Brahmin, she was forbidden to remarry even another

Brahmin and thus could never enjoy a life-partner or be a mother. Yogamaya would not accept this.

“Our Hazur eloped! She was just a girl but see how courageous she was.” Manamaya laughed, and waited for me to grasp the significance of this outrageous action by her master. Elopement meant rebellion. Yogamaya began her life by defying Brahmin widowhood. One hears about non-Hindus eloping – not unusual in the tribal societies. But it is rare for Brahmin women, even more unthinkable if she is a widow.

Yogamaya not only defied the ban against remarriage. She crossed caste lines. Her lover – Manamaya would not call him a husband – was of another caste! When she eloped, this young Brahmin woman went into exile. She fled from the Arun Valley region altogether. Manamaya gave me no more details about this episode. “She went away,” was all anyone would say, “and for a long time no one heard from her.”

The young fugitive crossed to north India, to Darjeeling, most likely because of its Nepalese character. It was the refuge of for many earlier runaways from the north and is known as a city of lovers, refugees and fugitives. Darjeeling, according to historian Janak Lal Sharma, was the site of the Josmani religious movement at that time and he believes Yogamaya was associated with the Josmani during her stay in India⁷. On my next visit to the Arun Valley, in February 1983, I asked Mata about this. She was curt and defensive. “Yogamaya not part of anything. She was alone,” she insisted. Manamaya agreed. “She worked for no one.” Devotee Lochan Nidhi Tiwari in Kathmandu and others we interviewed, all maintained that Yogamaya had no teacher. As if that should somehow diminish her achievement..

My companions at Manakamana may have worried that my primary interest was shifting from their master to a larger political movement. They could not or would not help me probe that phase of the rebel’s life. But that should not shut the door on this direction of inquiry. The 1980’s American feminists were inspired by the Black civil rights movement of the 1960s. Martin Luther King Jr. was influenced by earlier generations of Black American activists as well

7. Sharma, J.L. n.d. *Josmani santa parampara ra sahitya* (Nepali) Kathmandu.

as Mohandas Gandhi, and Gandhi in turn was politicized by his experiences as a union lawyer in South Africa.

One would have expected Yogamaya to grow politically during her stay in India. India was in transition in the first half of the last century. West Bengal was a fertile political ground for young dissidents, and at the time Yogamaya was there, she could have found many ideologies to ponder. Calcutta was a vibrant intellectual center, where the Indian communists played an important role in the emerging independence movement. The city was also a focus of emerging anti-Brahmin philosophy promoted by secularized Hindus. No place in India matched Bengal for its political and intellectual ferment. Given Yogamaya's later political work and anti-Brahmin stand, she could have imbibed at least some of her reformist philosophy and non-violent tactics there.

Former Prime Minister B. P. Koirala told me in 1982 that when he was a lad, he met Yogamaya briefly at his home in Biratnagar, a city in southeast Nepal with close ties with nearby India. "She came to see my father," he said, "so they must have spoken about politics." The Koirala household was well known for its party activities, so the visit suggests the young rebel from Kulung was not politically naive. Unfortunately Koirala could say little else about Yogamaya's visit, except he noted she was not alone. "She had her daughter with her, I remember, a very bright little girl," said the old politician. "Nainakala?" I asked. He replied that was her name, and guessed the girl was about nine years old at the time⁸. Even when I told my friends at the hermitage about B.P. Koirala's comment, Manamaya, Bhaktini Aama, and Mata continued to deny any outside political ties. Yogamaya may have worked alone in Nepal, but before creating her own campaign, the woman from Kulung had lived in south Nepal or India for thirty years and must have been exposed to political issues and ideas. I suspect she also had contact with political parties or leaders.

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8. Yogamaya would have been about 45 years old at the time of this meeting, since according to Lochan Nidhi Tiwari who spoke with us in Kathmandu in 1984, Nainakala was born when her mother was nearly 36 years old.



Eventually Yogamaya came back to Kulung, and what motivated her return is another mystery. In any case, she was not alone. "Everyone was shocked when they saw her. She had Nainakala her daughter with her. No sign of a father!"

Yogamaya was scorned and ostracized but she had the support of her brother and she was able to stay on. He must have endured hostility and criticism too but he stood by his sister. With his wife Ganga Devi, he accepted Nainakala as his own child. Ganga Devi, an educated woman, tutored Nainakala while Yogamaya started her career.

Yogamaya did not remain long in Kulung. She left her daughter with her brother and sister-in-law, and set out to explore the surrounding region. Wandering the trails, moving up and down the banks of the Arun River, Yogamaya witnessed the daily trials of her people. She saw the cracked and bleeding feet of porters carrying their contracted loads for the fat merchants. She heard testimonies about abandoned little girls. She learned how peasants were dispossessed. She witnessed the vast fields belonging to men who were friends and officials of the Ranas. She saw how stones were mixed with grain, how women were forced into marriage, and later driven out, replaced by another wife. And from time to time, she retreated to meditate.

जङ्गल् सुसोभित् बनवारि पारी,  
पर्वतखडा छन्, अति भारि भारी।  
बस्ति नजिक्मा पनि छैन वाहाँ,  
तप् गर्नलाई अति बेस् छ त्याहाँ॥

*The forest is wondrous,  
our mountains majestic.  
Bare of houses, a place for a hermit.  
Thus, I pray. I meditate.*

"We need strength to live in the jungle." To Manamaya, Yogamaya's solitary expeditions were a prelude to her later revelations. "She feared nothing. She needed no food to sustain her. She moved alone, from the icy rivers into the jungles and through the hills, north to Khempalung Cave, and south to Halesi Cave, and further into the mountains, to the border of Tibet." This period of wandering was doubtless important in Yogamaya's development. And in her verses we can see a growing love for nature and homeland.

फुल्को तवाशन् कोहि दिन् लिएर,  
 सूर्यः तरफ् दृष्टि बहुत् दिएर।  
 लोक्का हे साक्षी तिमी हेरि लेउ,  
 इच्छा भए को वरदान देउ॥

*Living off the fragrance of blossoms,  
 Concentrating in the sun.  
 Oh, evidence of the world, look.  
 Come, favor me as you wish.*

With Mata I visited Gaurini Cave a short distance upriver from Manakamana and saw where Yogamaya had lived alone for several years. The cave was on a rocky slope above Majhuwa – a mere ledge under a huge overhanging rock. Although it was overgrown with vines and ferns, and not visible from the trail, Mata located it without difficulty. She pointed out to me the fresh flowers and oil which were obviously left there not long before we arrived. “Whoever believes in our master’s power comes here and make offerings.” Mata spoke in a hushed tone, and I thought, “Is worship of the rebel still forbidden?”

At the end of her months of wandering, Yogamaya stayed at Gaurini. “She stopped here to do her *tapasya* (austerities),” explained Mata. “She fasted. She subjected herself to the bitter cold of the Arun River. She sat with barely any covering during the winter nights. She denied herself sleep. She took a vow of silence.” Whoever speaks openly about Yogamaya today describes mainly her *tapasya*, not her political campaign. They recall her abilities to defy nature, about how she overcame feelings of cold or heat, hunger or loneliness. But perhaps they are implicitly praising her defiance of Brahmanism?

Yogamaya’s did not begin her political attacks until after she gained recognition for her *tapasya*. It seems that her yogic accomplishments began to attract attention. People who had once scorned her now began to show admiration. “Some said she was a god. They made offerings to her,” said Manamaya. “From villages on both sides of the Arun, women and men came to Gaurini in search of her blessing. They asked for her advice.” Yogamaya’s social trespasses were forgotten, at least while she directed her powers towards defying nature.

Eventually, at the insistence of the growing numbers of worshipers who sought her out, Yogamaya moved from Gaurini to Majhuwa, an open, uninhabited slope close to the river. Majhuwa was near a footbridge over the Arun and not far from the ferry crossing, so

it was easily accessible from both sides of the river.

This is where she stayed for nearly five years and where she gave birth to the *hazurbani*<sup>9</sup>. Under the tall trees beside the great river, Yogamaya emerged from meditation and began to utter verses, unlike anything anyone had heard.

पक्षीहरूले अति गान गर्ने,  
सुन्दै माहाँ चित्त बहूत हर्ने।  
स्वाँ स्वाँ गरि फेरि नदी सुसाउने,  
सुन्दै माहाँ चित्त बहूत खुसाउने॥

*So beautiful the bird's song,  
It kidnaps the heart.  
So gentle the river's whistle,  
Our heart is again captured.*

Witnessing her yogic powers, worshipers returned to their homes and urged others to hear the Yogi. Some experienced visions, and others spoke of their spiritual transformation. From Dambar B. Basnet, I heard the story of the young Tibetan herder who threw a stone at Yogamaya when she was meditating at Tordhapur Cave, and then realizing she was a yogi, apologized and begged her forgiveness. She replied “*I am not a god; I am the one discarded and despised by society. Thus I am obliged to prove my innocence.*”

More young farmers arrived in Majhuwa and eventually Yogamaya’s following exceeded anything seen in the area. Before long it would number two thousand.

Forty years later, Manamaya remembers her experiences with the Yogi. “Knowledge of what we can achieve surged from within us. We believed we could change our society and solve our problems ourselves.” She pressed her fist under her ribs and twists, pushing upwards. “No one commanded us to do what we did.” Manamaya insists. Hazur Yogamaya did not lecture on the ills of government, or tell us to rebel. “The truth lay in the *hazurbani*. She gave us the courage. That is all.”

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At Majhuwa, Yogamaya was joined by her brother, by Ganga Devi, and by Nainakala. Nainakala was now educated, and she and her

9. Estimated date is the late 1930s.

aunt stayed at Yogamaya's side, ready to transmit her teachings when she came out of her meditation. "Nainakala wrote down the *hazurbani* as Hazur revealed them to her," said Manamaya. "Ganga Devi was there too. It was Ganga Devi who created the music for the *hazurbani*. You will find no verses like those we sing."

माछन् कि भन्ने डर छैन केही,
आखिर काल गतिको छ भिरेको देही।
प्रभूका कृपाले गरि जन्म हुन्छ,
निहुँ काल जगतिले गरि जानु पर्छ॥

*Why fear execution?
A body is mortal, after all.
I arrived and exist by divine grace,
And being mortal, I'll also be gone.*

These words and their music captivated young men and women with their simple beauty. Then they reached into their social conscience to stir the imagination of the young people and awaken their political longings.

गुण् दिने ता अन्तरयामि दर्शन् दिने शीव,
यी आत्माका गुफा भित्र बसेको छ जीव।
फुल्को थुंगो रूजि रहन्छ बासन् रूज्दैन,
अगम् तत्त्व खोलि सकेँ लोक त बुझ्दैन॥

*The light is within you,
And you are inside the flame.
After all there is nothing;
Look again. There is nothing.*

'*There is nothing to it. Have courage,*' said the Yogi. Yogamaya did not order her followers to march on the palace or attack local police posts. What she advocated was simpler, and at the same time infinitely more profound. "She told us: 'You can change your life. You have it within you. There is no barrier but what you yourself build'."

It is noteworthy that her verses and philosophy did not attract old men and women, those usually seeking religious consultants and devoting themselves to prayer in their twilight years. Yogamaya appealed to the young. The majority of her followers were like Manamaya – young and adventurous. Many were newly married couples with young children. "Our parents stayed away from Yogamaya. We, me and my girlfriends, Mata and her brother, came to hear new ideas." Brothers brought their sisters, women their husbands, fathers their sons and daughters. They were young and hopeful. They

did not seek redemption for past crimes, but dreamed for ways to change their future.

One of Yogamaya's disciples was Prem Narain, a young mendicant who enjoyed a reputation as spiritual seeker. Some of his followers were Arun Valley Brahmins who lived in Kathmandu and gathered at Pashupatinath during the winter months. One was Lochan Nidi Tiwari who in 1984 told Uttam Pant about how Narain received a letter from Ganga Devi inviting him to the Arun Valley.

“Prem Narain. You have been searching for God all over. But God is here in Majhuwa. If you want to meet God, you must come here.” And Prem Nairain replied *“She cannot be a God because she has many husbands. So, I cannot come there.”* And when Ganga Devi received this, she reported this to Yogamaya who responded: *“Prem Narain is proud, but he will nevertheless arrive here within seven days.”* Prem Narain was in Assam at the time he received the second letter, and he was overcome by a feeling that he should return home. He excused himself from his fellow sanyasi, and set out by foot for the Arun Valley. On the way he stopped at a shop to sleep and in the night awoke to see a bright light with the sun in the middle of it. Yogamaya appeared to him there, and asked him *“What do you want?”* He replied he wanted mukti (salvation). And then Yogamaya threw all the fragments of the light at him, which broke into thousands of bits of paper, and she declared *“Here, take which piece you want. But only one of them has the mukti in it.”* Prem Narain was afraid to pick the wrong piece, and said, *“I do not know what kind of mukti is good, you must tell me which to take.”* With this, Prem Narain seemed to awaken from a trance and told the proprietor of the shop that he must leave, and he set out in the night and before long he had reached Dharan, and from there walked straight north and

reached Majhuwa within seven days from the time of Yogamaya's declaration, and he met her and remained one of her most devoted servants.

Lochan Tiwari also reported that Yogamaya later sent Prem Narain to Kathmandu to petition one of the high ranking Ranas with whom she had a good relationship¹⁰. Prem Narain promised him that if he fulfilled Yogamaya's twenty-six demands, he would remain in power for twelve years. When Yogamaya petitioned Juddha Shamsheer after he assumed power in 1932, Tiwari tells us, she asked "What about my edict?" The first of these demands was prohibition of child marriage. The second was discontinuation of tax on the poor.

When Prem Narain stayed at Majhuwa to be with Yogamaya, many of his own followers moved there too. And when he declared she was his guru, they did the same.

Prem Narain died with Yogamaya, but his sister, Nanda Devi, who was also a devotee of the rebel survived, and I met her at Mankamana. She had been living there as a *sanyasi* since her brother and Yogamaya and the others 'left this world.' "Was Prem Narain involved in creating the *hazurbani*?" I asked. "Did he help Yogamaya develop her political ideas?" She replied, "My brother was a yogi, but beside Yogamaya, he was a child." Nanda Devi showed me a collection of his handwritten poems. But when Dharma translated a part of the manuscript for me, we were disappointed. Narain's verses were conventional praises to the divine, devoid of the rhythm, intelligence or bite of his master's. We could find no hint of political advocacy in them either, and I was forced to accept what the ascetics and Manamaya told me, Yogamaya was the only source of those political invocations. Parizat said this too, when she examined the *hazurbani* in the book Mata had given me. Nothing across Nepal paralleled the Yogi's political wit and audacity, and Parizat, an accomplished political poet in her own right, even declared that

10. Yogamaya lost what sympathy she had inside the palace when Juddha Shamsheer came to power. If it is true that she met with a Rana leader, that may have been Bhim Shamsheer, Juddha's predecessor who was reportedly slightly more tolerant.

Yogamaya was her ancestor and political model.

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यो पैसाका चलन भित्र लोभ पाप रहेका],  
कोहि दिनुमा हुने बात् यो अन्सारको।  
महा राज् छन् दरबारमा हेर्न आउँदैनन्,  
दुःखि जन्ले निजा निसाफ सिधा पाउँदैनन्॥

*Raja sits in his palace.  
And does not care to see  
If the poor have justice--  
Not even justice by chance.*

Yogamaya repeatedly called for a ‘*dharma raj*’ and eventually, I understood this as ‘*rule by truth,*’ or *justice*. In the above verse, she plays on the word ‘raj’ as both the ruler (prime minister) and an ideal justice. If the ruler is imprudent or irresponsible, there can be no justice, she says. The above verse lays responsibility for justice on the ruler. Thus, it says, his neglect is the cause of injustice. In other words, Yogamaya is accusing her supreme leader of total negligence. As calm as these lines may appear in such a simple poem, they were a rude attack on Nepal’s ruler, equal to blasphemy and certain to incite government reaction. Consider her irony in the last line – *even justice by chance*. ‘Justice by chance’ means no justice at all.

If these barbs aroused officials – and they did – they also alarmed the public. Some anticipated a government backlash, and families who were not part of the movement cautioned their loved ones who attended the Yogi to abandon her. “We would not leave.” said Manamaya. “She sought justice, and no more than justice. From the beginning this was her aim.”

धर्म सम्झी विचार गरी इन्साफ गरेन,  
पैसा भए वहेरालाई दण्ड परेन॥  
कुल् ता हाम्रो ब्राम्हण हो छैनौं कुलैमा,  
जातता सत्य छैन हाम्रो राख चुलैमा॥

*Though right was on our side,  
That bully escapes the law.  
Brahmins, we’re so unholy.  
Let’s leave our caste in the kitchen.*

Yogamaya herself showed no signs of retreating. Having confronted the trials of nature, Yogamaya was prepared to face death from any source. Mahatma Gandhi practiced fasting during his youth in England, and later he adopted extreme forms of fasting as a political challenge, putting responsibility for his death squarely on the

shoulders of the British. This enabled him to confront his political enemies and fearlessly face the very people who might strike him down. This was the basis of the civil disobedience Yogamaya employed. She seemed to court a confrontation and stood ready to face a ruler who had unhesitatingly wiped out opponents for demanding far less than she was. Eventually, the dictator did order his troops into the Arun Valley to crush her movement and silence her.

Before this happened, another challenge faced the reformer and her followers – the wrath of their families and neighbors who became incensed by the group’s attack on caste proprieties.

अघि मेरो जात थियो  
ब्राम्हण कूलैमा।  
अहिले मेरो जात छैन  
राख छु चुलैमा॥<sup>11</sup>

*Before I owned a caste  
Belonging to Brahmin clan.  
Now look, I have no caste.  
Ho, I chucked it there in the hearth.*

Sung in the rhythm of the *hazurbani*, these lines are so cheerful and light that they belie their explosive content. The poem’s brazen message would be easy for any Nepalese to grasp. She says, ‘chuck out the rules of marriage that divide us,’ and then she adds, ‘throw them there, in the fire.’ The fire? One can hardly imagine more flagrant disrespect. Her choice of the hearth as a dump for something to be discarded as trash is awesome. The hearth of a Hindu (or Buddhist) home is not an incinerator. Nor is it just a cooking place. It is sacred. The hearth endows the house with sanctity. Strangers may not cook, gather, or eat here. Since the hearth symbolizes exclusiveness, one could find no place more outrageous than the hearth to toss caste into. This simple quatrain advocates nothing less than shrugging off one’s Brahmin caste, which implies doing away with all caste. But this was very different from the rejection of social rules by individual yogi.

Yogis are respected and their anti-social behavior is tolerated in this society where their action is individualist and follows the conventions of renunciation. Yogis can flaunt any social norm because they have left society, including their caste status, and relinquished any

11. By oral transmission, through Manamaya. Attributed to Yogamaya.



rights in society to take up the life of the ascetic, the fourth, final stage in Hindu life. Renunciates have wide licence and are admired for their powers of concentration and self discipline. Yogamaya was different. She used her self-discipline to defy society, urging others to break (Hindu) social rules while continuing to live as householders.

"We began to feel we too did not need our caste," said Manamaya. "Bharat Dhoj told his family he would not take the Brahmin wife they had chosen. Then, one of the Brahmin widows living at Majhuwa joined with a man and lived with him as his partner." This kind of cohabitation violates a fundamental and deeply ingrained concept – Hindu purity – a principle upheld in the chastity of a Brahmin woman. People become uncomfortable at the mention of such a liaison. It is almost as abhorrent as incest in western society. So Manamaya lowered her voice as if the news could still invite reproach. "They said Hazur was creating a haven for prostitution. Villagers came to our meeting threatening to kill our guru.

"Yogamaya met them directly and she defended the couples. 'I have given them this power,' she told them. 'It is not them you assault; it is me.'

"I was there. I heard her." Manamaya pulled held back her shoulders, and placed one hand on her hip in a posture of defiance. She continued quoting her leader: "'They have done nothing wrong; it is I, I who have given them the power to do this.' And they went away."

Surely the men and women in the assembly knew that public criticism would not subside so easily. To my question about their anxieties, Manamaya replied, "As long as we were near her, we felt we could do anything. Other women and men at Majhuwa began to live together too."

Meanwhile, from all sides pressure on Yogamaya mounted. "Ask Mata how her husband tried to keep her back. But she went secretly, taking two of her children with her. My parents told me not to go there. All of us, we began to visit our master at Madjuwa after nightfall." Even so, some were dragged away when villagers converged on the gathering place by the river to fetch their children and wives and brothers from what they thought was a den of prostitution and blasphemy.

Yogamaya would not cease. If she was not denouncing caste, she was lashing out at the priests. Most Hindus understood how the Brahmin leaders, the canonical experts and the ritual priests, worked with the commercial interests, the ruler and his court. Others certainly complained about the excesses and likely scorned the priests, but only in private. No one but the Yogi voiced criticism with such language.

यो माकुरा भित्र को होला,  
कति छ है माकुरा (धागै)  
धागाको (त्यो) पोला।  
यो विचार गर्ने को होला,  
चैतन्य जिव जो होला॥

*Who may that spider be?  
And how much silk does he hoard?  
Reflect on this  
And you'll have enlightenment.*

Yogamaya was asking her nation to challenge the wealth of the powerful. Confront injustices, she told them. For her, enlightenment was social awareness, awareness of the causal relation between the privileges of the few and injustice for the rest.

She called on her ruler to reflect, a plea which Manamaya says was not confrontational. "She was not his enemy, you see. She did not ask for his downfall. Hazur even traveled to see our Sarkar, to ask him face to face to take responsibility for his people. 'Give us dharma raj,' she said again and again. Hazur believed the ruler had the power to do good and she never abandoned her personal appeals to him."

अधम भक्ति हूं बिन्ति लेख्तछू,  
तिम्रा लोकको हाल् यो देख्तछू,  
बिन्ति गर्दछू हित् छ बिन्ति यैही  
तिम्रा लोकमा स्थिति छैन केही॥

*'Though I am a speck, I petition you.  
Be informed about our conditions.  
We have no benefits, no help.  
As long as there's injustice, I'll petition you.*

Once when she petitioned the palace, she went to Kathmandu herself. Although she did not obtain an audience with the ruler, she saw her message delivered. Later she sent Nainkala her daughter, and only got as far as the ruler's secretary. Manamaya referred to a letter in verse which Nainakala wrote to her mother reporting the encounter. "He asked Nainakala: 'Child why do you wear this yellow cloth (her ascetic robe)? Get home, dress in red and be married.'"

But the rebel was undeterred by these rebuffs. She intensified her campaign with ever more piercing attacks against cheaters and their accomplices.

कोहि प्राणिले मखान् बेचे कपट मिलाए,  
कोहि प्राणिले मखान् किने त्यो धूप चलाए।  
धूपको वासन् छैन एउटा कपट गनाए,  
लोक् भो भुट्टो देवाहरू बिन्ति चढाए॥

*What swindlers sell as butter  
others burn for incense  
whose odious smell... is greed.  
Corruption! How it stinks.*

Yogamaya's metaphor of incense captures the immorality of cheating. Even in modern times, merchants commonly lace their grain with sand or stone, leaving the buyer to discover this deception after arriving home. Sometimes as much as twenty percent of a sack of grain are stones and sand. By all accounts, earlier in the century, it was just as widespread, yet few of the cheaters were ever punished. This verse describes how adulteration is exposed when a cheater burns his offering of incense. Like the Hindu hearth, incense has spiritual significance. Foul-smelling incense insults the divine and is a mockery of religion. Manamaya explained: "You have seen incense sticks. We mix wood and herb powder, and offer their lovely fragrances to our gods. But when those thieves light incense for the god, it is vile because of what they have mixed in it. It stinks, and it offends our gods. Are they not ashamed, defiling our own god!"

In a single stroke, in four lines, Yogamaya attacks the piety of the cheaters and identifies these crimes as a sin.

A regular theme of Yogamaya was the collaboration between business interests and political power.

थितिदेखि बेथिति ता भएकै छ अइले,  
त्यही थिति बिग्रनाले बिन्ती गरें मैले॥  
आमामीले पहिले कर्जा तिरिसकेछ,  
साहु भन्ने लोभीले ता बाँकी भनेछ॥

*With order gone to disorder.  
I pray for reason to return  
This man has paid his debt.  
So why does the rich man lie?*

"We all know how these injustices persist," said Manamaya. "Before Yogamaya, no one challenged them. With our master, all that changed."

At the peak, the Yogi's local following reached 2000 or possibly more, composed of local farmers but also wealthy families from the city. On her visits to Kathmandu to petition the ruler, Yogamaya stayed at Pashupatinath where she performed her feats of endurance. Hindus from India and from very corner of Nepal converged at this holy place every winter. Women and men from Bhojpur, Chainpur, Kulung in the Arun Valley who lived in the capital were among those drawn to Yogamaya's call for justice. Soon many of them joined the core of her most faithful supporters. Some left the city when Yogamaya returned to Majhuwa, to live at her retreat. They included women and men from the most notable families of the region – Tiwari, Basnet, Pande, Adhikari, Chapagai.

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| धर्मात्मी राजन तिमि धर्म ग्राम | <i>Nobel Raja, hear our plea.</i> |
| ज्ञानात्मी राजन तिमि ज्ञान विचार | <i>Wise Raja, give us justice.</i> |
| विवेकी राजन विवेक खुव गरियोस् | <i>Intelligent Raja, choose wisely.</i> |
| स्वराज्यका धर्म जव भट्ट गरियोस् | <i>Remove pain from your land, grant joy to</i> |
| स्वराज्यको धर्म र कर्म माहा | <i>those who suffer.</i> |
| सम्पूर्ण सारा यि छोडेर ता हा | |
| ज्ञानु भया लौ अव देश माहा | |
| नहोसन माहाराजको राजमा दुःख | |
| पाउन दुःखीले केहि चित्त खुख ¹² | |

As her popularity grew, Yogamaya and her followers found themselves increasingly isolated. The ruler would not respond to her appeals. Local villagers denounced her. The young rebels may have shouted the audacious *hazurbani* into the night air ready to die with their leader. But they did not go into the villages to help farmers counter corruption or abuse. They did not recruit Rai and Magar people whose lands had been lost by trickery to the incoming Brahmins, and whose debts doubled and tripled and then were passed on to their sons. They did not go into the courts to challenge false land claims. They did not tutor young women to read and write; they did not

12. By oral transmission, through Manamaya. Attributed to nainakala.

boycott taxes, or build bridges or rally on the steps of the courthouse. Instead they became entrenched at their retreat by the river, and found themselves cut off.

There is hardly any doubt that the authorities were following the activities of the rebel closely. The palace ignored her, but she persisted, finally adopting a strategy that courted death. She sent a letter to the palace with her demands clear: 'We insist on *dharma raj*. Allow Brahmin widows to marry. Let our people unite with whom they wish. Stop the marriage of small children. No more protection for the rich. Remove the priests, and give us laws that do not serve only Brahmins. If these demands are not met, I and my people shall die by fire.'

Within two days of her dispatch, government troops descended on Majhuwa. Manamaya remembered: "Yes, Hazur was ready to immolate herself."

The warning was similar to Gandhi's threat to the British Raj to fast until death. The Nepalese government feared liability for any Brahmin's death if Yogamaya and her followers should die. It would be considered murder since Hindu law itself forbids the murder of any Brahmin, for any reason. Yet neither was the ruler willing to negotiate with her, so instead he chose a cowardly and foolish course.

यो कलिको मुख्य आसन् सुवर्ण हो सून, *This era rests on a throne of gold.*
 धिरे धिरे ज्ञानिरूले लाउन छाड्ने छन्। *The nuggets we enlightened, discard.*
 यो कलिको सुन् हुनाले चोरि हुँदैछ, *Leave them to those greedy ones.,*
 लोक् ता भन्दा दैलथ् मेरे जोरि हुँदैन। *Devils, thieves, how they lust for it.*

The Yogi and her followers identified the riverbank at Majhuwa as the site of their immolation and began assembling logs for their pyre. Among the hundreds involved in the preparations were Mata and Manamaya, Bhaktini Ama, Nanda Devi and Mahadidi. Recalling the awesome sight of the growing heap of wood, Manamaya became more animated. "We all joined in. We carried wood from either side of the Arun to the slope at river bank. Some were big, naked trunks of trees washed down by the monsoon from the Upper Arun. You see them on our beach. We chopped and tugged, and pushed. In a

month we had a heap of logs as high as the roof of a house."

What may have alarmed the government more than the report of the pyre was the list of two hundred and forty names attached to the notice. "Of course my name was there," said Manamaya proudly. "So was sister Mata here, and her brother, and his wife and children, and the Basnet family, and Prem Narain. This was our challenge to the ruler. He had to grant us *dharma raj*. He refused to meet with Yogamaya but he could not ignore this."

Manamaya's voice carried no feeling of outrage. She spoke about a logical non-violent strategy that, in theory, could have worked. She was certain, as was Yogamaya, that Juddha Shamsheer Rana would not murder them.

This approach may seem archaic to us today, but Yogamaya's strategy fit the social framework of the time. As Harka Gurung explains, Yogamaya was probably correct to employ a religious principle. "Her enemy was not religion, but the abuse of religion," he explained. "At that time, governance was largely according to Hindu values. The ruler felt he was a devout, righteous person. Any rebellious act had to be a religious one in order to appeal to his religious principles. Another strategy wouldn't have gotten them even this far."

The troops who arrived from Dhankuta in the night and marched on Majhuwa could not harm these rebels. "There were hundreds of soldiers," recalled Manamaya. "They captured Hazur first. They took her and everyone at Majhuwa. The General had the list of our names that had been attached to Hazur's demand. They began their hunt. Soldiers moved from village to village searching for us. They locked Hazur and the women in Siddha-Kali Mandir (a shrine in Bhojpur town). They took the men down to Dhankuta jail."

Manamaya was among those who escaped. "Word spread that the government was going to arrest all of us – Hazur and everyone on the list. I hid with a neighbor and stayed there two weeks. The troops spread throughout the valley, searching door to door, but they did not find me." Manamaya admits it was really terrifying. The whole area was under military control. Mata escaped too and sent her husband to Bhojpur to inquire about Yogamaya's fate. She was imprisoned but

Later in Kathmandu I obtained the government's version from Mahadev Shamsheer Rana, the commander who led the troops into Majhuwa. He was governor of Dhankuta and father of the political advisor to the present king, Birendra. The old general spoke about his mission against Yogamaya purely as a military strategy. "I wanted to surprise them, to forestall their flight or their attempt to carry out the threat. We moved on Majhuwa from all sides; we ambushed the group at night.

"Yogamaya was unpredictable. We captured eighty of them there, including Yogamaya. The others we searched for in the weeks that followed. There were over two hundred names. We had the list. We found their homes and we questioned their families. With Yogamaya in our custody the young people did not know what to do. Most gave themselves up easily."

जागिरदार लोभी छन् निजा हेर्दै नन्,
मर्नुपर्ने शरीर हो विचार गर्दै नन्॥
दुःखी जन हो हात जोडी सत्य पुकार,
अर्को हाम्रो सहयता छैन विष्णु गुहार॥

*How greedy they are, discarding justice.
How proud, forgetting their mortality.
Oh we poor, we plead for truth.
Helpless, we pray to Vishnu.*

"Was Yogamaya dangerous?" I asked.

Telling this story, the old general was at ease. He was living in retirement at his son's house near the palace and received us while surrounded by several small grandchildren. He was a very tall, thin man, with the whitest skin I have ever seen in a Nepalese. He spoke English with a British accent, and even remembered the name of his English tutor. As he spoke, he lifted one little girl of about six years old onto his knee and, without a hint of moral concern about what he was reporting, proceeded to tell us about the capture of Yogamaya.

"They were very dangerous," he replied. "They were communists, you know." Then he qualified his remark to assure me that Yogamaya was no real threat to the ruler.

"Was she anyone's agent? Was she working on behalf of an organization or party?" I asked.

The general quickly dismissed this idea. He estimated the size of Yogamaya's following at Majhuwa at "over a thousand." He agreed

it was large, but added “they were all simple villagers.” I thought he said that to minimize to me the degree of their threat. I asked him if he had ever seen a photo of the Yogi. He said no and said he was certain none existed. Then he added, “I think however that I have a file.”

“A file?” I repeated.

“Yes. From the court proceedings,” said the old man. “I confiscated all the documents and brought them to Kathmandu. There ought to be copies in the courts too,” he said. “But we had a file. I think it is still in this house. I will look for it. Come back tomorrow.”

The next day Murari¹³ received a message from the general informing us that the documents could not be found. The general said the house staff may have burned the paper for fuel on some chilly winter night! This and other mysterious disappearances during our inquiries in Biratnagar warned us that the history of Yogamaya still troubled many people. This led me to conclude that even forty years after the uprising, people remained fearful and nervous. Testimonies from the old women at the river hermitage were permissible, but somebody gave the order that no written documentation should find its way into our hands.

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| बिग्रनेलाई मासि दिनु चोरलाई दिनु काटी, | <i>Kill the corrupt; behead the thief.</i> |
| धर्म संझी निसाफ् गर्नु यौटा न ढाँटी। | <i>Judge with virtue, eliminate lies.</i> |
| सांरथि उत्रने छन् धर्म जाग्नेछ, | <i>When our charioteer arrives, truth will reign.</i> |
| राजा मंत्रि भारदारलाई ठक्कर लाग्नेछ॥ | <i>And smash king and courtiers too.</i> |

I returned from Kathmandu to Manakamana after meeting the General to learn more from Manamaya about Yogamaya’s imprisonment. “They held Hazur and a hundred and forty disciples for several months. News about the capture spread through East Nepal and everyone was watching.” Manamaya told me Yogamaya’s imprisonment became an embarrassment for Kathmandu. The Yogi and her fellow captives continued their campaign from their prison cells, a temple and a large house. The prisoners could see into the

13. Murari Aryal who helped translate the *hazurbani* arranged this interview and accompanied me to the general’s house.

village around them, and could be heard in the neighborhood. "They began to sing the *hazurbani* and soon, passing townspeople stopped to listen. In Bhojpur, women and men who had never before heard the poems approached the prison and stayed there."

Bird's song kidnaps the heart.

Then a gentle river's whistle holds it.

The followers of Yogamaya had the same reception at Dhankuta jail. *Hazurbani* the men sang lifted through their cell windows into the village air. The neighbourhood was enchanted."At Dhankuta," said Manamaya, "the troops themselves were smitten. Off duty, soldiers and policemen took their families to sit outside the prison in the evening."

अन्त्य काल्मा त्यो घुसले फटाउन लागदा,

बडो कष्ट मिला जाला त्यो घुस निस्की जाँदा।

महिले मात्र पचेको छ भरे पच्ने छैन,

सम्झि राख सत्य बचन् भुटो हुने छैन॥

Fat bellies burst.

And those bribes ooze out

To poison you.

So savor your riches... while you can.

The popularity of the *hazurbani* was beginning to embarrass the government. It came forward with an offer of amnesty. "They said they would release the Yogi and her followers in return for a promise. Yogamaya must cease her advocacy. They must disband and quit their site. Most important, they must not utter the *hazurbani*."

Yogamaya accepted the order without protest. She signed a government document forswearing her utterances. The other prisoners followed her and one by one they dispersed and returned to their homes.

General Rana thought he had finally put an end to the rebellion, and gratified by his apparent success, left the area.

But they underestimated Yogamaya. She could not be quieted so easily. She began plans for a final assault. This time, she presented no demand, and said nothing outside her circle of devotees.

Manamaya leaned forward to share a secret. "This time Hazur sent word only through her most trusted aides. They told us to come to

the riverside at Majhuwa to be with her. We were to tell no one and bring nothing with us. We were to assemble after midnight.

"Oh, some of us knew what it meant. My husband told me not to go, and I stayed back. Mata decided not to go, but her brother and his wife and all their children went."

Manamaya and the others knew details of what happened because an 11 year old lad named Dhoj witnessed it all from his hiding place and told villagers after he fled. Manamaya told me: "The boy had gone with his grandmother to join Yogamaya. He told us how he pulled himself from his grandmother and ran from the gathering and hid in a tree. From there, he saw everything. There were sixty-nine people. The children were crying. So were some of the others."

The river was high and running swiftly. It was Asoj, the sixth Nepalese month, in late summer when the monsoon rains are heavy. The Arun roared chalung chalung, chalung chalung.

"Yogamaya closed her eyes and stepped into the river first¹⁴. Then Ganga Devi and Nainakala followed her. Then Prem Nairain. A whole family jumped next, the father tossing his screaming son into the current, then stepping forward with his wife who clutched a baby in her arms. One by one they followed. Each woman removed her jewelry before departing, each family signed its name.

And then there was nothing but the awesome call of the great Arun.

स्वप्नमा देखिएथ्यो भष्म पार्ने चाला
महादेवले लिन भयो विजुलीको भाला॥
विजुली र वज्रसँगै आसना भई फर्ला,
त्यसैबेला जगत भरमा को को होला पर्ला॥

*In my dream, I saw destruction.
How Shiva, lifting his spear,
sent thunder, hail, lightening.
Crash. Chaos will rule, everywhere.*

Yogamaya entered heaven. So did those who accompanied her into the current.

Even today some of the surviving members of her movement express regret that they did not join her, and I suspect Mata is one of

14. *Jalsamadhi*: in Sanskrit, seeking eternity by immersion. This kind of sacrifice in a religious context carries honour.

those. She has taken the vows of *sanyasi*, and leads a life of prayer and meditation, a noble and worthy course in the Hindu tradition. But I felt she preferred the more radical course and was pained over her failure to take it. By the 1980s, Mata was watching her country slip deeper and deeper into the grip of corruption, with the authority of Brahmin priests unabated, with women still mistreated and Brahmin women doomed to endure premature widowhood and live childless throughout their lives. Perhaps Mata knows that Yogamaya's call for *dharma raj* was the best solution.

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## Chapter 4

# A GIRL CHILD NAMED LAXMI

*“Laxmi must work,” the woman said to her husband. “We need help in the fields. What harm can come to her there? The field is safer than the house where she has twice spilled boiling milk. She’s not this much use,” mother argued, marking the tip of her smallest finger with her thumbnail.*

*The weary woman stopped speaking to reach out and haul the pot of bubbling rice off the hearth. Then, still without rising, she pulled another pot onto the iron grill over the fire. In it was a stew for the milch cow—a mixture of potato peelings, onion skins, rice husk and other edible garbage. Next, she pulled a fist of salt from a basket hanging on the scorched wall behind the fire and she splashed it into the mixture, and stirred for a moment. She stopped and took a deep breath, then leaned over, into the hearth. Holding her plaits behind her neck with one hand, the woman bend over until her face almost touched the pot’s bottom. With her right hand, she poked at the half burned sticks of wood in the circle of ashes. The she blew on their ends to ignite the fire. A few flames broke under the vessel; then she picked up the ladle to stir the mixture as she resumed her complaints. “Laxmi is fourteen. The girl has been idle too long. We keep our daughters with us so they can work and be of some use before they marry. Then they are gone.”*

*Laxmi sat nearby, wordless, as her mother continued. From the time of her birth, the child had exhausted her. Every mother needs the help of a girl, especially after she births a son. A normal girl, even at the age of six, can coddle and feed a baby brother, rock him to sleep, clean him. By the time she is nine, she can support the baby strapped*

*on her back, so her hands are free to help her Aama. Girl and baby follow mother from place to place, and when the infant cries, sister lets mother unstrap him and suckle him for a few moments. In the fields, in the courtyard, inside the house, a girl child is a great help.*

*"Thuli, see your brother, pick him up, hold him, sing to him, pat him." "Thuli, stand here so I can bind him to your back." "Thuli, light the fire," then "Thuli, rock your brother. Carry him to Sasu. Bring him here."*

*"Thuli, the milk!" "Thuli, more fuel under the pot. Thuli, heat water."*

*But how could Laxmi do any of these things? She was blind.*

*Somehow her Aama found a way. She strapped the baby to Laxmi's back and directed the girl to walk in a circle, holding a rope anchoring her to the central pillar of the house. She told her, "keep him calm, keep him calm. Rock from side to side as you step around the post."*

*The little girl had grown remarkably competent and could manoeuver herself through the house as well as creep across the courtyard. She taught herself every inch of the stony square in front of the house. Should she step beyond these stones, however, she might topple into the terrace below. The courtyard ended with a drop of four meters, her father told her, and if she were carrying baby, they would both die. If that happened, he told her, her spirit would be lost forever and all the family would be visited by demons. The only time Laxmi ventured outside was when she was roped to someone, and she stumbled along behind.*

*Once, Laxmi walked behind her mother all the way to the town, and hadn't fallen once. The child was so pleased, in her enthusiasm she told her father when they returned home, "Baba, I walked to the town. Baba, next time, I shall fetch little brother from school." Her father laughed at his girl, but Aama had no patience. "Silly girl, you are blind," she scolded. "Who will accompany you? Silly blind girl. How can you lead your brother?"*

*Before schools came to the hills, every boy was put to work by the time he reached seven. With other lads in the neighborhood, they brought their cattle to search for sprigs of grass on the side of the*

paths that has been overlooked by goats or foraging women. By day, a young son watched a few cows, and in the evening, he helped bed the animals and bind together what extra grass they collected in their baskets. During planting and harvest time, boys worked side by side with adults in the paddy fields. Generally, until they are strong enough to wield a scythe to cut and gather grass, and carry a bari loaded with fodder, little girls stay near the house. This does not mean they are idle. They watch animals in the courtyard and chase away birds from sheets of drying grain. Indoors, they help prepare food, and of course they take care of the younger children as well.

After schools were introduced, little girls would herd and weed and harvest. Somebody had to take over the work the boys once did since the boys were now at school. Actually, for girls old enough to herd welcomed this change. They could flee their mothers' incessant calls for help. In the fields, moreover, they found new companions – other girls sent to herd for the same reasons. The girls taught one another songs and skipping games on the pathways above the riverbank while their animals grazed nearby. For a few hours they escaped the confines of the house and become mere children.

Laxmi wishes she could take the animals along the roadside too, just to be with other children. Every day she hears them passing above the house. She longs to join them, cutting grass from between rocky ledges, running after any wayward animals, finding juicy roots to chew. Oh, if only she could see.

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In the house with Aama and Baba lived Thulo Aama, Laxmi's grandmother. Thulo Aama was more patient with Laxmi. She trained her blind granddaughter to do many useful things. She spread the corn seeds on a mat to dry, and then called Laxmi to the courtyard. She sat her on the edge of the straw mat and put a thin pole in the child's hand. "Laxmi, here is the lathi to shake at the birds so you can help me guard the corn." And so the girl raised her switch in the air and yelled "wha, wha, heee' ya!" to the hens and ravens she heard flutter down near her. At first that was fun. But after two days of sitting, waving her rod in the darkness, Laxmi was tired., Thulo Aama told her she was not to move,

but Thulo Aama went away to look after the baby and left Laxmi sitting in the sun alone with only the birds as companions. Alas, Laxmi had to chase away even these little visitors.

The birds did not take long to learn that the little sentry could not see them. They waited and watched the child, and, seeing how she remained motionless, they lunged onto the blanket of drying seeds, pecked a few kernels and flew off. Before she heard the seeds dropping from their beaks, they were gone. Laxmi flailed her rod and shouted "jau, jau," but it was too late.

"If she were deaf and not blind, she would be more use," her mother said. Indeed, maybe that would have been better for the child too. She would not hear Aama's curses and complaints. "At least, if she were deaf, she could go into the fields and help gather corn or cut the rice paddy. She could thresh. She could even operate the rice crusher."

But Laxmi was not deaf. She could hear her mother's complains. She could hear the skipping of boys and girls on the path above the house. She could hear her brothers reading their schoolbooks, and father calling to them, "Shabash, shabash!" Bravo, bravo!

Laxmi's mother eventually convinced her father that the child should work in the terraces. One day, father led the girl across the courtyard and guided her down, over two terraced ledges to the first paddy field below the house. When they reached the terrace where she was to work, he tied a rope to her, and anchored it to a peg in the ground, as he did with a cow. Sometimes father took her to the field; sometimes uncle did. There they put a scythe in her hand and told her to cut everything in the plot around her. Uncle showed her to feel her way over the ground and keep within the boundary of the mud parapet. "Don't step outside the edge," Father warned her. "You'll fall over like an old cow."

These terraces were small, but since Laxmi was blind, she worked slowly. There was no one to stay and watch her, so they left her in the field alone. It was on one of these mornings that the teacher, Prabhu, saw the girl groping across the field. The young man knew Laxmi. Who in the entire Arun Valley would not know a blind child? Moreover, moments before, Prabhu had secretly watched the girl's

uncle make his way up the mountainside, leaving the child alone. The young man stepped off the path and made his way down to the terrace where the girl sat in her tender, dark cage. "Laxmi?" he said softly, stepping towards her.

Laxmi knew this voice. She remembered Prabhu had visited their house one day. He was to marry Ram Bahadur's daughter. Aama had talked about their betrothal, and the man had stopped at their house himself.

Prabhu was a teacher, Aama told her. He was to be posted to the city – to Biratnagar – and his family wanted to marry him before he left the Arun River Valley. Aama and the other women were glad he was going away because they did not like young men working in the school. 'Things had happened' between teachers and school girls, her mother had said. The men went to the Pradan Panch officer who filled out his reports and levied a fine of barely five hundred rupees against the man. This was all he could do, he said. "The best thing is take your girls out of our schools."

That is precisely what happened. Families decided that schools were not a safe place for their daughters. High schools were few and located only in the towns. Now they almost emptied of girls, especially village girls. Wealthier town families meanwhile could send their daughters to boarding schools in the cities where they would be better supervised.

The government was embarrassed by this exodus. Elementary schools in each cluster of villages were costly. Could His Majesty's Government be expected to build special schools for the convenience and safety of girls?

Meanwhile a temporary solution was proposed. Principals in the area agreed to hire only married men in the schools. This would surely remove the chance of trouble arising between teachers and girl pupils.

Laxmi heard her father and mother talk about these things, but she could not comprehend the real problems, and certainly saw no connection between them and her own life. For her, Prabhu was a teacher and he was to be married to Karma, the daughter of Ram Bahadur, the cloth shopkeeper. The wedding was very soon because

Prabhu was leaving to take up his new job in the Tarai far to the south. She remembered that Aama said Prabhu was going to Biratnagar, and it sounded to Laxmi that he was a very successful man.

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*Soon the town would witness the marriage of the teacher Prabhu and Karma. A wedding is a grand affair in a village where debts, accidents in the jungle, lost goats and abnormal births are the usual news. Weddings provide a change from routine, and whether or not they know the boy and girl, everyone debates the match, speculates on the dowry, and evaluates the go-between who helped finalize the union. The women compare views on how beautiful the bride is, how light her skin is, how heavy her jewelry is, how smooth her hair is, and how she works and talks and walks, if she is shy or weepy, talkative or sullen, bossy or demure.*

*Laxmi heard all the gossip. Even though no one spoke about her marrying one day, the child found herself entertained by all the talk about other girls' weddings. She laughed when the others laughed, and she found herself agreeing that Prabhu was a fine and handsome young man.*

*Prabhu and Karma's marriage was only a story for Laxmi until one day before the wedding when the boy and his father actually came to her house. "Prabhu, come. Drink." Laxmi's father insisted. He boasted of his wife's fine liquor and the men obliged and stepped down the path into Laxmi's house. The room filled with neighbors who came to offer felicitations. They would later say how well they knew the groom. Prabhu and his father laughed with everyone as if they all were deep friends and drank with them for many hours before setting off for their own village late in the night. Some neighbors stayed on, drinking and discussing Prabhu's good character long after the guests had left.*

*Laxmi's mother and father were gratified. Now this family could report authoritatively on all the details of the betrothal, the negotiations, the dowry, the boy's new appointment. Such talk was not only worthy entertainment in a quiet hill town; it cemented relations among families. But where did Laxmi figure in all this?*

*"Oh, Laxmi, daughter of Rajendra." the man called softly. Laxmi knew Prabhu's voice from his visit with his father to her home that day. So, although Laxmi was alone in the field and Prabhu called to her, she was not afraid. She did not know how long Prabhu had watched her or how he had looked up and down the terraces to see that no one passing on the paths above could see them. The child heard only his kind voice. "Laxmi," he said, as he arrived where she sat. "You are working too hard. Here, I have a cigarette for you."*

*She felt safe. "Rest and I will help you," he said, and he lifted the scythe out of her fingers and held her hand, easing her to the ground. She felt tired, in the mountain sun and being alone, his presence made her feel good. She liked him because he was a teacher. She felt for the cigarette as he put it to her lips and his fingers touched hers. She let him hold the cigarette to her lips. She relaxed against the earth wall of the hillside.*

*The cigarette fell away and she felt a warm hand tighten on her thigh. She felt fingers pressing into her flesh. As rough hands pulled at her skirt, the cloth pushed higher against her chest and face. Then his body was half covering her.*

*Laxmi was confused. What did he want? She had not been taught to resist. Being blind, she had always welcomed the touch of someone else, a hand finding her in her darkness.*

*Something was wrong now. The man was laughing. Why was he laughing?" she asked herself: "Prabhu, why are you laughing?" she asked.*

*She began to struggle and push him away. This made him laugh more. Her skirt was pulled free of her legs. He grabbed her close. His voice softened. "I'll take care of you. Don't you want me to take care of you? I will take you to the schoolroom and teach you things." He laughed again. He liked her the night he saw her in her house, he said, and once more he grabbed her legs and still laughing, began to rub against her and push at her. He moved his hands up and pulled her blouse above her small breasts. She liked the sensation of being close to another person, yet something was not right. She felt more confused. Now he drew away from her to pull her to her feet and away from the ledge of the paddy field. He pushed her against the mud*

*wall of the hillside. She did not know it but, sheltered by the wall, they could not be seen, neither from above nor from below.*

*The man grabbed at Laxmi's thighs and pulled her legs around him. She felt him completely cover her, pushing harder. She felt pain, but did not know where it actually came from. The man pushed her still harder against the earth and began scolding her. "Be still, be quiet," he hissed. He was smothering her with his weight, pushing his body again and again against her. Then, he suddenly stopped and his heavy body fell against hers. Her legs felt wet. She thought she had done something wrong. She waited, afraid. He pulled away from her and told her to be silent and he would help her. He pulled down her blouse, pinching her tiny nipples as he held her chest in his hands. Her body hurt and she began to cry. Then the man began to speak softly. He patted her skirt and stroked her small feet. He had suddenly become gentle. "I'll come again. We'll do this again. I'll teach you many things." But, he warned, "You must tell no one."*

*"He is a teacher, an educated man," she thought. "He will come and finally I'll learn to read." Despite the pain between her thighs and the unpleasant memory of his weight on her, Laxmi did not feel angry.*

*But Prabhu never returned, and Laxmi felt sad but she told no one what happened. After many weeks of waiting, secretly hoping the nice teacher could find her again, she asked her father to take her to the field to work. "The paddy is harvested!" her mother said. "Did you think we will wait for you to clear the field? What a silly girl!"*

*By late August, two months had passed and Laxmi did not have her menses. She did not know the significance of this and did not think about it. She was still waiting for Prabhu. One day she heard her mother say his name. "Perhaps he is coming here," she wondered. But no, the family was discussing Prabhu's marriage. It would take place in a few days and some of their neighbours would go to town to watch the arrival of the groom. None of these families were wealthy so the weddings were not lavish. Nevertheless a marriage was an exciting spectacle for the children and a chance for people to gather in the town. All the adults agreed that the bride looked beautiful. They said Karma was the prettiest of Ram Bahadur's three daughters.*

*Bahadur had insisted his daughters would not marry a village boy. He was proud that his first daughter was to wed a teacher. Yes, people said, Bahadur made a good match for his daughter. Prabhu had paid 1,500 rupees cash – a reasonable sum – to Bahadur, and provided the food for the wedding guests. It was not chicken curry. Only the wealthiest merchants in Khandbari could afford to offer meat to wedding guests. Prabhu's family sufficed with a small plate of cold churra, crushed rice, with a spoonful of curried potatoes and some chutney on the side for everyone. Government officials, shopkeepers, school boarders, the policemen, and all their wives and children came to the feast.*

*The groom would arrive long after the banquet ended and night had fallen but many of the guests lingered in the square to wait for him. A groom's appearance was the climax of the wedding, a celebration of the hero coming to take his prize. Perhaps today's rowdy parade of the mounted groom into the girl's village is a carryover from the past when in some localities, young brides were secured in the course of battle, taken by force, and carried off on a horse by the victor.*

*The appearance of a horse in town nowadays carries special significance because horses are not used in the hills, neither for plowing nor for transport. They serve only a ceremonial purpose, to carry a visiting district official from the airstrip, for example, or to carry the groom to his bride's house on the night of their wedding.*

*So there was Prabhu, arriving to fetch his new bride. Accompanying him were cousins and neighbors from his town. They walked on either side of the horse as his attendants. The all male party was led by boys banging drums and tin pots and playing flutes. The lads pranced back and forth in front of Bahadur's shop on the main street of town.*

*Karma, the bride, was in a bedroom at the back of the shop, surrounded by her sisters and girlfriends. She waited among the whispering, giggling girls, outfitted in her red dress and garlanded with flowers and jewelry. Her head was wrapped in a scarf and her face was barely visible. Karma seemed happy, although she acted diffident and bashful, as girls must on this occasion.*

*Her mother was proud too, but when she heard the girls snickering, she scolded Karma with a smile. "What is this? Why do you smile, girl? You must weep. You are going to leave home and go far away. Shameful girl. What kind of daughter will they think I have? Weep, weep."*

*In the street beyond, the drumming sounds grew louder. Boys surged towards the edge of the square. From the dark path below, shouts and clanging sounds rose into the clear night. From the street, onlookers saw the light of a lantern, swaying from its pole. Prabhu's entourage slowly made its way up the hillside to the town square. The petromax lamp hissed in the night air, and a boney, white horse stepped forward under its light. "The groom is arriving!" yelled the small crowd waiting in the square. Boys clapped and skipped in front of the tired looking horse as it slowly moved forward. More cheers rose as the children pranced around Prabhu. The warrior had arrived to collect his bride. Even though the horse was docile, Prabhu sat on it's back tentatively. All eyes were on the young man, and they cheered madly, although Prabhu remained rigid on his mount. Perhaps he was concentrating on keeping himself from falling, uneasy in his oversize suit.*

*A canopy with gold and red trimmings was anchored on the horse's rump, held upright by two of Prabhu's aides. It silhouetted the hero. Prabhu gripped the arms of the helpers walking on either side of the horse and he shifted awkwardly in the saddle, waiting for them to direct the horse forward. Men shouted, "The groom, the groom! Clear the way." Children joined in. "Clear the way! The groom, the groom!"*

*Horse, rider and his attendants proceeded slowly down the street amid the clanging and shouting. In front of Bahadur's shop, they stopped and finally Prabhu was helped off the horse. He quickly disappeared into the dwelling, and the petromax lamp was extinguished.*

*The horse and the crowd were left in darkness, and the clamor ended. One after another the boys dispersed to their homes to tell their parents about the arrival of Prabhu the conqueror. The square was dark and quiet.*

*Next day, almost unnoticed, the bride and groom walked out of town and down the mountainside to Prabhu's family's house. Karma's*

sisters cried openly and her mother wept too as they watched her depart. Neighbors reported Karma was smiling as she walked with her young husband at her side, accompanied by her two brothers carrying the dowry of utensils, bedding, two suits of clothes and a carpet. (It was more than the remaining daughters would see at their weddings.)

On the third day, according to custom, Karma returned to visit her parents. Returning to her maitighar even for a short visit was usually a happy day for a girl. But this young woman's smile was gone. Everyone noticed her miserable composure; they were not surprised however since the rumour had already reached into every household in the town. There were many grim faces in the street that day. The families had suppressed the information until after the wedding, but now the news was out. Prabhu was to be the father of a baby carried by another girl. Still more shocking, the mother-to-be was little Laxmi.

Details spread from one house to the next about how, in the days before the wedding, Laxmi's mother became suspicious about her blind child's condition and Thulo Aama, took the girl to a woman who did some things that frightened her and finally the girl yelled, "Prabhu!" When they calmed her, she told them how he had visited her in the field. Then, the rumor said, Laxmi's father went straightaway to the boy's house and confronted Prabhu's father. The marriage was only hours away and Prabhu's father laughed and chased them out of his house. But Laxmi's father returned after the wedding when Prabhu's bride was there, and he had the hapless child with him as his evidence. Poor Laxmi. She wept and hid her face and her father squeezed her arm and shook her shouting, "Stop stop, stupid child!" Karma began to scream, pulling her hair and turning in circles as if she had gone mad. Prabhu finally broke down and cried and then tried to run away. The older men fell silent, surveying the disaster.

When details were known, the men of the town gathered together to address the calamity. They called the boy's father and Laxmi's father to their council. All were distressed and angry with Prabhu and condemned him, but they had to move swiftly to solve the problem. Although it made no one happy, they came to an agreement. Prabhu's father would pay a fine. The self-appointed council prevailed on Laxmi's father to accept. The next day the two men met in public to

*drink together and to laugh once more as friends.*

*After this no one saw Karma or her husband for a long time. Karma stayed with her mother for a few days, then left quietly by the path below the town to return to her husband's house. People said she wept and wept. Meanwhile Prabhu was dispatched to Biratnagar without delay to begin his assignment, according to plan, as a school teacher.*

*The town's inhabitants gossiped about the episode for many months. The men seemed more involved than their wives in the ongoing discussion about how this had happened and who was to blame and what else could have been done. Several of these men were town notables and had been deeply involved in the betrothal, and the celebrations. They had to redeem their self-respect. The go-between of the match, for example, was Madev, and he had to protect his reputation as a match-maker. The attendants who led Prabhu on the horse and celebrated his manhood in the public square would not be shamed.*

*Each of the men in turn asserted the emotional needs of an educated man. They discussed the custom of child betrothals, at least for girls. Perhaps they should send girls into marriage at the age of eight, as their fathers had done. They argued the monetary settlement between the fathers: how much? what terms? Some said that Laxmi's family should have hushed up the pregnancy and said nothing about the rape. A few argued that Prabhu was a coward for breaking down and admitting his crime.*

*But no one talked about the pregnant blind girl.*

~~~~~


*Here was death.
That ragged cart-puller,
crushed on the road
by the shiny car
of a drunk city guy
in slick white suit, as he sped,
fleeing in the night...*

from 'Mreetyu'

निकामना मन्दिर ए सन्यास आश्रम
को स्थापीत अध्यक्ष



श्री ती दुर्गा देवी धिमिरे खत्री
पां गा० वि० स० वाडं नं० २ मंडवा
२४ माघ १९

Durga Devi, N 1950

Chapter 5

DURGA DEVI:

Advocate, Patron, Prosecutor

After Yogamaya's death in 1940, Majhuwa was abandoned. Whoever of her followers remained, dispersed. Some went back to their village. Others returned to Kathmandu. A few became wandering ascetics and made their way to India, merging into the spiritual or the earthly currents of the great land, flowing from one Hindu holy place to another. Who would know their past? Did it matter?

By 1960, a handful of women, each for her own reason, moved down-river a few miles to the sacred place called Manakamana and camped at a sandbar beside the great Arun. Into their group, although not part of pious life and she never would be, came Durga Devi. She was born around 1918 and died at Manakamana in 1973.

Durga began to attract attention in public confrontations with her brothers-in-law about 1940, when she was rather young. Although her appeals started even earlier, the details of which we will presently hear. Durga was a more contemporary sort of activist. She was a political agitator in the modern American sense, and her language was secular. No one was less like Yogamaya than Durga. A flamboyant and cantankerous woman, Durga was no poet even less of a visionary. Compared to the unworldly Yogi with her piercing, beautiful verses, this rebel was a graceless peasant who shouted her way into history. Passive resistance was not her style. Durga was a woman of immediacy.

Durga was religiously conservative. By caste she was Chhetri, ranked just below Brahmin in the Hindu caste hierarchy. She did not

challenge caste protocol as Yogamaya did. She followed Brahmanic rules regarding marriage. She accepted her widowhood as a child, and observed rules about food purity, even hiring a Brahmin woman to cook for her and so maintain the house's ritual purity. So Durga Devi did not seek to end laws imposed by the caste system.

Durga campaigned to see that the law – concerning land, inheritance, rape and abuse, debt trickery and extortion for example – as it existed, be respected and implemented. She found ample reasons to concentrate on these injustices. Corruption, graft, caste privileges, abuse of power and bureaucratic laziness were still rampant in 1960 although by 1951, the Rana regime had ended. Nepal had a nine year period of democratic government, but it was replaced by a new dictatorship, the Shah kings. For 104 years they had been powerless, retained by the Ranas only as symbolic heads of state. Now it was their turn at tyranny. The new dictator was King Mahendra. Beginning in 1962, his first five year plan provided for some economic development and social welfare. For this, he created a delivery system, a network of administrative posts to reach into cities across the plains and into the hills. By the time Durga began her work bureaucratic abuse by the new civil service was flourishing. Officials worked according to the size of a bribe, the courts continued to favor the rich, women were abandoned without land if they objected to their husband's behavior, and men violated young girls while police turned a blind eye.

To counter the abuse and exploitation she saw around her, Durga's goal was that government officials observe the law, that police apply the law, and that courts be fair. She appealed to the courts to keep her share of land after her husband died; she helped people who were cheated to name the culprits and demand justice from the police; she came to the defence of a violated child; she helped women who were abused; she badgered government clerks until they did their job. She brought to this goal her literacy and a profound knowledge of law and legal procedures, a skill she learned as a child accompanying her father to the courts. Although Yogamaya sought to reform the Nepalese legal code, Durga found some protections in it. The problem, to her eyes, was corruption. According to her, if the Muluki Ain were faithfully applied, it could offer people justice.

Durga conducted her campaign in street confrontations, filing complaints against whoever attacked her, harassing clerks and fighting in the courtrooms of the district towns of East Nepal. And she did this almost singlehandedly.

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In 1981, during my inquiries about Yogamaya, I met Durga's lifelong friend Mahadidi<sup>1</sup>. She was another resident at the hermitage, a Brahmin widow, also a former devotee of the Yogi. After Yogamaya's death and before taking up residence at Manakamana, she was Durga's cook and confidante. Their association lasted for 25 years, until 1973 when Durga died. They lived together, first in Malta, Mahadidi's village, during the 1940s and 50s. Malta is within a half day's walk of Tumlingtar, and not far from Chainpur, district headquarters at the time where Durga fought her earliest legal battles. The court was located in Chainpur town.

The two women traveled often – to Banaras, Hardwar and Assam, Darjeeling and other places in India. At home, Mahadidi witnessed many of the public encounters her friend provoked. Mahadidi was not a social activist herself, and she did not discuss Durga in an ideological way. Over several long conversations, whenever I visited Manakamana, Mahadidi taught me about her departed companion. She spoke with surprising dispassion. While I found this odd on the one hand, it was to my advantage in piecing together this biography of Durga. Mahadidi did not have her own agenda. She was not trying to eulogize or champion her friend. Her detachment made the history of this heroine all the more convincing. Her reports proved highly reliable.

“Who owns this land where you have built your houses?” I innocently asked Mata one morning. We sat on the hill overlooking the beach sloping towards the river.

“Durga Devi bought it for us,” she replied. Mata's response to my question was simple and rather matter-of-fact. From where we sat

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1. *Mah-* short for *mahili*, the term for second daughter. Didi is the respectful term for elder sister, also used for non-relatives.

on the hillside above the hermitage, we could see most of the fields and jungle that belonged to them. The place where the women lived stretched along the bank of the Arun for a quarter of a mile. At its southernmost frontier, their property started at the pebbled '*sati ghat*' where corpses are brought for cremation. It included the open sandbar, and extended upriver to a cut in the forested hillside where one has to leave the water's edge and climb uphill.

The Kumal fishermen walk onto the beach from the river, jumping from rock to rock across the current. But that is not the customary route. Most visitors trek through the jungle from the hillside above and walk downhill towards the river. Funerary parties on their way to the burning *ghat* pass at the edge of Mankamana so as not to disturb the women and proceed down the beach to build a pyre at the water's edge. Worshipers at the nearby shrine of Goddess Manakamana and those who make offerings to Lord Arun in the current also pass through the settlement.

Half of the hermits' land is an open beach and garden. The rest is a tree-sheltered hillside, not more than ten acres altogether. An ideal location for a retreat, it is isolated but still accessible to worshipers and others, mostly families of the old women. A large thicket of banana trees and some mango trees on this land belong to the hermitage. A prayer hall was built on a clearing in the middle of the property. Around it, scattered under a grove of lemon and lime trees are thirty-two small grass roofed huts—the homes of the ascetics.

Until 1960, the area was uninhabited. "Tell me more about your patron," I asked Mata.

"She was a wealthy lady, and she always helped women. She gave it to us," she said.

A woman? I thought of the Buddhist culture of Sherpas and Tibetans. I had studied with nuns in the Solu district of Nepal a few years before and knew when a rich Sherpa or Tibetan woman takes up a life of contemplation, she donates her personal wealth to the nunnery she joins. Or she founds and supports a new nunnery. "Was Durga such a woman?" I asked.

"A rich *sanyasi*? No." replied my host. "Durga Devi was her name. In 1960, she bought some land here and constructed the path



through the jungle to the river. In 1963 she bought us another piece beside the first and you see what we have in front of you. Mahadidi knows all about her; she will tell you.” Mata laughed, amused by the idea of their patron as a holy lady.

When Dharma, my translator, and I arrived at her hut, Mahadidi was expecting us and appeared delighted by our mission. She poured each of us a cup of milkless tea with mint leaves, and plunged directly into Durga’s career in the courts. “We call her Jethi Devi, victorious Devi,” said Mahadidi, “because she always won.”

“She was a widow; so was I.”

“In those days,” explained Mahadidi, “the courthouse was in Chainpur. Durga was already involved in the case against her brother-in-laws<sup>2</sup>. She could not stay in their house because of the animosity between them. She could not remain anywhere in Marwa village, where the disputed land was located. She needed to be close to Chainpur to be ready to pursue her work at the courthouse. So she came to my village, Malta. She built a house and she asked me to be her cook. We stayed together for 25 years, until near the end, when she became ill and we moved here to Manakamana.”

Such an contract between two widows was rare since widows are normally destitute and rely on the forbearance of their families. Except for wandering ascetics, who are mostly men, few people live alone in Nepal. Neighbours would not have been thrilled to have Durga and Mahadidi in the village. Villagers from around the region sought out this odd couple for help, but Durga was by then well known for her cantankerous ways and was not welcomed into Malta homes. Local residents considered Durga meddlesome.

She was also unpopular with officials. Durga would not overlook the corruption in the government offices which was rampant even by the 1960s. “You were in Khandbari,” Mahadidi told me. “You saw clerks drinking tea and playing cards and gossiping on the job. You know how the elected representative uses dynamite to fish for himself and his fellows! How his friends buy up the land when he tells them that is where the hospital will be built. What do they care about

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2. Durga was about 19 years old when she began this eight-year long court battle for her land. It would have been around 1940.

the porter who comes to them for help, holding a paper from the landlord which he can't read? 'Go to that office;' 'we are closing;' 'come next week;' 'go back to Bhojpur, this is not registered in our district;' 'we have not received any police report; go and ask them for it,' and so on. That's what they tell the fellow who has lost a day's work and has walked four hours from his house to their office."

Mahadidi told us how, in order to learn about goings on in the locality, her boss waylaid children, or met them in the fields when they were idly watching their cattle. She bribed them with candy to tell her their family gossip. She asked them who was beating whom, who had been cheated, or insulted, which auntie was sent away, or which little girl was unfed. Being an outsider in Malta Durga had no sister or aunt to tell her these things. In any village of sixty or fewer households where the even minor disagreements become public knowledge, children know as much as adults do about people's affairs.

Durga must have lived an isolated life if she needed to cajole children for information. Perhaps officials and other men threatened villagers to stay clear of this woman. But I was more interested in Durga's jural activities. To lodge complaints in the courts she would have been educated in law. But when Durga was a child, there were hardly any village schools and few girls were educated, even up to class five. The New Education System plan was introduced only in 1971. Palikot village where Durga was born, could not have had a school until after that. Where and how was this child educated? Where did this woman study law?

"Sher Bahadur Ghimire, her father, taught her," came the answer.

Some children were schooled by a family member. In this case, the leap from basic literacy to a legal career was immense. I pressed Mahadidi for more details. "Was Ser Bahadur a lawyer? Perhaps a distinguished judge?" My naivete about Durga's father also amused Mahadidi.

The man was not an unknown character in the valley, but he was a far cry from a respected judge. Mahadidi did not actually say he was a scoundrel but it was apparent that she did not care for him. In fact, I never heard anyone express a word of admiration for him.

“He was a man of the courts. Always in the courts, getting more and more land”. He probably loaned farmers money. Many fell into debt, and although land is not supposed to be transferred, Sher knew how to collect their deeds. He travelled on his horse from one town to the next, filing foreclosures wherever the fields of the wretched farmers were registered: Dingla, Bhojpur, Dhankuta, even Kathmandu. Knowing jural procedures, Sher could file his papers himself and make his case directly to the judge. He may have paid the judges as well. The poor farmers had no one. Most could not read or write. And there were no lawyers to defend the poor. So Sher Bahadur collected one field after another, from courts on that side to courts on this side (of the Arun River). And Durga went everywhere with him. She was a young girl. She had her own horse, one she chose herself which was larger than her father’s mount. He entrusted his legal papers to the girl and she carried these in her saddle bag. “She kept them with her in the courtroom. At the nod of her father, Durga opened the bag and fetched the relevant document.

“I never met Sher Bahadur. Only I heard that people feared him,” said Mahadidi. This reminded her about the abduction of the woman who became Durga’s mother. “He was traveling by horse on the trail between Palikot, his village, and Dingla. Over there, on the ridge,” she said, pointing across the river. “He saw her walking with her servant. She was married but Sher wanted her. So he ambushed them in the jungle and took her. He told the servant to go home and tell his master he would pay for the woman. Later, he sent the *jari* (divorce fine) to the woman's old husband. That was all.” The abduction was treated according to procedures for elopement which was not uncommon in Nepal.

Sher Bahadur became a wealthy man but did not sound like a wholly noble fellow. He and his brother Bir Bahadur may not have been above bribing others, they became so rich. Durga learned to read and write from her father. So she must have learned the ways of the courts from him. She was not a lawyer. But, understanding legal formalities and being fearless, she defended herself. But she would put her skills to different use than her father had. From the time of her childhood, she showed a righteous bent and a deep concern for others.

Durga's first known appeal, for example, was a heroic (or defiant) act on behalf of her brother. He could not have been much older than 15, but somehow, he and his father were in trouble. In fact, they were in prison in Kathmandu. According to Mahadidi, they had slain a Rai man who had attacked them.

The episode occurred around 1928. Durga was hardly 10 years old herself when she accompanied her mother and uncle on a visit to Kathmandu. This was still the time of the Rana dynasty. The country was ruled by the same dictator, Chandra Shamsheer, whom Yogamaya would challenge. Durga later told Mahadidi what happened. "The family was walking in the main road in the city, when a carriage, escorted by guards, appeared in the road. It was drawn by four great horses. When people saw his carriage they knew the ruler was inside and hurriedly moved aside, turning their eyes down. Durga did not step back when she saw the ruler's coach. She ran into the path of the horses and she grasped the bridle of one of them, somehow bringing the team to a halt. 'My brother, my father,' she shouted at the ruler, as if she ever could see him from where she stood. 'My brother, my father, let them free, they are innocent. Oh Sarkar, I ask you to release him.'" That was all Durga said, according to Mahadidi. She told Mahadidi that she saw the ruler look at her, and when she let go of the harness, his carriage swept on. Then, she reported, the police surrounded Durga, her mother and uncle.

"They could have been taken away and jailed, maybe shot. Others saw this. You can ask in Kathmandu. They will remember." According to Durga's account to Mahadidi, the police questioned her uncle but they did not arrest any of them.

Victory awaited them in the Arun Valley. Soon after the family arrived back in Palikot, Sher and his son also returned home. They'd been freed from prison! According to Mahadidi, Durga's demand to the ruler had made this possible.

"Thereafter, Durga was at Sher Bahadur's side, mounted on her horse, riding with him and with her uncle, Bir Bahadur." They always moved by horse going to and from their business affairs. Apart from high ranking officials who tour remote villages on horseback, only this trio travelled this way. Mahadidi said they wanted to be

certain everyone took note of them as they passed. Little Durga's brother was not among the team. It seems he was a sickly child who would not survive long.

“Sher's daughter carried his satchel holding his legal files. Durga accompanied the men right into the courtrooms. She followed everything her father and uncle did.” Probably her education was largely acquired this way, and by studying the documents her father discussed with her. They were a formidable team. They shared many more victories over land and Durga's sense of right and her feeling of invulnerability must have come from their successes.

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Despite his adventures in law, Sher Bahadur was a traditional man. Even though he saw that Durga was educated, he still betrothed her as was the custom, when she was 6 years old. Her 'husband' was a 9 year old boy she had never seen. He also arranged the marriage of his son when he too was just a child.

Durga was a widow even before she took up residence in her marriage house. Her brother, Sher's only son also died before he received his young wife, so she too became a child widow. Neither girls could remarry and neither would have children. The dowry was paid, the marriages legal, and the girls would eventually move to the home of their dead husbands. Durga's little sister-in-law would come to the Palikot house, and Durga would be sent to Marwa village, where her child husband was born. Sher Bahadur Ghimire was Chhetri caste, yet he followed the Brahmin practice of prohibiting a widow to remarry. This almost guaranteed that Durga would be subject to abuse. If Durga had not been able to protect herself and her sister-in-law, we would have two more cases of injustice and two more examples of aggrieved women.

Since Sher Bahadur survived his son, he might have anticipated problems over inheritance might arise and he could have searched for a solution, even if that involved breaking with custom. But he did not. On her side, even as she matured and faced difficulties in her husband's house at Marwa, Durga never challenged her father's decision regarding her marriage. Ending child marriage and

widowhood were part of Yogamaya's struggle, but not Durga's. She neither fought to overturn her fate as a child widow, nor did she campaign against the practice in general.

Durga knew she had to move to her husband's house in Marwa even if he was not there. But for several years she continued to spend much of the year in Palikot with her father and mother. Only when her father died, did she move permanently to Marwa. It was 1933 and she was 15³.

Durga was happy at her home in Marwa at the beginning. Her husband's brothers were still adolescents and their wives had not yet moved in. The early cheerfulness was due to her affection for her Sasu (her mother-in-law). There was a magic union between them. The Sasu welcomed the girl from Palikot. Indeed, the older woman was devoted to the young widow. And they forged an remarkable partnership. As we shall see, her Sasu's actions on behalf of Durga were critical in her career. Their bond would last until the old woman, with Durga at her side, gasped her last breath and was consumed in fire at the burning *ghat* near Manakamana.

This kind of bond between women was rare. If a woman has several sons, she receives the wife of each into the same house, and she usually dispenses her affection to those daughters-in-law who bear the grandchildren. Her eldest son's wife is frequently her favorite because she gives birth first. But Durga was childless and a widowed daughter-in-law in this condition is usually a disadvantage. Without a husband to protect her, or a male child to assure the line, a widow can be subject to cruel treatment from her mother-in-law. It is not unusual for her to be shunted aside and, if she stays on, live a miserable existence on the margin of the family. Some young widows run away. If she is lucky enough to have a brother willing to take her in and give her work, a widow might return to her *maitighar*. That option is only possible if the brother's wife agrees, and even then, a widow is not always kindly received.

3. Sher and Bir Bahadur died violently. The police reported they drowned after a landslide swept them into a river but Durga maintained they were murdered by people who ambushed them and stole their legal files.

My translator Dharma was listening carefully to my discussion with Mata about the difficulties of these child widows. She knew his family, and seeing his thoughtful mood, not unkindly reminded him about his *Phuphu*, Dharma's father's elder sister who had been living with them since before Dharma was born. Mata guessed that Dharma and his brothers and sisters hadn't thought much about that loving, but sad aunt. "Your *Phuphu* was a child widow. She left her land and did not want to fight, so she came to your father's house (her *maitighar*). Your mother said she could stay, but if she did not agree to work as your Aama's cook, you may never have known your sweet *Phuphu*."

Dharma was deeply moved by this information. He thought over what our friend had told him and began to recall for us the ongoing tension between his parents over his father's sister. He told us how, after his auntie ran away when he was a child, his older brothers went in search of her and brought her back to their house. "She has no money, no jewelry, no land, Father told us. He said *Phuphu* had run away after an argument with our Aama." Dharma remembered that his mother and auntie hardly ever spoke to one another. Dharma had thought this was a personal problem in their house. He believed his *Phuphu* a poor relative whom his father was helping. He thought she stayed with them because she loved Dharma and his brothers and sisters. Now he understood that she must have had rights to some land somewhere, and that she had lost her fields because she hadn't demanded her rightful portion. Dharma, with tears in his eyes, promised he would go home in a few days to talk to his auntie. He had a new awareness of the depth of her history and he wanted to learn more about her past.

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As Durga's campaign demonstrates, legal redress for women is available. Even if she is widowed and childless, a wife retains some rights in her husband's family property. And these rights are guaranteed in the national social code, *Muluki Ain*. Few women feel able to assert this right however, just as they will not legally challenge their husband if he brings a second wife to the house. But Durga was different. She decided she would not forfeit her land. She was 25 and had been living

in Marwa for almost ten years, working her fields, caring for the animals, repairing the house and enjoying the confidence of her Sasu. She was not about to let her *dewar* (husband's brothers) and their families take the produce of *her* fields.

But what man voluntarily gives up his dead brother's portion? To insist on her share, Durga needed the court's sanction and she would have to fight for it. A public dispute of this kind was certain to bring the scorn of the whole village on a woman. Was Durga ready for all this?

Mahadidi reported how all three of her *dewar* joined forces in their determination to take Durga's share for themselves. "First they tried to win their mother's support. A woman will usually side with her sons, but Sasu refused." This was critical. Sasu's support for Durga was essential because, as the senior woman of a household, the deeds to the land were in her possession, not with her sons. Although women may be subject to many constraints, and even though they do not ordinarily overrule their sons, they are the head of the house and as such can decide how shares are divided. "All three *dewar* found their own mother standing firmly with Durga. 'You must give Durga her share,' she told them. The men asked their wives to help assuage Durga. 'Promise her anything,' they pleaded." But Durga could not be mollified. Finally the men decided on a trick.

"They would marry Durga off, to an outsider. It would be against our caste rules and it might bring shame on the house, but they calculated that it would pass, and in the short term, they could live with the gossip. They thought that if Durga were sent far away, she would be forgotten soon anyway." So they began to search for a new partner for their troublesome sister-in-law. They even agreed to offer a small dowry to help lure a husband. It was worth the sacrifice of some of their savings to give someone else her ill temper and her rights.

Mahadidi only learned about this from Durga later, but in her report to us, she spoke with the enthusiasm of a spectator at a sports match. "Everything was arranged. The groom was a man was from down in Madhesh and he was on his way to fetch Durga. An old, old man," Mahadidi said with a pleading look. She grimaced and pulled her spread fingers down the sides of her own face to paint a picture of a



withered old soul. Mahadidi's large eyes opened wider as she continued. "Durga did not know. The Madheshi was due that day and he was already near Marwa, about to claim his wife! Hah. He had his musicians with his party and they began to play their horns and drums as they came nearer to the house. You can be sure the brothers and their wives grinned with delight. Their saucy sister-in-law would be gone.

"They miscalculated. Durga's Sasu knew the men's plan and she did not like it." Up to this point she had remained silent. But something made her change on the day when the old man came to take Durga. "You will never believe what she did, that Sasu? Against her own sons!

"Against her own sons!" she repeated. Mahadidi's enthusiasm for Durga's mother-in-law was infectious. This Sasu was the kind of mother-in-law every Nepalese woman dreamed of. "Against her own sons," she said again.

Dharma and I were not the only ones enjoying this tale. Another old woman from the hermitage had been listening from nearby, leaning on a shade tree. She smiled as she stepped into our circle and crouched right in front, between me and Mahadidi. She knew the story, but she wanted to hear it again. She sat on the ground, leaning forward to hear Mahadidi finish the tale. Her thin sari was pulled over her close-cropped head reminding me that she too had probably been a child widow, a desolate sister-in-law. How much of a model were Durga and her Sasu for this woman? Or is this just a wild story?" We all waited for Mahadidi to continue.

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This is a cherished moment for an anthropologist. A field researcher often finds herself groping blindly in the early stages of an inquiry. In my work in the Arun Valley, I began without a map, not knowing where I would end, unaware of how few people would or could verify this history. In retrospect, I feel I was blessed with a degree of naivete and by these women's tolerance of me. Like my innocent questions about the poems, or the ownership of the land where the women lived, my naivete led me here. But having stayed on, finding that their lives were so charged and controversial, I had to

make a special commitment to them.

We anthropologists are visitors here. We usually can't see beyond the colorful and curious customs of our hosts to enjoy the deviant and daring. We don't usually seek out the abnormal since the norms are difficult enough for us to make sense of. We concentrate on learning people's habitual ways because custom tells us how the society holds together and that is what we want to know. We seek endless examples of caste norms, of inbuilt or 'inherent' exploitation or inequities, of backwardness, of the 'endurance' of traditions, of family values, of people living the same way century after century. We become so enchanted and overwhelmed with the norm – after all we are only visitors and do not have to abide by these rules ourselves – that we can't imagine anything else. Especially in Asia, the Arab lands and across Africa. That is not because social life in India or Burma or Bangladesh is inherently inflexible, but because of our own limited vision.

Most anthropologists develop a narrow view of what is possible, for example, in Asian societies. We are sent to understand these norms and the power of the rules of these cultures, so we too have vested interest in them. We accept a picture of social rigidity because many of the people we speak to are firm about what they can and cannot do. We encourage them to tell us what is normal, and we record that. We hear so many stories about forlorn and abused widows that the practice seems unassailable. If we feel too angry about their problems, we won't stay long. If we feel nothing can be done, we write about the 'tenacity of traditions'.

Mahadidi's account of Durga Devi cut through all that. This was more than a story. It was *these* women's history, *these* peoples' history, and as such it became a record of their potential.

It was during those few weeks, hearing such stories, that my aims as a chronicler changed. I found my skepticism fading. My British professors stressed the need for skepticism, in order to better evaluate 'truth.' I decided that to continue this pursuit without the usual tools of verification – news reports or chronicles of other examples, or statistical occurrences – I had to evaluate the report qualitatively, perhaps with my emotion. I learned there are times when

facts themselves cease being paramount. Facts can be useful, but they can be highly subjective too. And facts have their limits. The personality and the character of events can be more significant, and just as real, and could lead me to the truth as much as empirical facts could.

I abandoned my scepticism. I allowed myself to enter this history and I did something a scientist should never do. I found myself cheering Durga, cursing her *dewar*, and feeling the thrill of an approaching victory. She would never let that toothless old dog take her, never let her brothers-in-law dump her. I also felt a growing confidence that Sasu would not betray Durga.

I was no longer a detached observer. I felt destined to be here with Mahadidi and the other widows. I resolved to write Durga's story without empirical facts. Durga was a heroine for me. Sasu had to help her, and she did. Sasu crossed the line to openly ally herself with her daughter-in-law, rushing to Durga to warn her of the old Madheshi's arrival. There was still time for Durga to escape.

“But Durga did not run away. Not Jethi Devi,” Mahadidi assured me. She devised a plan, of sorts, for the unsuspecting fellow. In what was to become her style, she positioned herself for an assault, running into the path and singlehandedly confronting him and his party. Mahadidi laughed as she continued the tale. “She attacked the poor chap. And he turned and fled in the opposite direction, back to Madhesh.” And Durga? “She was screaming, cursing the old man and her *dewar*. The whole village was watching.” The men must have been chagrined. What a blunder. They had not only lost their dowry. They had aroused Durga's wrath. Their failed scheme made Durga even more determined to have what was hers, and more. She had Sasu, who would always be her accomplice. Soon after, Sasu handed over the land deed to her favorite daughter-in-law – a kind of parting gift. They had taken the first step.

A woman cannot just walk away with a deed and cash it in. There would be a court hearing. Moreover, Durga's share was not one coterminous piece of land on a hillside. One plot was many hundred feet below near the river surrounded by her brothers-in-law's shares – another bordered the path to town – another lay in the meadow on the

shade side of the mountain – another was east of the house. Until now the family ploughed and seeded and harvested the fields together. Who would want to purchase these disparate plots?

First Durga would have to go to the court to force a sale at fair compensation. Then she had to somehow exchange plots so hers would be coterminous and she could cultivate them independent of her relatives. This would take time.

Durga's struggle for possession of her land involved a series of court cases lasting eight years. During this period, Durga moved to Malta and lived with Mahadidi while she supported herself from the produce of her fields in Marwa. Sasu watched over her land, but Durga regularly returned there to plough and sow, to hoe and harvest. The two women tended Durga's fields together, and when Durga returned to her temporary home in Malta, Sasu sent Durga her share of the harvest. She sold whatever grain she did not need and put her profits in the bank.

The court battle continued and at times became ugly, with Durga and her three opponents shouting insults at one another in the streets, first in Chainpur, where it is said, she actually kicked a judge, and later in Khandbari, after the courthouse was moved there (not in flight from Durga but because of a district re-zoning). Administrative towns are the domain of men, mostly government men. They and the hangers-on who befriend high officials and rich merchants, and profit from government contracts. The town center is their clubhouse. They have their own way of doing things, their own culture. To the last person, from Bhojpur to Dhankuta, the men of the Arun Valley knew about Durga Devi. Here was a woman, a widow with no formal education, who was intent on using government, not bribes or tricks, to secure her rights. Sympathy among the town's inhabitants lay with Durga's brothers-in-law. And that would grow as the dispute dragged on.

On my early visits to Chainpur and Khandbari just after I first learned about Durga, I inquired about her among town residents. Those who volunteered a comment were dismissive of Durga and told me that she was not worth my time. They offered no details about her work, only repeating, "she was a troublemaker; she was always making

trouble.” This was their simple, singular characterization of Durga. They had made up their minds long ago that she was either a troublemaker or ‘mad’. Everyone spoke in the same sulking tone, as if she had personally hurt them.

I had already lost any chance of befriending these gentlemen with my earlier inquiries about Yogamaya. They had described her as a communist whore. Now here they were summing up this lady in equally derisive language. Yet, I found the men’s reactions instructive. Their hostility to Durga Devi was founded in their solidarity with her brothers-in-law. Some of them had widowed sisters-in-law staying in their own homes, women whose shares they were enjoying. They must have thought: “What if she decides to follow that troublemaker’s example and take possession of her fields?”

I suppose I was fortunate that these men were not hostile towards me. After all, I was a visitor in their country and they could have had me shipped out, or pressured the women at Manakamana to end their association with me. Their dismissals and rejections only made me more curious.

The men – police, clerks and merchants – hated that abrasive style of Durga’s. She was confrontational in most of her dealings with people, and this was unacceptable to the culture. She probably seemed like the ambitious and angry American or European women today who are labeled ‘militant’.

“Durga felt pity for the women and men who simply needed the help of a clerk – even a high-school educated boy could ease their hardships with a few kind words and an hour’s help over formalities. She was angry at these officials because they didn’t do their job. They sit with the bosses to feel important; they play cards with each other because they are bored, feeling so unimportant. They have the simplest work, those office fellows – keeping reports, directing papers from one office to another, telling our uneducated citizens the rules. They send these poor people away and take bribes to help the rich get more. Our Durga would not be sent away so easily.”

Durga marched into town every week with one complaint or another. She accused police of taking bribes, the land office of extortion, the banks of corruption, the school superintendent of fraud.

They misplaced her files, requested more forms, and otherwise harassed her at every turn. When she was spotted heading into town, word spread through the offices, and whomever could slip away shut their doors and disappeared for the day. “Durga always won, and they didn’t like that,” was all Mahadidi said about this. “Our people are poor. They cannot write. Who will help them?” asks Mahadidi. “One day a man brings a sample from a sack of corn he bought at the market last week; it is laced with stones. He knows who sold it but he is unable to confront the man alone. Would Durga help him? A woman came in search of protection from a husband who beat her; he would throw her out if she did not accept his new wife. Would Durga file a report for her with the police? Another arrives to report that her husband died last month owing 800 rupees and the landowner says that to pay off the debt, her son must work for him until the monsoons – nine more months. She has no way of knowing if the debt is real. She fears the landlord. How can she find out about her husband’s debt? What is she to do?”

Mahadidi was the only witness to those private moments at their house in Marwa where Durga faced the pitiful women and men who came for help. Only she heard Durga’s kind, searching questions: “Who will help them? Who will stop this cheating?”

“Sometimes she cried,” Mahadidi told us. “She became angry and she wanted these peasants to be angry too.” Mahadidi mimicked Durga, flinging her arms around. ‘What! They can’t do that. Tell him the law does not permit a second wife. You can divorce him and take your share. Your son does not have to work for the guy. Demand they show you the debt paper and your husband’s signature. Go back to them and tell them there is a law that protects you. Tell him,’ she said.

“But they could not do it alone. They were afraid.”

Durga was a person of action. One example had to do with the grain measures. Merchants were well known for their tricks, especially using grain measures with false bottoms. The police were supposed to check the measures of grain sellers, but for a small bribe, they ignored it. Durga did not let these things pass. I was told how our self-appointed prosecutor would choose the busiest time of the week – market day when crowds of people gathered in the town. From a

corner she would watch a merchant measuring grain, and when the moment was opportune she'd lunge at the man, grab the measure and smash it against the ground, its false base exposed. Durga would send a child (no adult would cooperate with her) to fetch the constable, while she stood over the evidence, shouting accusations at the merchant.

In the short term, these ambushes could be considered victories for Durga. Yet what about the long term costs? Young people, like my assistant Dharma, never overcame his negative image of Durga Devi, even though he was learning about her history and beginning to appreciate her accomplishments.

Dharma was twenty at the time of our work, but his memory of Durga was formed while sitting with his father and other adults eleven years earlier when he was nine. He often heard the men talk about her, and he recalled seeing her once. "She was screaming, running through the square, shouting 'police, police!'" She had her *kukri* knife in her hand, and blood was streaming from her head. We all laughed," he admitted. "She was *bahulai* – a crazy woman."

Mahadidi knew about that incident and told us what she remembered. "See Dharma," she said. "That happened in Chainpur. Durga was still in the courts trying to get her land. She was at the courthouse every week. After one visit, she and a brother-in-law were screaming at each other in the street. She always carried a pole as well as her knife. She swung her stick at the man and they hit each other. She was cut in the head, and I took care of her.

"You didn't understand Durga, sweet Dharma. Yes, she was bleeding from that fight. But why? Because she went directly to the police office, screaming, showing everyone along the road her bleeding face telling them they were her witnesses. She insisted the police see her cuts and bruises and write their report. There and then, before she left the town, she filed a charge against her brother-in-law for assault. Again they went into the court. And you know Dharma, he had to pay her for that. Jethi Devi."

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After Sasu, her only ally died, Durga continued her work. Meanwhile, she began to give away some of the wealth she

accumulated. The summer after Durga returned from Banaras to Tumlingtar, there was a flood that swept away the river bank around Mankamana. Until then the Mankamana stone on a ledge in a rock on the beach was accessible to worshipers, but after that flood villagers could no longer reach the rock. “Durga did not believe in the power of Goddess Manakamana. She said only ‘ignorant hill people’ worship the spirit. That is not our religion. They cut pigeons and goats to please those gods. They eat meat. We do not,” said Mahadidi. “But Durga had pity on the peasants and when they asked her to help them, she could not refuse. She build a new shrine for Mankamana on the hillside, and had the stone brought there. She made it strong, of brick and wood. She put aside money to pay a custodian for years to come, to live at this place and look after the shrine. He is still here.”

Durga bought ten or more acres of the land around Mankamana. She bought it for the women who now live there. She paid for the construction of the praying hall in the center of the plot, and had workers build a levy fifty meters from the beach to hold back the Arun during the monsoon months when the river swells to many times its size. She hired men to build paths and she helped women who did not have money to put up their own huts. She ordered hundreds of fruit plants from the south of Nepal and she worked with the women to make a garden of trees across the hillside. Even today, the women still harvest the fruit to earn money to pay for their needs.

Were these moves a sign that Durga was growing more pious? Was she making amends with the divine, perhaps reflecting on her early sins? Was she finally abandoning her political mission?

Mahadidi laughed and assured me that Durga fought until her last breath. “You still do not understand Durga Devi. She never cared about *dharma*. When she saw people in need, she could not turn away. She gave away food to beggars. She took pity on the poor. That was just her character.”

Durga had one more adventure in court, a final battle. She would fight for her own brother's land, the property which passed to his widow (the *buhari*, or daughter-in-law) when Sher Bahadur and her mother died. Like Durga, she was a widow from childhood and thus had no children. Since Durga had no other brothers, this woman found



herself the sole heir to Sher's Bahadur's estate. It was a full half of what he and Bir Bahadur had accumulated in their careers, so it was sizable. This did not seem right to the seven sons of Bir Bahadur who asked, why this little widow with no sons should own half the land, while seven brothers and their families shared the other half? They decided they would take their uncle's lands.

You can be sure Mahadidi knew the details of this episode too. She knew that *Buhari* had the land deeds in her possession. For years, she had resisted pressure to turn these over to her cousins even though they had tried to convince her that she should let them take care of the land for her, and they would care for her too. When they saw she was unyielding, they threatened her and finally they planned an assault to take her land by force. "Those men were serious and *Buhari* knew one person could help her. Durga. She called Durga and Durga went straightaway to live with her sister-in-law in Palikot. The very next day, she registered *Buhari's* petition with the Bhojpur court, to separate the fields and sell them off."

Mahadidi was one of the few people who could tell us about the brothers' scheme to steal the deeds. "Without those papers, they calculated, the women could prove nothing and they set out for the Palikot house to rob her. But Durga had a plan. Instead of running away, the two women waited alone for the men, as if inviting a confrontation. "They locked themselves into the house. They were defenseless," said Mahadidi smiling. She knew her boss would win.

"When the brothers arrived, the women refused to let them in, so they began to push on the door. Durga and her sister-in-law were ready." According to Mahadidi, just before the men forced their way in, *Buhari* tossed the roll of documents to Durga waiting in the corn bin loft, and without the attackers knowing, Durga escaped through a window into the night.

Mahadidi was astonishingly casual as she continued the story. "The intruders found *Buhari* alone, acting terrified. She watched unprotesting, as they ransacked the house searching for the papers. But it was too late. While they were going through every corner of the house, Durga was on her way to the police. She walked to Bhojpur that very night and she went straight to the police office. She said she was

fleeing burglars who had broken into her sister-in-law's house and were in pursuit of her. Next morning she filed charges against the men – all seven of them – for assault, breaking into the house and attempted burglary.” She took on her own uncle's sons.

“The men were charged and paid heavily. During the months of legal proceedings, Durga stayed in Palikot until she won her *Buhari*'s right to dispose of her lands as she wished. In the end she sold her fields outright.”

Another fantastic story? Both Dharma and I were listening with disbelief. By now we knew Mahadidi was not one to exaggerate. Eventually the court documents could be retrieved from Bhojpur court and when that happened, everyone would understand Durga's skills.

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Our one final story from Durga's audacious career may be the most difficult to document. It never reached the courts but it engaged Durga in a no-holds-barred assault in defense of a raped child. I can't recall how I first learned about the little girl. Perhaps it was when we heard rumors about a teacher in Khandbari who had molested a student. This case was worse because it was not a high school teacher, but a policeman who had attacked a little girl. It was all the more horrifying because the child was deaf and unable to speak.

I looked at Dharma when we first learned this and he shyly admitted that he had heard something about it. “It was very bad,” was all he said. Again only Mahadidi would explain the details, because it was part of the history of Durga's victories.

“Sometimes,” Mahadidi began, “we have children who are homeless, even here in the hills. Little ones – girls, but sometimes boys too. That was Don Kumari. We called her “Lalo,” because she was deaf. She came from somewhere across the Milke Danda mountain. Maybe because she was handicapped, her family felt they could not look after her all her life and they sent her away. Or maybe she ran away and they did not care enough to look for her. We did not know.

“She stayed with the Sherpa woman in town, the one who kept the drinking room, and Sherpani fed the child. Don Kumari was so helpless and simple so no one thought she might be in danger. She had

lived with Sherpani for four years, and one day Sherpani figured out that little Don Kumari was pregnant. She noticed the child had become more nervous and hid when any man came into the shop. She cried and cried. Sherpani was angry but did not know what to do. She sent a message to Durga, and Durga told her to bring the child to our house at Tumlingtar.

“Oh what a scene. Of course it was clear the child had been raped. Durga said they must find who did this.

“Only Durga would say it. ‘Who did this to you?’ She shook the girl in her anger. Then Durga remembered the child was unable to hear, or to speak. What should be done?

“Durga decided it was useless to go to the police, or the district officer, or to the Pradan Panch, the elected party official. We had no clues, and no one would help us. Durga went to the town and called women together but even the few who met us said nothing could be done. Perhaps they feared the molester was someone in their own family.”

But what about Dom Kumari?

Durga decided there was only one thing to do. It was painful for the little girl, but Durga forced her. “She took the child by the hand and marched her in front of every man in the town, even boys, every one over the age of 15. Durga instructed the girl to look at him, and shake her head yes or no. They stood like that in front of the school principal, in front of each teacher, before each government officer, each shopkeeper. Every time the child shook her head, Durga would pull her away from the shocked man and marched to the next fellow. The men protested; some turned their face away and Durga accused them. They had to stand to let the little girl inspect them.

“Durga even went to the police station. The town was horrified. What was she doing? Indeed it was there, on the veranda of the police post the little girl began to scream and cry. ‘Is he the man?’ asked the older woman, pointing jabbing her hand towards him. He wore glasses, one of the few men in the village to wear glasses. The girl was certain.”

“Durga walked out of the station and to the government office. She forced the top man, the Pradan Panch, to go with her to the head

of the Khandbari police and she filed charges directly against the policeman. Rape. It was a horrible accusation. You could not find a man in the street that day.”

Durga stayed in town that night to make certain the papers were processed without delay. In the morning she was at the courthouse.

“A clerk from the police office brought a note to the court. The man in question, the defendant, has been posted out of town, it said. He left during the night, ordered to report to West Nepal. It was urgent and he had to leave before morning.”

Had she been younger, Durga probably would have taken off after the man. She would have hunted him down. All she could do now was file a charge. Nothing happened. It lay in the court file until Durga died. “No one spoke about it after that,” concluded Mahadidi. I inquired about Don Kumari during my visit to town some months later, but I did not try to meet her. Among those I questioned about the episode was Dharma’s mother. She nodded yes, and then, like others, then turned silent.

Lest people forget this wrong and to make certain they would remember, Durga would care for the violated child – the mother and her baby. “She opened a bank account for Dom Kumari, and arranged for Sherpani to take care of her. When the baby, a girl, was born a few months later, they stayed on with Sherpani. Durga left them enough money for years to come. They would be comfortable, and the baby could eventually go to school.”

By the time I learned this history in 1984, the child was twelve years old. She and her mother had remained in the town and the child was attending school. Dom Kumari never left their little room at the Sherpa woman’s house, but the girl, who was not deaf, was often seen on her way to and from school.

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Dharma was more willing to accept that history than his mother was, even though Durga was no heroine for him. I was sorry Durga never won his appreciation, as Yogamaya had. Dharma understood the style and the mission of Yogamaya well – far better

than I did, even though he was born long after Yogamaya passed away and he knew little about her before this sojourn at Manakamana. He overcame whatever doubts he had about Yogamaya when he heard her history from these women. Not with Durga Devi. While I became increasingly excited about Durga's work, Dharma remained skeptical. If she was not mad, she would always be a troublemaker in his eyes. Only once, when he learned about *Sasu's* death, Dharma showed sympathy and admiration for the fighter from Palikot.

When *Sasu* was near death, Mahadidi was beside Durga and could tell us everything that happened. "When we came back from a visit to Darjeeling, we found *Sasu* had fallen ill. She called for Durga and we went to the Marwa house to see her. Her sons were at her bedside with their wives and all of their children too. But *Sasu* insisted that her first daughter-in-law must be beside her as well. The end was near, she told them, and all of them were to accept her wish. She was their mother. Then she announced that Durga, not her sons, must make her *sraddha*. This was *Sasu's* order." It was a supreme act of solidarity between a woman and her daughter-in-law.

*Sraddha* is the Hindu commemorative funeral rite which the eldest son normally performs. By custom women take no part in the *sraddha*. If a man or woman has no son, another male relative will take over. None of the women at Manakamana, some of whom were present at *Sasu's sraddha*, could break with this tradition. Yet Durga would do her duty for her mother-in-law.

A young Nepalese told me about the importance men attach to this duty. His own father had renounced the world and gone to India to live out the remainder of his life as a *sanyasi*. "When we become *sanyasi*," he explained, "we do *sraddha* at that time because it marks our social death. Every son considers the *sraddha* for his mother and father a duty. For us it is an honour – an honour which, if we cannot answer it, we are forever unfulfilled. My father went away to Banaras and his fellow *sanyasi* undertook his *sraddha* for him, so I, his son, was denied my right."

Mata said in her own case, she could not deny her children their wish to do her *sraddha* when she decided to leave her family and take up residence at this hermitage as a *sanyasi*. "First my children

would not agree to my plan,” she said. “They cried. They said I could not leave; they begged me to stay with them. Only when they saw I was unwavering, did they relent. And my *sraddha*? That was the biggest problem. The older boys understood but Kancha, my youngest wept and pleaded with me, and I could not pain him for the rest of his life. So I allowed him to go with me to Banaras, where he performed his duty as my son. He is a sweet child.” Then she added, “I was not as strong as Durga’s *Sasu*.”

Yes, *Sasu* was indeed an extraordinary woman. Mahadidi said that *Sasu*’s family accepted her wish, knowing they could never dissuade her from her decision. “When the old woman expired, all of them were beside her. But only Durga bathed the corpse of her beloved mother-in-law.

“She bound *Sasu*’s body in white cloth, then wrapped it in an orange shroud. She prepared the old woman’s bier as well. The men stood back as Durga lifted the lifeless body of her dear *Sasu* on her own back. She carried her all the way from Marwa to the riverside, to the *ghat*, over there on the river’s edge. The others followed silently, obediently.

“I saw my friend weep. She prepared the pyre. She tended the fire while the body of *Sasu* was consumed. Then Durga herself searched through the ashes to find the piece of skull. ‘We will go to Banaras straightaway,’ she told me. ‘Prepare our things.’ She paid the Brahmin priest for his service. And we left.”

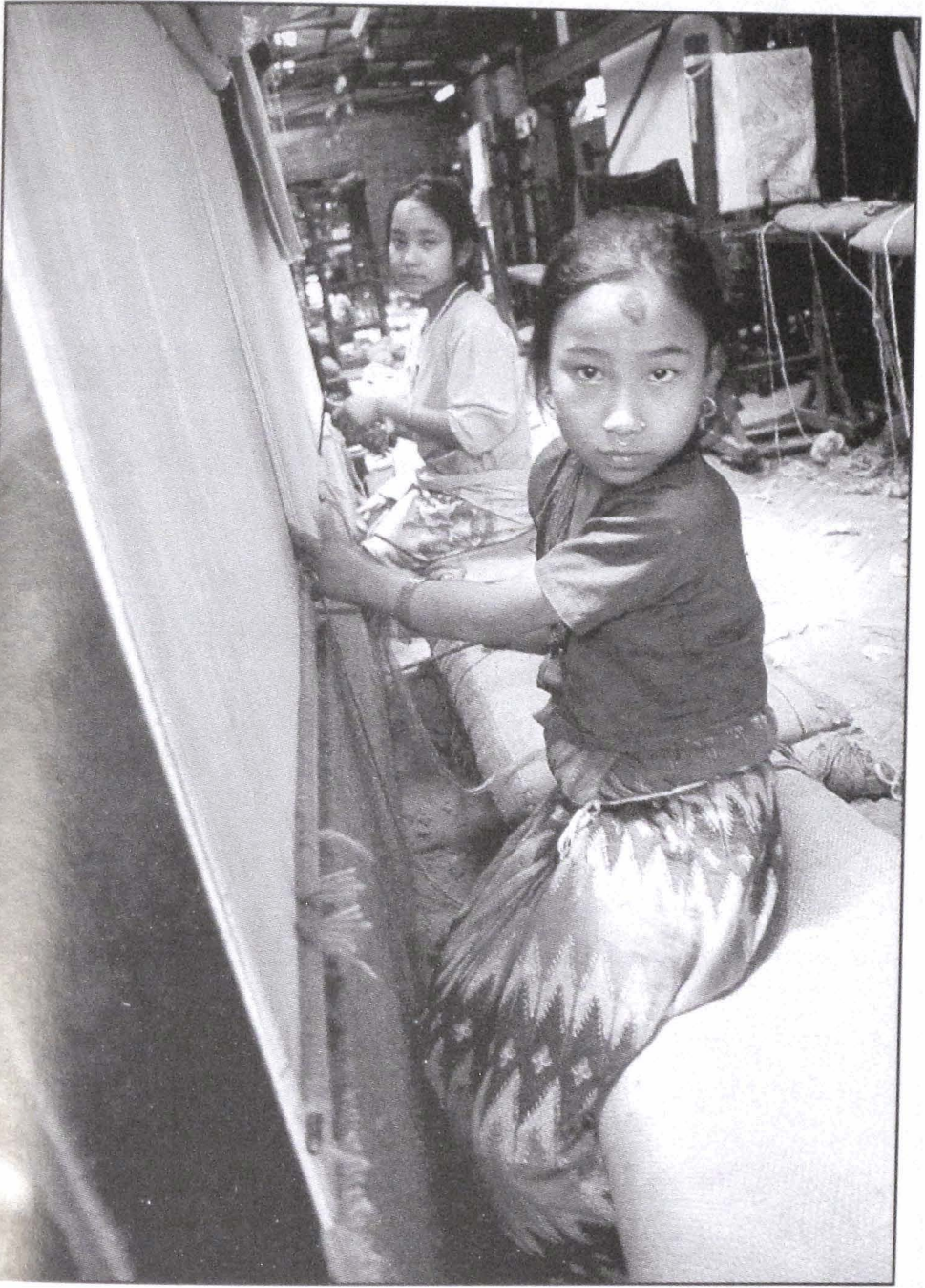
Dharma listened in astonishment and then pressed Mahadidi for an explanation. “How did her sons allow this?”

“Every son respects his mother and cannot refuse her final wish, especially at the moment when she is about to leave this world. *Sasu* ordered them to obey her. She had supported and protected Durga through all her struggles and her sons knew this. They could not oppose their mother.”

Later, when Durga’s time to die was approaching, in the last hours of her life, her companions at the hermitage carried out her funeral rite. Her family was also present. After weeks of illness and four days without food, when it was clear Durga had not long to live, the indefatigable warrior called her family to her bedside – her three

*Dewar* and *Buhari*, her brother's widow from Palikot. Durga's faithful companion Mahadidi was present along with a priest to administer the *sanyasi* mantra to her. A clerk from the land office had arrived to record her orders regarding deposition of her property. He wrote out Durga's orders: most of her wealth was to go to Manakamana shrine and hermitage, to be administered by *Buhari*; the remainder would revert to her husband's house but she stipulated how it was to be used. Ten percent of her crops was assigned for the support of Dom Kumari, the violated girl and 10% would be used to upgrade the trails around Manakamana. The document was signed by Durga, her *dewar* and witnesses. Then Durga dismissed everyone except Mahadidi and the *sanyasi* from the hermitage. They stayed to light her pyre by the Arun River when she left this world nine hours later. Jethi Devi.

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Eight-year-old labourer, a Tamang girl, at her loom in a factory in Baudha, Kathmandu. Photo by Mani Lama

Chapter 6

LITTLE WEAVER GIRL

Her oldest daughter had gone to the big city and now it was young Maya's turn. Maya was nine, a healthy and diligent child. "You are a big girl now, and you can help Aama even more." Aama spoke softly, stroking her daughter's hair. "School is of no use to poor farmers like us." The girl did not answer. She had heard her mother speak like this before. "Look at the boys in the marketplace. Sunil is with his friends at that table in the street playing at the karam board while the sun moves across the sky, from east all the way to the west." Where, Aama wondered, did these lads find the rupees to buy tea at a shop, when at home she hadn't enough money to buy rice.

Aama had wanted Sunil her son to work in a factory in the city. But he refused. "I am an educated boy," he snarled. "Anyway, weaving is women's work. I am going for government service, so I can help our people. I must be near the officers, the Pradan Panch and the policemen, with Bahadur who distributes the seeds, and with Purbu who gives out condoms and pills."

When Sunil began to study, every house sent a boy to school. Aama herself had said that Sunil should never haul loads up the mountain, like his father and his uncles had. She did not want him to walk barefoot through the town, wearing only undershorts and a thin shirt, carrying a heaped load of sugar and books and cloth for other people to enjoy.

But by the time Sunil finished school, there was no work in any of the town offices, and all the teaching posts were filled. Aama wondered what to do? "We haven't enough food or money for clothes. Last year, we sold one cow; we have only two goats left. I even leased

some of our paddy to another villager, and soon I must repay the loan I took against the land. We might lose our fields altogether. Thank the gods for a girl like Mahili Didi."

Aama was managing only because middle daughter had found work in the city. Every two weeks Mahili sent an envelope to her mother. Aama might find fifty rupees there, sometimes a little more. She needed every anna of it. Because there was no more wood on the hills to be collected, she had to pay for kerosene for cooking. If enough fuel was left from the previous month, Aama might have enough money to buy a little more cooking oil, or some beans for them to eat instead of those chillies every day. Still, there was never enough.

So that young Maya could have an egg now and then, Aama kept two hens. "Now," she calculated, "if Maya leaves to work with her sister, I can sell the hens and buy a new water pot. But I shall miss this kind child of mine."

Since she'd turned six years old, Maya was at her Aama's side, helping with the new baby or preparing rice, or cleaning the grain. She had told her mother, "teach me Aama, and I shall learn quickly. Then you can rest."

Aama smiled and watched Maya mending the baby's dress. She thought, "Yes, she is a quick learner and she is obedient." She looked at the child's long arms. "Her skin is glossy and brown, like mine. But she is too thin. And her hair is dull." She wondered if Maya had enough food to eat. She reached out to stroke the girl's hair. It was speckled with dust and bits of straw, and her braid had not been knotted for some days. Maya's body was skinny, but her face was round and her eyes bright. She was a cheerful girl and never asked anything for herself. Even though she was still a child, Maya was aware that there wasn't enough food for each of them to eat their fill. So, like her mother, she took less in order to leave a bigger share for her brother Sunil.

She never spilled grain or oil, or wasted even a spoonful.

Aama looked at the girl's threadbare dress, its print now faded. It had become too short, and it pulled tight at Maya's shoulders. "Now that you are almost ten, sweet Maya, we must buy you a real Nepalese skirt. And a satin tunic." She pulled the girl towards her on the mat

where they sat. The child reached out with both arms to lay them on mother's legs. She let her head fall onto Aama's thigh and turned to look up at her mother, waiting for those brown hands to rub her hair and pull her closer, into that warm lap.

"Would you like to go and live with Mahili Didi in the city?" Aama asked the child. She drew her hands downward along the sides of her daughter's head, bringing them together under the child's chin. Maya shook her head, and gently pulled away. She missed her older sister and many of her friends who had gone there too. "But what about Aama?" she asked.

"Aama needs you to be with Mahili. Your sister has found work for you and soon she is coming to take you there, to teach you carpet weaving in the big city where our Raja and Rani live. You will see a very big castle with high walls around it. Please Maya, make us tea"

The little girl left her mother's lap and skipped across the room to the earthen jar. Aama reached for the baby lying on a small blanket not far from her and pulled him to her body. She lifted her blouse to give the child her breast. Maya meanwhile scooped out a measure of water with a tumbler and brought it across the room and poured it into a pot on the hearth. She knelt and blew at the embers until they ignited. Then she lay down, this time beside her mother and leaned against her shoulder while the baby sucked noisily at her mother's breast. Her mother lifted her free arm to brush Maya's hair from her face. Maya needed mother's comforting arms, however thin they were.

The next week Mahili arrived home. With her, she brought a gift for Maya, a new plaid green skirt, and Maya was happy and without removing her worn clothes, she wrapped it around her. She tried not to think about leaving her Aama. "Mahili needs a helper, my little Maya. Your sister will show you many new things, and teach you to weave with real wool. No more corn mats like those I taught you." Then she ended, "You can visit me whenever you like, my cheery daughter."

In the morning Aama sat on the threshold of her door, cradling her infant in her lap, as she watched Mahili and Maya climb the path from the house to the main trail and turn southwards. Maya wore her

new skirt. She needed no suitcase. The only possessions she carried were her hair comb and a brass cup. Oh, yes, and five silver rupees from Aama. She had folded them all into the cloth band she wound many times around her waist. No more short frocks for Maya. She was a grownup now, going to work with big sister to help her Aama. Mahili walked ahead, clutching the straw mat which Aama had woven just for Maya. This would be the child's bed in the dormitory where they would live.

Visiting Kathmandu for the first time should be a great adventure for a nine year old. Maya had never seen the city, although she once rode in a bus. She knew there were many electric lights there, and bicycles and cinemas and so many shops, and factories too. That was where other girls and boys from Dandagaon worked.

The journey took them two days. During the walk, Maya had lost one of her hair ribbons and her green blouse was stained under her arms. "Don't worry my sweet; we shall buy you a pretty green bow when we reach Kathmandu," said Mahili.

On the edge of the city, Maya saw a bus and cried, "Stop bus, stop." The bus was badly rusted with some patches of white paint here and there, and it was very, very big. Mahili reached out and grasped Maya's arm, and pulled her back. "Come. That bus does not go to our home. We live in this direction." They walked for another hour, although Maya noticed the bus had gone down the very road they were following.

Finally the girls arrived at a shed hidden behind a row of shops. Maya followed her sister into the building. Its walls were wooden boards, and she could see the sky between the slats. The room had no loft, and no ceiling, just a roof of tin sheets high overhead. The floor was earth, pitted with shallow cooking basins. Around each depression lay utensils: small trays and glasses, a teapot, or a brass rice pot, and a small kerosene burner. Each of these clusters was a hearth. It marked the "home" of one family of workers who lived in the barracks. Corn mats were rolled up and pushed against the wall. Clothes hung from nails stuck into the boards or on posts set into the earth. Towels and cotton covers draped over rope strung between posts and along the wall. The air was dusty. From somewhere in the distance

Maya heard a strange clacking – thump, thump, thump, thu-thump, thu thump. Was it the clatter of someone threshing rice, or perhaps cars? Mingled with the thump thu thump, she heard voices, sometimes giggles, sometimes a shriek, and occasionally the line of a song. They were children's voices, children's coughs and giggles, children's shrieks and songs.

Maya remembered her friends. "Where is Sunita? Where is Rani?"

"They are at work in the factory," Mahili answered softly. "We will see them tonight perhaps. Now, let us go to buy rice, and kerosene and your new ribbon. This is our holiday little sister."

Mahili put Maya's bedding beside her own, took the little girl's hand and led her into the neighborhood. Wherever they walked, Maya heard the thu thump, thump, thu thump. It was a sound she did not know, and she felt it was not a pretty sound, but she said nothing.

When they returned, the girls cooked their rice over the hearth beside their mats. When they had finished eating Maya washed their plates under the tap outside, then returned to her sister's side. She sat beside her sister, turning around so Mahili could plait the shiny green ribbons into her hair. "Tomorrow we shall begin work," explained the bigger girl. "We will sit side by side. I will be your teacher and we will send Aama our money." This made Maya feel happy. Soon, the sisters were asleep, their arms entwined around each other while the thu thump flapped through the air around them.

It was not yet light when Maya felt a hand rocking her shoulder. "Kanchhi, Kanchhi – time for work. Up, come. Look, I have some sugared chyura for you." Mahili held a bowl of flaked, cold rice in her hands and offered it to the little girl. Having bribed Maya to her knees, the older girl now brushed her hands over Maya's forehead and pushed her hair back. "Quickly, we must go. We will take our tea in the factory."

Even the purple of early morning had not yet arrived. All around her, along both sides of the shed, Maya could make out the humps of sleeping bodies curled under their blankets. These were the weavers from the late shift who had returned long after Maya and Mahili fell asleep. Coughing here and there, the wheezing of an

asthmatic interrupted the silent room. Maya thought she heard a little boy or girl crying, and calling 'Aama, Aama.'

Maya folded her mat into her sister's, rolled them into one bundle and pushed them against the wall. Then she wrapped her skirt tightly around her hips and followed Mahili outside. "Are we going to ride a bus?" asked Maya, as she moved into the dark path. She was walking towards the thumping sound, and it grew louder. "Some day, maybe we will ride a bus." Thu thum thu thump, thum, thu thump. Mahili raised her voice over the din as she walked into the factory. "Look, we are already at work!" They had walked along a muddy lane outside their shelter into a nearby building. This place was many times larger than where they slept. It too had an earth floor and a tin roof, and walls of loose-fitting boards.

The room was immense but it was divided by rows of heavy platforms extending from one end to the far wall. It was really a factory, a carpet factory. The wooden scaffolds on each platform looked like machines with arms extending out from their body, and sheets of rope joining the various joists. These, Maya would learn, were looms. Carpets in various stages of completion were stretched over each machine. Maya looked up and down the corridor where she stood. She saw some children already sitting at the machine, as if tied there. A single bare electric lightbulb hung from the roof above them, so she could not see their faces clearly. "Is Sunita here?" she asked Mahili.

"Hush. This is a factory and we must begin work. It is not a place to meet our friends," explained Mahili as she climbed three feet onto a wood platform, as if entering a machine of rope and paddles. "Come Kanchhi. Sit with me and I will teach you to weave." She fastened a strap behind her back to tie herself to the loom, then showed her sister how to fasten her little body as well. "This is the first lesson. This rope will stop you from falling off if you should become sleepy."

More children arrived and quietly moved down the corridor. Each climbed up to a loom to begin work. This was their station to which they came every day, six days a week. Maya smiled with her cheerful brown eyes at two girls who sat nearby. They looked to her to be her own age. They smiled, and one asked her, "Where is your

village?" Maya began to speak but the child's eyes had already turned away, to her work. Her hands were reaching among the rows of strings in front of her, and her partner was doing the same. Their little golden fingers appeared and disappeared through the strings, then clak, clak, thu thum thu thump, clak clak. "Watch me, watch me," Mahili said. The older girl lifted balls of wool, each a different color, from inside the loom and dropped them into her lap. Next she pulled a rope taut, unwound a ball of yarn and made a knot around one in a row strings very held tight from the bar at her stomach upward to a rod inside the loom. She pulled the knot closed, then looped the wool around the next string, then a dozen more, then pulled out another coil of wool and knotted six of that color through the strings. "Look at my feet, watch my feet," she whispered. Then the whole loom began to groan – clak clak, thu thum thu thump.

Maya was peering under the loom to watch Mahili's legs, but her sister had begun another operation with her hands. "Now see my hands." She removed a pair of iron scissors from under her thigh and reached forward with it, snipping at the knots in the string. Little Maya gazed though the dim light in bewilderment, from where her sister's feet paddled, back to hands lost among the net of strings, down again to her feet. "Watch me carefully. You have to learn by yourself, little Maya." Maya turned for help to the two girls at the loom beside her, but neither child looked up from their work.

After many hours Maya's eyes burned from the strain of peering through the dusty air and her legs were numb from sitting so rigid in the loom. Flicks of wool covered her face and her eyes had become red. "I must stay awake. I must help Mahili," she said to herself, trying to follow her sister's movements through the dim light. The older girl repeated her movements, uncoiling, knotting, snipping, hammering, with her feet clacking periodically though the hours.

Finally the older girl spoke. "It is time for food. Come." She climbed down from her perch at the loom and Maya followed her sister back to their corner in the barracks. They were too weary to speak to the other workers, who in any case were absorbed in preparing their own rice.

The light through the boards had now disappeared. The sun had sunk somewhere behind the Himalayas as the sisters ate in silence.

Had they not been so hungry, surely they would have been too exhausted to lift their hands to their mouths. Mahili picked up the empty plates and left. "I will serve you today, sweet baby." Before Mahili had returned from scrubbing the pots clean, Maya was asleep.

The next day the girls again rose before the sky turned purple. They washed their faces in the dark, rolled up their mats again, and again filed into the factory. The next day, it was the same. Maya sometimes slept without removing her clothes. Before the first week had ended, her legs ached all night. She had hardly walked at all during these days.

On the fourth day, Maya took the threads in her own hands. She felt happy now that she could do what the other children did. "You are a good student. How proud Aama will be," said the older girl.

In four weeks, Maya and her sister together had finished the carpet. Two boys came and cut it off the loom, and for the first time Maya realized what they had made. It was soft and lovely, and she told her sister how pretty it was. Somehow Maya knew she must not suggest they make such a carpet for themselves to lie on in place of the scratchy corn mats in their sleeping room.

On Saturday, the factory closed. This was the only chance for Maya and her sister to wash their hair and scrub their clothes. Maya sat in the sun across from Mahili who had rinsed her hair for her. Their tangled, wet locks fell over their shoulders, and they laughed softly and planned their afternoon. "We must buy rice, and some cooking oil," said Mahili. Noting how her sister's fingers had begun to swell, she added, "and flower hand cream for Maya." I must take care that her little fingers do not crack, she thought.

After their bath, the sisters joined Sunita and Rani around their 'living place' on the ground and together the four girls cooked their rice. "Our brother has come from the village, bringing with him these pickles." Mother made this from burned sesame and from sour mountain lemons. It could not be found in the city. "Here, here," said Sunita to the sisters, and spooned some onto their plates. The girls were happy sharing their food, but Maya fell silent. "Why did Aama not send me something special?" she asked herself.

Each four weeks all the workers in Maya's shift were paid, and the weavers, in turn, had an hour off work to collect their wages.

Mahili walked back from the office with the money in her fist, and, joined by Maya, the two girls huddled together as if they had found a treasure. Mahili slowly unfolded the bills. Three hundred rupees. "What shall we buy?" asked Maya excitedly as she watched her sister count their earnings. Mahili was concentrating. "We must send 100 rupees to Aama; we need 100 for our food, and twenty for kerosene, thirty for a blanket for you, and, let's see, five for soap, and twenty to pay back the loan from the oil seller." Maya was quick to calculate how much this left them. "We have twenty-five rupees! Please, please, let us buy bund roti from the milk shop, and a glass of sweet milk," she pleaded. Mahili's little sister was still growing. "She needs milk, and sometimes an egg, especially since we could never have meat or cheese," she told herself.

First Aama's share had to be taken care of. Mahili sought out a trusted courier who would deliver the hundred rupees home, and she gave the lad five rupees for his help, like each worker did, so he might at least pay for his journey to the village and back. The rest of her money the older girl pushed into the folds of her waistcloth where it would remain untouched until Saturday.

Without taking their tea that morning, the sisters set out, hand in hand, for the shops. They bought rice and paid what they owed for last month's cooking oil. Then they skipped to the tea shop. There Mahili surrendered four rupees for bund roti and milk. The sisters sat side by side on a bench in the warm sun. Maya dipped chunks of white bread into the hot milk and Mahili laughed as Maya rocked her head far back to catch the dripping bread in her mouth. How lovely it was to have a few rupees for bread and sweetened milk.

They left and as they walked along the streets towards the big avenue, they passed more workshops. Maya did not have to see inside the buildings to know these were carpet factories. She recognized the clak clak thu thum thu thump from behind the wooden boards. She suddenly felt like running. She did not realize how much she had grown to hate that drone.

Mahili was quick to pull the child from her unhappy thoughts. She skipped to her side and clutched her little sister's hand. "Next holiday, we shall visit the palace? Or shall we go to watch visitors at

the gate of big hotels? Or take darshan to the lord Swayambu on the hill?

“Today, let us find Devi so she can write a letter to our Aama,” said Maya. “Yes, I will tell her what a good girl I am. What nice gift shall we send Aama? A white plastic ladle, or a new bracelet, or paper-wrapped candies? ”

Later, after they had finished dictating their letter, Mahili saw how sad Maya seemed. She said “My little sister, do you know we can finish a whole carpet from start to finish in only three weeks. If we make almost twenty carpets in one year, how much is that for us. Many thousands of rupees, no? So much money!”

Maya could now sit for five hours at the loom before her back began to pain her and she had to ask her sister to let her rest.

The sisters spend many more months in the city, working their shift in front of the same dark loom. Aama sent them pickles sometimes, but no letters. Every time the girls dispatched money home, they sent along a note with news about their friends, the children around them. What news could their mother report?

The sisters had been working together almost a year when, one early morning soon after she had begun her knotting at the loom, Maya heard a shriek not far from where she sat. Then there was the thunder of wood collapsing, and more shrieks. It was the only time she remembered in the three years Maya was here that the the the thum thump stopped. And out of this silence rose young, thin cries. Younger children began to cry.

Mahili and two other bigger girls unstrapped themselves and ran down the walkway to where the weeping children were huddled. On the floor, pinned under the broken loom, they saw little Rani. Her arms were splayed and her legs were bent under her. A beam of wood lay over the lower half of her body. She was screaming and each time she yelled, a wave of sobs came from the others. The older girls were frightened too. But they had to take charge, so they stepped close to Rani and pulled at the beams to try to free her. The structure above them creaked and then broke apart and more pieces of wood collapsed around them. The girls jumped free but now they saw that Rani was very still. A mass of string and rope and boards covered her. No one

dared to touch the structure again. They all stared at Rani. "Rani is dead, Rani is dead," one finally uttered, and then others cried out the same. Huddling near each other, the children backed away from their friend's body. Suddenly orders came from behind. "Get out, get out all of you. Out. Quickly. All of you, to your quarters," shouted a man rushing towards them. He was the manager and he quickly cleared the whole room. Soon a car arrived and two more men rushed into the factory. They carried Rani into the car and said they would take her to the hospital. "Stay in your room, all of you," spat the manager as he rushed off with the child.

In their barracks, the children sat in clusters. They awakened the workers from the early shift. Maya had never seen the hall filled with so many people. "All these boys and girls work with us in the factory?" she asked herself. "All of them are workers like me?"

The older workers made tea and spoke in low, worried voices.

The manager returned and ordered the workers back to their looms, but he spoke quietly. "Everything is alright. Rani was only cut a little, and as soon as she feels better she is going home. There is no reason to cry," he said, and again told them to go back to work.

When Maya and the other children returned to their machines, they could not find the broken loom, only a wide empty space in the row of workers where it had stood. Rani's partner did not come back. "She was given extra money to work in the manager's house," they said.

Some foreigners visited the factory not long after that accident. With them was Thulo Manchha, the manager, a Tibetan man who spoke German and English as well as Nepali. Mahili whispered to her sister, "if they ask about Rani, shake your head and say you know nothing. No one was ever hurt here, remember. If you say anything, the factory will close and Aama will have no food." Thu thum thu thump thump thum. The visitors took photos and the children smiled because they wanted to show how happy they were to work here. They jumped up and stood proudly beside their loom while their pictures were snapped. The men argued as they walked past the rows of workers. Some of the intruders peered closely at a few of the children and asked the owner what tribe they came from and how many carpets they could

finish in three months. The men were always talking in numbers – rupees, dollars, dates, colours, knots per inch, this many twin carpets and that many double sized. Then they got in their car and drove off.

Rumors spread up and down the rows of strapped-in workers. Mahili frowned and bit her lip thinking, “How can I convince them that Maya is fifteen?” The same thought must have been troubling every little boy and girl along the row of looms. They began to whisper their fears. “It is because Rani died.” “They don’t like children to make carpets.” “You have to be fifteen to work.” “Maybe the factory will close and we shall all be sent home.”

Weeks passed. The accident with Rani was almost forgotten. And no one came to write down the ages of the children at the looms.

Meanwhile Maya had been to see a cinema and her sister bought her a new skirt as well. At those moments she thought the city was a wonderful place to be. Sometimes she saw that Mahili was troubled. One night as she and Mahili and other weavers crouched over their fires cooking their dinners, boys they knew from the villages arrived. These visitors worked as dyers at factories near the river. Only big boys and girls can manage dying work because of the heavy loads they must manoeuvre. They have to boil water in big pots, stir the heavy bundles of wool through the coloured stew, and pull the dripping bundles of wool onto drying racks. The plant where they worked was built alongside the river because it needed lots of water for the dyeing, and for rinsing the yarn. The workers pour the waste dye water into the river when they were finished. They had been doing this for many years.

But now things were changing. “They want to close our dye factory,” said one of the boys who had arrived at Maya’s barracks. “It is the foreigners again. They came and photographed our work and went to the river with their medicines. They say they found poison in the Bagmati River. It is killing the water, they say, and this is bad for Nepal. They told us we must not wash wool in the river anymore.”

“Will we lose our jobs? Will they send us back to our village?” asked Maya. Even the weavers began to weep because they knew that if the dye sheds closed, so would their factory. “We shall go to Patan,” said Mahili to the others. “There are factories there.”

"I have searched for work there," replied an older boy. "Those factories supply rice and peas but the rice is not good rice, and the pay is low." Another added: "They will not take us. They say we are just children."

The workers from the dye sheds had a proposal. "We are going to refuse to work. We will tell the bosses we will not work until they provide a half day school for the youngest workers." Maya's eyes opened wide when she heard this. "School? Will somebody teach me to write?" she thought.

There were more demands listed by the group. "There must be better lighting in the shed. They must build a closed-in shower for every hundred workers, a toilet for every fifty. They must build sinks for our kitchens. We will ask for a kilo of rice for each worker, each week."

The children looked at one another, their eyes wide with puzzlement. "How? Who will give these things to us? The bosses? What work must we do for them?" They felt nervous and the girls turned to look at one another. They were thinking of the stories about some girls who went to play with the bosses. They heard these girls slept in real beds and they used the indoor showers too. Would these children also be sent to the cottages of those men? "How shall we pay for the school and these nice things?" they asked.

Padma was one of the older girls. She stood up and spoke. "We shall not pay. They shall pay. We have a right. We have a plan.

"We are listing our demands here," and she held a paper in front of her. She repeated the list of demands they would put to the bosses. Then she read out the plan. "We shall stop working on Sunday, the day after we collect our pay. We will sit outside the factory and not allow any new workers to take our places."

A boy Maya did not know stood up. He was from a factory in Patan city outside Kathmandu. Maya had never been there but she knew there were many carpet weavers there. The man spoke softly to the group. "Our weavers have saved money every month since a year ago for this. We will help you. Every week we will send you your food. Our workers will come and sit with you, to block the entrance to the factory. The dyers from the wool washing plant will be here with you

to make certain no one steals your pots and bedding. They will surround this shed so you will not find yourselves in the street. You will be safe. They have been trained; they will protect you."

Maya felt confused. But she saw how happy the older boys and girls looked. She glanced over to her big sister who sat beside Padma. Mahili smiled towards Maya.

"A school?" Maya thought to herself. "Shall I really go to school. Aama will be so pleased when I will be able to write her a letter by myself."

*Then there are the collective deaths:
the hungry, patriots fighting for freedom,
peasants wanting their land.*

No, death does not end.

It becomes a fraternity. We embrace.

Death becomes a voice. Words appear on walls.

It becomes a call. An oath. A Promise.

from "Mreetyu"



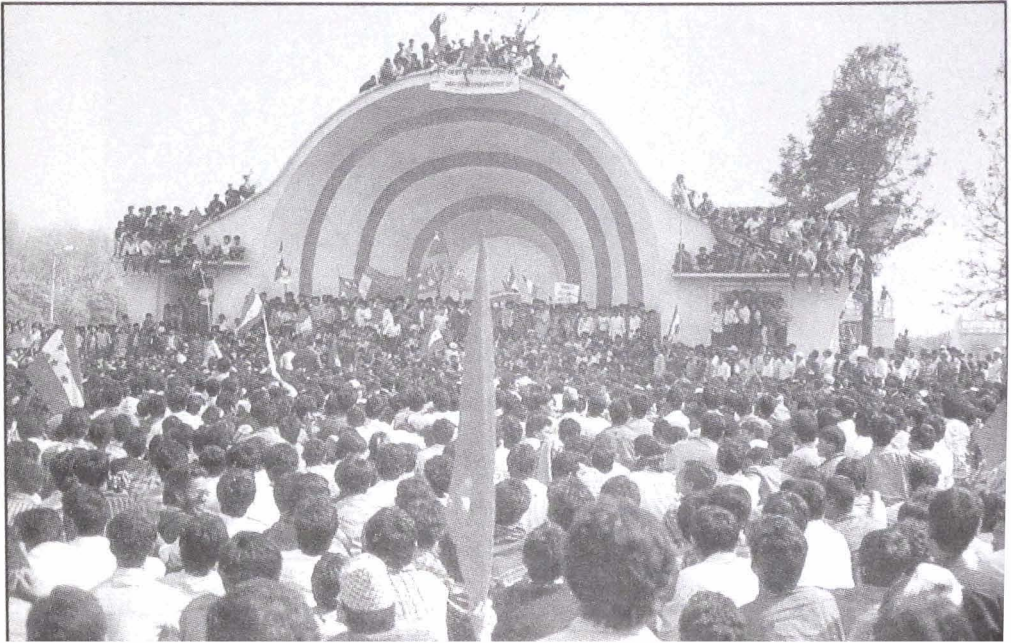
*1990 Democracy Movement. The man stop the statue, attacking statue of King Mahendra, was shot and killed moments later by the king's troops.
Permission of Indira Dali*

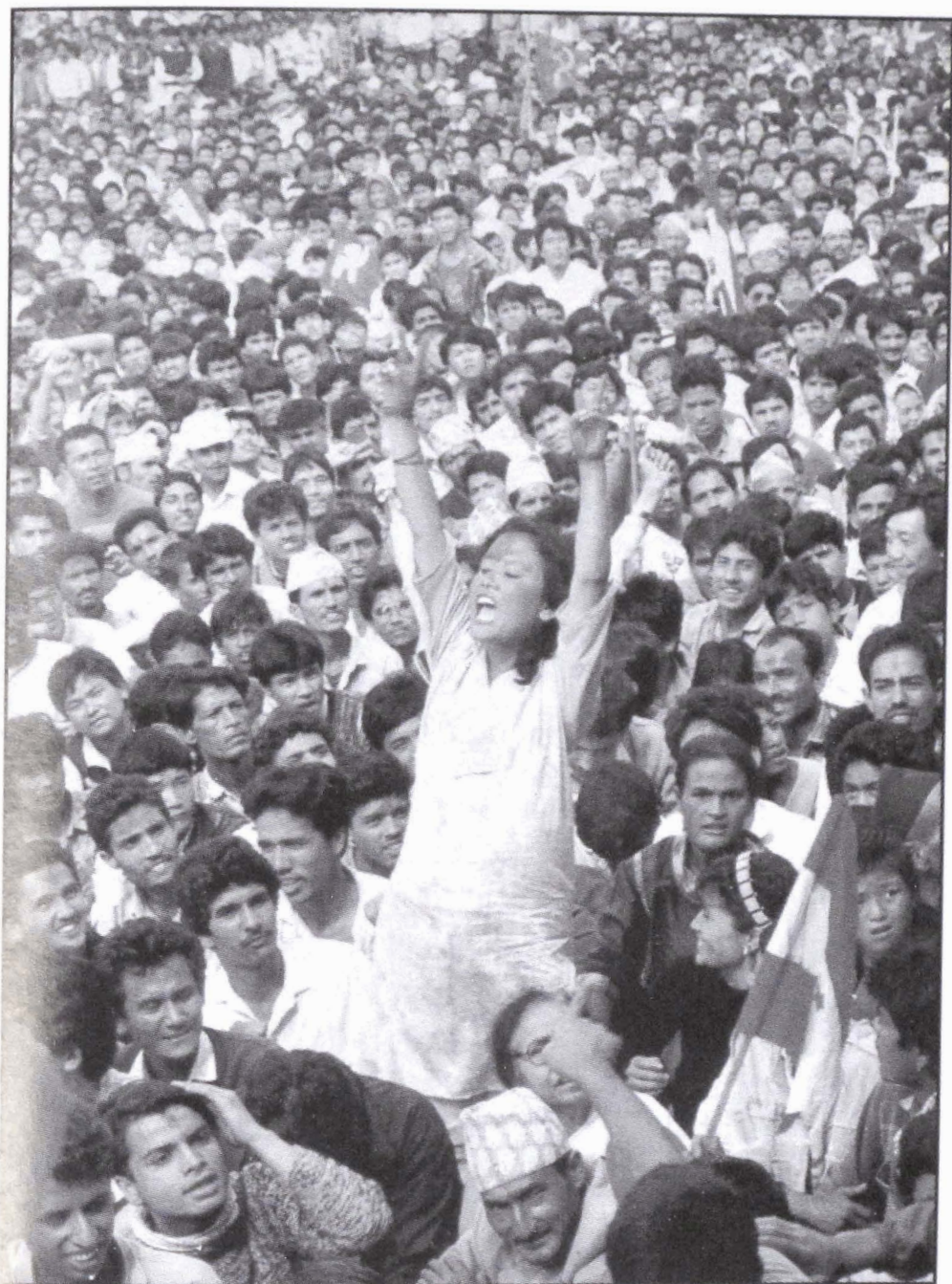


Curfew is imposed across the capital, April 1, 1990. Himal Photo Archive



Four martyrs of the 1990 protests lie in Bir Hospital morgue, Kathmandu. Leaders of the demonstrations estimate 3000 unarmed protesters were killed by the military. After democracy, there was no investigation of shootings, rapes and torture by the police. Some protesters who were arrested and jailed have never been located. Permission of India Dali





Victory demonstration of the king stepped down. Photo by Min Bajracharya



Children spinning yarn at one of thousands of unregulated carpet factories in Kathmandu



*Women are prominent in today's Maoist movement.
Photo by Sudhir Sharma*

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

Maya, sent far from home to labour as a weaver; Laxmi the blind child left alone in a field; and Manu carrying loads through the mountains toil through hard times, year after year – each clings to his and her dream. Manu longs to be a farmer again, to work his land and dance at the weddings of his relatives. Laxmi craves for the companionship of other children, and wants to learn to read. Maya yearns to return to her mother's side, their debt gone, their land redeemed.

There are so many young people like Maya, Laxmi and Manu in Nepal. They work in conditions approaching slave labor simply to pay off debts and buy food for their families. Despite the arrival of democracy and numerous donor agencies over the past half century and declarations by world bodies to end poverty and exploitation, the numbers of poor are increasing instead of declining. What is to be done?

*Raja sits in his palace/ and does not care to see
if we poor have justice – even justice by chance.*

Shakti Yogamaya

The Rana ruler is gone. The Nepalese king no longer has absolute authority. At considerable human cost, his subjects fought for a democracy to allow them to participate in government and to be free from exploitation and the whim of any dictator. They brought a multi-party parliament and the freedom to speak. In 1991, a democratically elected government took office. Successive elections and

administrations followed. Some were led by Communist Party candidates. Some were led by the centrist Congress Party. But for the Mayas, Laxmis, and Manus, things have not improved.

Economic decline is often linked to war, such as in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Congo, or El Salvador. Decline is also due to misrule, mismanagement and exploitation, sometimes by outside powers, sometimes from within. Nepal was not a site of international conflict, only a dictatorship – and that was overthrown. In 1990, the Nepalese press was ungaged. Democracy, which the Nepalese enjoyed from 1951-1959, was restored. The new arrangement was a constitutional monarchy, with a parliament free of dynastic despotism. The ‘free’ parliament could have used its popular mandate in the wake of the political change to take the necessary bold steps to reorganize the country and cleanse the military. It could have ended the monarchy and formed a republic. It could have done away with the priests who sanction the king’s deification, and tried the officers who shot protestors. It could have repealed Brahmanic laws that chain women. It could have imposed fair labour standards in the factories, and reformed the legal system to ensure justice. It did not.

The Shah royal family remained nominally the head of the land with its wealth, its court and its privileges intact. The king remained supreme commander of the military. Nepal continued to be a ‘Hindu state,’ and this gave priests continued influence over legal and ethical matters. Brahmanic hold on power was as firm as ever, the weak were as vulnerable as before, and the debts remained and multiplied.

Statistics – if they are really necessary to convince us of what we witness in the flesh, the factories and the fields – show educational opportunities lessening, living standards of the majority of people lowering, and the number of poor increasing. Those reports also point to worsening conditions for women. All are the outcome of general deterioration and a growing disparity between rich and poor.

In 1990 Pramila Upadhyay supplied me with official statistics on the status of Nepalese women. She reported, the literacy rate for women at that time was 12% as compared to 41% for men. Women’s contribution to the household income was calculated to be 53% of non-

marketed subsistence production and 22% of cash income, although women's contribution in terms of work hours averaged 25% more than men's. In 1990 the percentage of women in the labor force was 43 out of 41% employed for the whole population¹. A recent study of labor in Nepal show these trends continuing, with women taking a heavier burden of agricultural work².

With the beginning of the millennium, statistics on poverty, literacy, the gap between rich and poor, the budget deficit, and other economic indicators still put Nepal at a sorrowful place in the list of 'developing nations.' Literacy among women is listed as 24%, just above Afghanistan (21%), not far behind Bangladesh (30%), and half of the rate for Cambodian (58%) and Indian women (51%). The secondary school enrollment ratio for Nepalese women is 33%, higher than Afghanistan and Bangladesh at 12% and 13% respectively. The infant mortality rate per thousand for Nepal is 77, half that of Afghanistan with 147, a country which has been devastated by war for more than two decades. But it is slightly higher than the rate for Bangladesh. Mortality for children under five in Nepal is 108. This parallel's Bangladesh at 102, and is less than half that of Afghanistan with 248³. The average life expectancy for Nepalese is low. A new report released in July 2000⁴, reveals a shocking statistic for Nepalese women – their average life expectancy is merely 47, making them a demographic exception where, universally, women's life expectancy is a few years more than men's.

Globally Nepal still ranks among the poorest five countries in the world, even though other nations at the bottom of the list cite wars or terrible natural disasters. Little has changed since 1990 in Nepal. There has not been much real progress since 1940 when Yogamaya was at the peak of her campaign. The 1999 statistics reinforce this general picture of the conditions.

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1. P. Upadhyay, citing the Nepal Mahila Sangh Report of 1990.
 2. *Labor Market Development and Poverty*, by Meena Acharya, Kathmandu, 2000.
 3. UN office for the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, N.Y. 2000.
 4. *UNDP Human Development Report*, 2000, announced in Kathmandu, July 1, 2000.

Yet the attention given to economic development in general and women's rights in particular in Nepal has been considerable. Before 1990, Kathmandu had a handful of non-governmental organizations engaged in humanitarian and development projects. By the end of the century, when the number of those foreign agents had sharply increased⁵, the schemes and procedures of modern governments and international aid groups didn't seem to be achieving much beyond benefitting politicians and bureaucrats. Indeed those internationally devised strategies may actually have hindered effective change. Criticism of development policies and the public's call for change were mollified by labels and budgets and promises of new programs. These programs reached out to employ potential critics, and thereby absorb the talent of many idealistic women and men in communities who believed fairness could be achieved through institutional means.

Corruption in government is a major issue and a major obstacle to progress. Ironically this was a target of Durga Devi and Yogamaya's campaigns.

*What swindlers sell as butter, / others burn as incense /
whose odious smell is greed. / Corruption! How it stinks.*

Shakti Yogamaya

Despite the political change of 1990 and the restoration of a multi-party system and democratic freedom, it is generally agreed that corruption has worsened during the last decade. Graft and fraud have become features of everyday life and each administration, whichever party rules.

As conditions across Nepal worsen and the administration's incompetence is exposed, Yogamaya's and Durga's strategies seem thoroughly reasonable, to say the least. Yogamaya's remarks to Nepal's leaders more than sixty years ago are poignant, and pertinent

5. In 1962, the number of registered N.G.O.s in Nepal was 15, in 1990, 219, and by 2000, it had reached 10,475. See D.R. Dahal, "Problems and Prospects of the Relationship between Government and NGOs in Nepal," April 2000, Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

today. The stench of corruption has grown so powerful and widespread that many, especially young people, desperately search for alternatives. The migration of Nepalese outside the country has increased both in volume and destination. They travel abroad in order to accumulate some money to build a house or pay off debts. Nepalese Sherpa, an ethnic minority in Nepal, number 600 families in the New York City area. Most work as housemaids and menial laborers in the same low paying and unskilled sectors in which illegal Mexican migrants work. One now finds Nepalese employed in mainly low paying jobs in Europe, Hong King, Korea, Japan, the Arab Gulf countries.

The insurgent Maoist movement in Nepal doubtless recruits its members from those youth who can find no legitimate alternative to toiling for almost nothing, and growing poorer by the year. The Maoist program has taken hold in the Western hills of Nepal in the past five years. They move into a village, throw out corrupt officials, kill the police and institute their own administration. They force the rich to hand over their wealth and fields in order to redistribute these to the poor. They are described as having “liberated” numerous villages this way. The police tried to wipe out these rebels but failed. According to reports, a recent confrontation between government forces and the rebels resulted in the killing of innocent people⁶. It seems that countering the movement by force is almost impossible because their members are not confined to one area. The movement is becoming widespread, and increasing in membership. Both police and government troops are afraid to enter areas under Maoist control.

The violent tactics of the Maoists alienate many citizens. The movement has little sympathy from abroad because of its leftist ideology. No one knows what to do. Some wealthy hill farmers are fleeing their villages out of fear that the insurgents will arrive at their doors. At the same time the movement recruits new members from among the poor. Many Nepalese admit that the rise of the radical Maoists in Nepal in recent years is an expression of public

6. Troops opened fire on villagers claiming they were the Maoists. “A Red Revival “ by Jan Sharma, *Toward Freedom*, February 2000, Burlington, Vermont, and “People’s war sparks violence in Nepal” by Ed Douglas, *Guardian Weekly*, April 13, 2000, London.

disillusionment with unfilled promises from successive administrations and unchecked greed by office holders.

In the preceding pages, I pointed to the irresponsibility of local officials and merchants. They were the object of Durga Devi's relentless campaign for justice. But I do not wish to characterize all Nepalese men in an unfavorable light. Men take up government jobs because they need work. The civil service – a major employer in the country – is often the only place one can find a job. These men often start their careers in distant outposts in the hills. They begin with some idealism. Then they find themselves embedded in a system which has disagreeable ethics and culture. They cannot resist. They become contaminated. Any crime in the professions I discussed should not brand all civil servants and businessmen as criminals. Moreover, they do not operate in a vacuum.

Corruption and greed are global diseases. I have encountered incompetent, mean officials in the course of my personal dealings in my own American bureaucracy. And, almost everywhere women are paid less than men for the same work. Women are also prevented from advancing on a par with men. Class and ethnic bias exists in U.S. schools, hospitals, civil service and military, and corporations. The dealings between private contractors and the U.S. Department of Defence is well known. Their collaboration is particularly significant because of the huge sums of money involved, and the corruption goes on year after year. American critics of government handouts for multi-million dollar industries – largely unheard and ineffectual in their pleas – call this “corporate welfare.” Bad management in government is ubiquitous and probably on the increase everywhere, in Moscow or Prague, Cairo or Beirut, Mexico City or Washington, and it will doubtless continue as the trend towards extreme wealth on one hand and massive poverty on the other increase with the spread of world privatization as managed by the big powers. A few more millionaires are created while billions of women and men are pushed into new depths of poverty.

Few state governments however can match the example of the agency which is mother of all bureaucracies – the United Nations. With its hundred thousand dollar-plus salaries, the U.N. manages to

maintain a veneer of professionalism and to float above the corruption it breeds. The U.N. is moreover, a male-dominated institution, which, along with the non-governmental organizations (N.G.O.s) it fosters, has infiltrated every corner of the world. It feeds on poverty, removing responsibility for health and other services from governments. It recreates a colonialist culture, working political alliances, and helping to promote men into the international bureaucracy. In a regional N.G.O. office, one finds foreign staff alongside local staff. Local employees, although they may do the same work, receive a small fraction of the salaries of the foreigners. And, they have none of the 'perks' such as paid home-leave, free lodging and extra pay for hardship posts. Those local employees also witness schemes foreign co-workers employ to keep as much of their salaries in their overseas bank accounts, while incurring few local expenses. Whatever dollars those N.G.O. staff receive in 'the field' often do not get exchanged at the official bank rate, but are cashed in the local black market. N.G.O.s also foster greed and competition by renting whatever buildings, vehicles, etc. they use. Since their budgets are considerable, they provide a tidy fortune to the local merchants able to secure contracts to supply them. Even middle class people become resentful of routine abuse and opulent lifestyles followed by these foreign personnel.

The United Nations and its donors may be able to boast that benefits result from the massive funds it doles out. At the same time, the U.N. and their spin-off agencies are a primary source of cynicism and corruption worldwide. No U.N. office or N.G.O. would support historical documentation of women like Yogamaya or Durga Devi, nor do they fund the humanitarian and political work of poet Parizat and her people.

The stories I document here, semi-fictional and historical, portray patriarchal abuses of power – secular and religious. There are many competent and caring men throughout Nepal and this characterization should not be applied to all.

Political ineptness and abuse of women by powerful men is worldwide. Misogyny too is universal. It is promoted in the theological seminaries of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

These and other abuses I describe belong to an international culture of inequality. American culture and government play a major

role in creating or supporting many inequities through their economic foreign policies. All foreign donors are aware of the economic disparities that their own development projects generate. They work with an emerging elite in Nepal, or Nigeria, or Mexico, and surround themselves with members of that class in their circles. They also know of the increase in poverty and crime, and the political resentment their policies breed. In response to the growing hostility of the poor and marginalized people in the countries where they exercise considerable influence, the American foreign missions simply protect themselves with larger “palaces.” Their embassies have become virtual military fortifications on the edges of the capitals of the world.

Colonialism is widespread today and is growing, even though there are few ‘political’ colonies left. With the increasing power of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization, organizations promoting a capitalist economic system, we find more poverty existing alongside obscene wealth. It’s occurring on an unparalleled scale. The experience of Nepal is one example.

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*“I am not only aiming at that tyrant.  
My goal is Point Zero.”*

**Shakti Yogamaya**



# APPENDIX I

## Introducing The Hazurbani

*Hazur*: “master,” Yogamaya. *Bani*: her message. Here, we include one volume of Yogamaya’s sayings in the original Nepali<sup>1</sup>. This is a photo offset of the booklet gifted by Damodara, who headed Manakamana Ashram during the years that I visited the community. It was published after 1950 in Kalimpong, India, by Mani Press, not long after the death of Yogamaya.

This is in not a comprehensive collection, but it is the only book I was able to obtain at the time and I drew heavily on it for my research on the teachings of Yogamaya, their creator. Almost all the translated poems cited in Chapter Three of “Heir to a Silent Song” were taken from this collection.

From the time of Yogamaya’s ‘entry into heaven’ until 1990, while copies of this and other collections of Yogamaya’s work existed, even though Rana rule had ended, free political expression in the country was still forbidden and the book was hard to find. Whoever owned them, it seemed, kept them in secret for fear of arrest. Banned during the Rana period, broadcast of the *Hazurbani* either orally or through these texts was also dangerous during Panchayat rule (1960-1990). Uttam Pant, who took up research on Yogamaya after 1981, learned that some volumes similar to this were in the possession of survivors of Yogamaya’s movement living in Kathmandu and East Nepal. He secured copies only by determination and daring.

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1. Although this text may contain a few grammatical or typographical errors, we reproduce it as it was originally printed.

The political message of the *Hazurbani* is well established, and self evident in the text itself. Translations of the few poems we provide in Chapter 3 demonstrate the indisputable political message of her work.

But there is much more to the *Hazurbani*. For political philosophy, women's history and Nepali literature in general, this work is of added benefit. The short, pithy, often witty, and poignant quality of Yogamaya's creations demand that her work be made widely available. Their reproduction here is to introduce her teachings to the largest possible audience. Any Nepali-speaking person will feel immediate access to her philosophy and will enjoy and appreciate her wit and daring. Activists, and perhaps even bureaucrats will find the verses of use. With this publication we hope to stimulate translation into other languages for writers, teachers, women's advocates, patriots and scholars.

My personal introduction to the *Hazurbani* was through oral transmission. During my first two visits in 1981 with the custodians of Yogamaya's legacy in East Nepal, I did not know this book existed. I heard the *Hazurbani* being sung by women who knew them well—women who fifty years earlier lived through their creation and dissemination at the height of Yogamaya's political attacks against Rana tyranny. I collected some on audio tape. I transcribed these with the help of an assistant, Dharma Shrestha. Before the translations were complete, even with my rudimentary knowledge of Nepali, I could feel the power of Yogamaya's verses.

The music of the *Hazurbani* is important. Their rhythm, created by Ganga Devi, Yogamaya's sister-in-law, is unique. I am told it has characteristics of the 'hill music' of East Nepal. In this respect, they are cultural creations emanating from of that specific region. But the quality of the poetry is high by any standard, according to literary authorities. Their impact on Nepalese of every caste and ethnic background seems profound. I expect they will find admirers across the world.

The reaction of many Nepalese people to the poems, particularly politically savvy people and poets, speaks much for the verses' political force. Nepalese from the East may have long held

these verses dear. 'Though as time passes, the *Hazurbani* find favour everywhere in the country. When they read these verses for the first time, poet Parizat, Harka Gurung, Murari Aryal, Uttam Pant, Khagendra Sangraula and other savants and writers, grasped their literary excellence and their political daring. Since 1990, with the restoration of democracy, more of Yogamaya's writings are in circulation and more people are using these verses in their ongoing political work and it appears they are stimulating vigorous research about this pioneer<sup>2</sup>.

At first Yogamaya's political agenda was not entirely clear to me. But I suspected these verses were special. Pursuing their meaning, I brought them from the hills to Kathmandu and showed them to a number of people. All immediately grasped their value. The pre-eminent poet Parizat, recognized Yogamaya as a literary figure of stature and included this book in a 1984 conference in Kathmandu on literature by Nepalese women. I have hardly met a Nepalese, who, reading this work for the first time, is not exhilarated by it. One man who said that he still faces misunderstandings over his inter-caste marriage told me how relevant he found a verse by Yogamaya. He read it to his wife and daughter in order to help them understand his own feelings about shedding his Brahmin orthodoxy many years earlier. Just before this publication went to press, a Nepalese writer looked at this book and remembered seeing the poems in his youth, some 35 ago. He was impressed by them at that time and was eager to take a closer look. When he began to examine the poems, preparing to translate some verses for this book, he seemed thrilled.

In view of the corruption that is so rampant in Nepal today, we read Yogamaya's early attacks on corruption with new hope. Her words offer us a weapon with which to fight for justice. Even 70 years after their creation, living in a very different era from hers, we feel her contemporariness. She speaks of universal issues. Her language is fresh and her wit invigorating. Therefore, this venture in the wider dissemination of her teachings and creations.

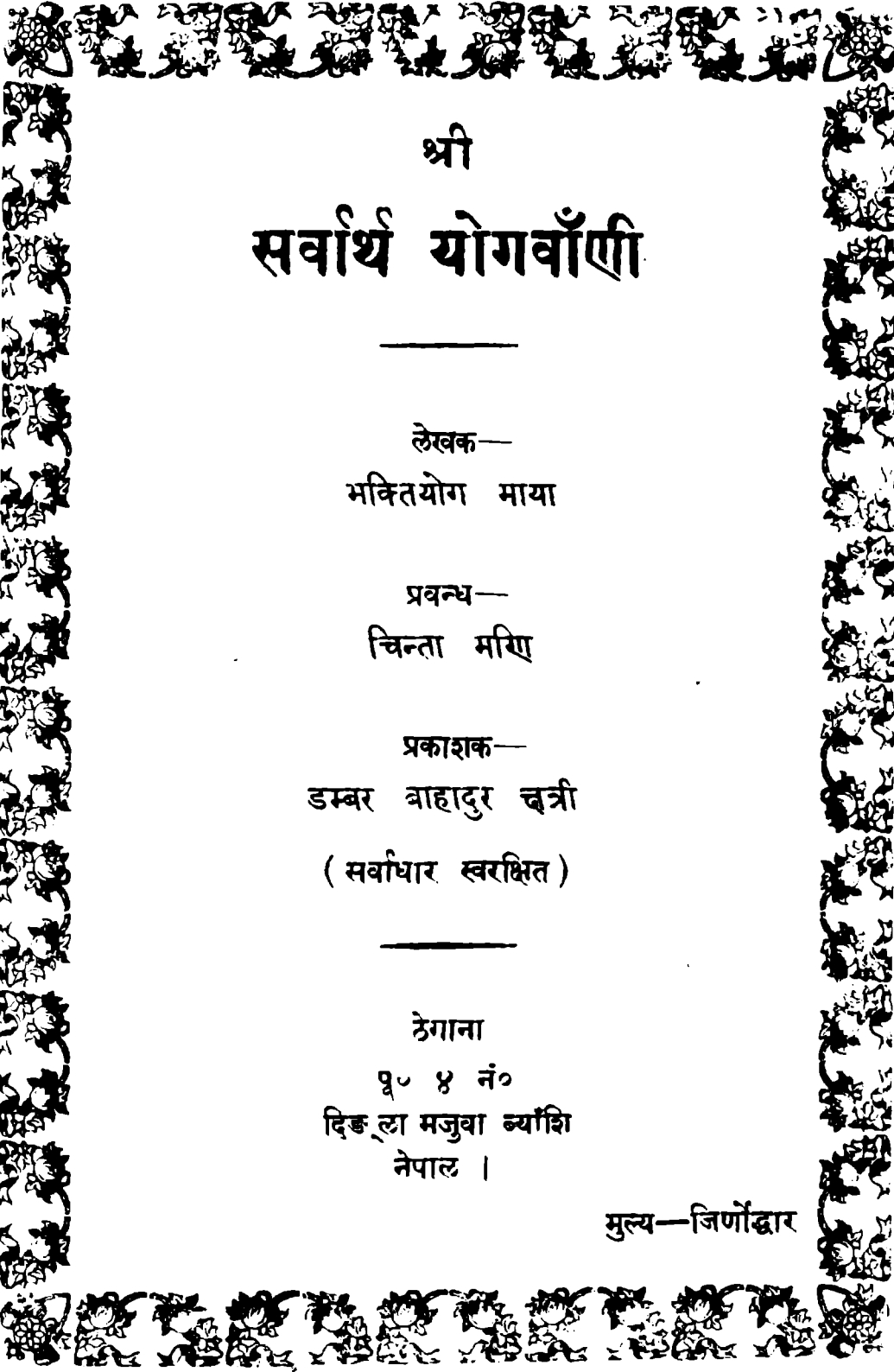
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2. See Bhandari et al. in Further Readings

APPENDIX II

**The Hazurbani of Yogamaya:
A Nepali Text.**

**Reprint of Collection Published
in Kalimpong, 1940**



श्री
सर्वार्थ योगवाणी

लेखक—
भक्तियोग माया

प्रबन्ध—
चिन्ता मणि

प्रकाशक—
डम्बर बाहादुर च्त्री
(सर्वाधार स्वरक्षित)

ठेगाना
पृ० ४ नं०
दिङ्ला मजुवा ब्यांशि
नेपाल ।

मुल्य—जिर्णोद्वार

श्री भूमिका

ॐ नमः शिव शक्ति सत्य सचेत शरणा गत,
संसार रूपि समुद्रबाट पार हुने उत्तम मार्ग,

श्री भक्ति योग मायाको शुक्ल वर्णन, बाँहा नेपाल पुर्व ४ नम्बर मजुवा सिले कौडिन्य गोत्र न्यौपाने ब्राह्मण कुलमा जन्म भै, शन्सारका हरेक ब्यवहारि रस लाई चाखि, मानव ब्यवहार गर्दै जाँदा बैराग्यको बिजा रोपण भै मानव तिर्थस्थान श्री वट्टि नारायण; उत्तर ख्याम्पालुङ्ग हिमालय आदिमा समेत जाँदा मन्मा सान्त नभै अरूण वरूण श्री इन्द्रा वति सङ्गम । मजुवा ऋवेणि घाटमा रहि श्री सङ्गेश्वर भगवानको आधाँलि उग्र तपस्या तर्फ बड्दै जाँनु भो । तपस्याको वर्णन गर्नलाई हामी— अशिक्षा द्वारा बिचार न भएका मानव तनबाट वर्णन गर्न के शकौला ।

ठन्डिमा जल शैया गर्मिमा पञ्चाग्नि आश्रय गरि इत्यादि कष्ट देखाउँद कहिले अन्न पानी त्यागि गुफाको आधार गर्ने कहिले कहिले निलाहार रहने, कहिले श्री गङ्गाजीका सेवाद्वारा फलाहार रहने कहिले गाईको दुध मात्र कहिले अमलाका दाना मात्र, कहिले फुलको वाशन् मात्र, कहिले हाँषा मात्र आहारा गरि आइ लागेका लोकापषादलाई सहन गर्दै श्री गङ्गाबहादुरलाई तपोबलको बिचार दिदै समिपमा रहेका दुःखि जनबाट सेवा लिदै तपोबल योग सक्तिद्वारा खुलेका भविष्यमा हुने बाँणि सुभे लिने राख्ने लेखने कोहि नहुँदा मानव तन्मा सम्बन्धकि गङ्गा देबिबाट गरिएका सेवाद्वारा ऋकालका भजन बाह्रौँलाई कृपा गरि बक्सियो

ओं भविष्यका लागी हुने बाँणि सर्वात्र नावालख निरक्षरि वर्ष
 ८ की पुत्री नैनकलामा आफ्ना मुखारविन्दबाट सुम्पि दिनु भो ।
 प्रभूका कृपाले उनलाई नभुलि लिन करै लाग्यो सो बाँणि श्रवण
 गर्ना साथ कस्तै पत्थर हृदयमा पनि सत भावनाको विजा रोपण
 हुने सो बाँणी १४ वर्ष पछि लेख्ता पनि नभुलिएका हुँदा सर्वार्थ
 योग बाँणी लेखिएका प्रख्यात छन्, तपस्याको आनन्द लिन लागे
 पछि श्री नरेन्द्र वहादुर द्वारा मजुवा व्यासि टापुमा १ कुटि बनियो
 र त्यसैमा आश्रम गर्नु भो 'पूर्व' तपस्याका तपोरश सारालाई वर्ताउन
 लागनु भयो सो तपोरश यो माहाभारतदेखि लिएर विन्ध्याचल सम्म
 कङ्करो नरनारी पर्यन्त नियमित रूपसंग सामान्य पठित जन्देस्त्री
 लिएर ठुला ठुला अप्राह्य २ जनहरूमा पनि प्रकाश भयो आसाममा
 व्यवहार गरि बस्नु भएका श्री पं० प्रेमनारायण सारा व्यवहार
 छाडि अर्ध रात्रीमा उठी श्री भक्तिजीका चरणमा दाखिल भई भक्त
 दास बन्नु भयो । तपोवल सत शब्दले ब्रह्माण्डमा खलबल मच्चिन
 लाग्यो । भक्तहरू छानिन खिचिन लागे । बाहाँका भक्तहरूको नाम लेख्न
 लाई लामो लेखाई पर्ने हुनाले माहानन्द, रत्नमान, पहल्मान डिल्लि
 बाहादुर, डम्बरबाहादुर आदि दम्पति सहित सारा दुःखी हरिभजनका
 भोका प्रभू चरणका दाश घेरै स्त्री, पुरुष, बाल, बृद्ध चरणमा दाखिल
 हुन आए । ॐ नमः शिव शक्ति सत्य सचेत शरणा गत । भन्ने
 शब्द गंकन लागो सत शब्दका ध्वनिले गर्दा झुठो असत खल्वलिन्
 लागो हरेक लोकापवाद पनि आई परे । अधि भएको देव दानवका
 खेला जस्तै खेला पनि हुन लाग्यो ।

जस्तै श्री मोहिनिबाट एउटै घडामा राखियेको चिज बाडिये-
 को थियो कसैलाई अमृत पर्न गयो कसैलाई विष पर्न गयो
 जस्तै जस्तो पाषाण थियो सो सो पाई भक्तहरू कृतार्थ पनि भये ।
 त्यस्तै खेला पनि हुन लाग्यो एता चरणका दास भै श्री गङ्गाजी
 पं० प्रेम नारायण गङ्गा बाहादुर, नरेन्द्र बाहादुर, टेक बाहादुर, डिल्लि

बाहादुर, चमेलि, शिव भक्तिनि पं० गोपिकृष्ण लगायत सारा आफ्ना भक्त दावाँ वावाँ राखि हरि भजनमा आल्हाद भै तपोरश वर्षाई भक्तका शरिरमा करकमलका छाप लगाई भक्तका हार बनाई हृदयमा लिनु भयो तपोरश योग शक्तिका आनन्दको सीमा रहेन वर्णन गर्न हामी अशमर्थ छौं केवल अन्तस्करण पुग्नु सक्तैन प्रभु शरण.....

हरि भज भनि सारालाई चेताउन लागनु भयो लोकबाट स्तुति निन्दा बराबर आउँदथे स्तुति निन्दा एकै रूपबाट पान गर्नु हुन्थ्यो राजधानिमा समेत चेताउँनु पर्छ भनि पं० प्रेम नारायण लाई पठाउँनु भयो श्री ३ चन्द्रमा सुचना गर्दा गर्दै स्पर्स हुन नपाउँदै वाहाँ मुक्त हुनु भयो । श्री ३ भिमका पालामा बिनति पत्र-द्वारा श्रवण गराउँदा गोकर्ण उत्तर बाहिनि गुफामा राखने हुकुम भै पं० प्रेमलाई गुफामा राखनु भयो, बिचमा नेपाल वाशि धेरै भक्ति बनिए भक्त श्री ३ पद्म, श्री गु० भरतराज लोचन निधि समेतबाट सेवा गरिनु भयो श्री ३ मा भने वार्तालाप हुन नपाउँदै वाहाँ पनि मुक्त हुनु भयो पुर्ववत श्रवण हुँदा श्री ३ जुद्धका पालामा श्री पं० प्रेमलाई राजदरवारमा लगि श्री भक्तिजिको वर्णन श्रवण गराउँदा श्री भक्तिजिले पठाउँनु भयेको सुचना पाँवो धर्म पालना गछु भन्ने सत्य कबोल भै त्यसको चित्र १ फुलको थुँगो श्री भक्ति जिमा चढाउँन हस्तरूपि पात्रबाट दिनु भयो, सो प्रतिज्ञा चित्र साथै लिई श्री पं० प्रेम श्री भक्तिजिका चरणमा दाखिल भै पुर्व वर्णन बिनति गर्नु भयो । तेस पछि पूर्वाश्रम छाडि त्रुवेणिमा आश्रम लिनु भै पानि मात्र जलाहार गरि ३२ दिन रहनु भयो सो व्रत समाप्ति वाद १९८८ साल भाद्र श्री कृष्ण जन्माष्टमिका रात नदिले सो आश्रम लिनु भए पछि इन्द्रवति पार गौरखपुर भन्ने जगा मा आश्रम गरि तपस्या गर्न लागनु भयो सो गौरखपुर भन्ने जगा

श्री गज्ज बाहादुरले ले० नरेन्द्र बहादुर द्वारा माता शिव कुमारि प्रिये भनि गौचरन रखाउँनु भयो र श्री आबाल ब्रह्मचारि षडानन्दको आश्रम दिङ्गला पाठशाला राम मन्दिरमा, ७ रात्रि आसन । लिनु भै पुर्वाश्रम गौरषपुरमा पाल्नु भयो र साग सिस्नु पिठो फाँक मुठि मानु औ लात बात मनो ईच्छा भिक्षा कार्तिक शुक्ल पुर्णियाँ सम्ममा दिनु होला भन्ने भिक्षा पत्र लेखि श्री ३ मा र ठाउँ ठाउँमा समेत सुचना पठाउँनु भयो आज सम्म सत्य कबोल धर्म पालनाको चिन्न न देख्ता उत्तर टोढापु हिमालयमा तपस्या गरि बस्नु भई पुरा वर्ष दिनपछि पुर्वाश्रम मजुवा व्यासिमा आसन भयो र स्वयं आफै नेपाल राजधानीमा गई श्री ५ मा सूचना गर्नु भनि पाल्नु भई वाहाँको ईच्छा श्री ५ मा थियो तापनि वाहाँ जाने रूल छैन, जानु हुँदैन भनि अरू व्यवहारि भक्तले रोकी श्री ५ मा दर्शन दिन मनाहि गर्नु भयो भक्त बत्सल ईश्वर हुँदा भक्तका वचन स्वीकार गर्ने पच्यो श्री ३ का हुकुमले श्री पशुपति निकट बप्प घरमा आश्रम भयो हरेक शास्त्र वेदान्त ब्रह्मज्ञानादि भक्तिजि छेउ आई चलन लागे निन्दा स्तुति बरोबर चले हरे तैलाई दण्ड दिन दिलाउँनका लागि मेरो ज्यू और धन आज अर्पण गरे भनि कुनै भक्तले श्री भक्तिजी छेउ बिन्ति गरेका तिन दिन मै वहाँले यस्थुलबाट बाहिर जाने बाटो लिई शरीर छाड्नु भयो र नेपाल बाशि कोहीमा भए पनि पैदा भयो बडा दर्शन श्री दुर्गाष्टमिका दिन श्री भक्तिजि र वाहाँका पूर्व वाशि भक्तलाई श्री पशुपति मन्दिरमा राखने हुकुम भै श्री ३ महाराज जुद्धको श्री पशुपति नाथमा सवारि भै श्री भक्ति छेउ बसि दोहोरा बार्ता हुँदा जस्का राजमा उदय भयो सो सूचना राष्ट्र पतिमा दिन हाजिर छु लेउ गर यदि नगरे जस्को पालो आउँछ उसैले नगरि छाड्ने छैन भन्ने समेत आज्ञा हुँदा मैले के गर्नु पर्छ तपाईंलाई के चाहिन्छ भनि हुकुम हुँदा केवल सत्य धर्म भिक्ष्या पाउँ भनि वाणि ३ पटक सम्म निस्कदा सत्य धर्मको भिक्षा

नवाब्द ११ को फटिक बाहुरल्लहं छहं दिव अक-
 लहं नल ठोकु म्भे ह्कुम प्रमीन आयो, त्यसका ३ मूना बाहं
 म्भिक सहित खान्नी मानसलहं छहं दिव अकलहं ३ वर्ष क्क
 गरि छ । छ मूनाको फटक गरि छहं दिव म्भे ह्कुम बमोनिम
 पुत्रि पाहं छहं किर किरन खान खल्लहं बनहं अगलन् पुर्वक बसे
 पछि सकरिया छहं विचारि अपिसर सिपाह २३ सौ खलमा
 पनि अडन लग । खलमा बन समेत म्भे योग सत्तिको विचार
 मू पन्य पन्य पन्य सत्तिको सति गनं लग त्यस पछि रलमान

दिन धन्कटा खलमा बन गरि राबे, त्यस पछि—

बर्षिक जन्मा ११ जना लहं १११५ साल कार्तिक २७ गतेका
 लिहं तपो भूमिमा ३ ५७ जनालहं पकाव गरि कसुलहं छहं
 पछि श्री सं ज० माधव गन्धर दम्पति सहित, फौज गोजी गरी
 मा भुञ्जि म्भे प्रभाङ्गी मू सौ बिन पत्र समेत वापस आबे
 पाटिया रात्रि क्क पन्ना म्भे सुनाहं दिव अकलहं धन्कटा खल-
 गरि विजामा लो । तेका क्क दिन बाहं म्भिक मनावलिहं
 पत्र पठाए पछि म्भिकनी सहित, १०१२ जना म्भेकलहं पकाव
 उपर नवा उपहह कविन बल्लह म्भे समेत सुबनाको बिन
 कविन ल्याहं खानो सत्य कबोललहं बावा खलमा सो खलने
 बाट टोक टोक, नखोस यहि वृष्टा पुदाना थोडा म्भेकका अंन
 प्राण त्याग गछ्छु म्भेमी आफ्नी छिछि जान तयार म्भेका ह्कै सकार-
 २४० जना म्भे, श्री म्भिकज सधै सति मू अतिन प्रवेश गरि
 ह्कै विजिवाट फौज आहं पाले पढेरा बाधो टोकावट म्भेमी
 म्भे त्यस पछि अतिन प्रवेश छरा प्राण त्यागने म्भे विचार लिपको मुक
 सम्म बाटो ह्कै पनि यस सत्य प्रतिष्ठाको ख्याल नरहेको विचार
 श्री ३ मोहन समेतका सेनादारा पुर्वभिसमा पाल्ने म्भेमी ह्कै दिन
 समेत सति मू श्री ३ जिहवाट सत्य यस भिक्षा पाहं श्री ३ पद्म
 दिव गहं तपाहं जस्ता सत, पात्रको आशिर्वाद पाहं पछि म्भे

(च)

श्लेष्मै मुक्त भये, थुनिएका १५ मैनामा हिल्लीबाहादुर, ईश्वर बाहादुर, सुर्जे बहादुर, भक्तबहादुर ४ भाई छुटे । टेक बाहादुर श्लेष्मैट जबर-जस्ति भागे । श्री पं० प्रेम नारायण १८ मैना बाद र बाँकि भाई ले० नरेन्द्र बाहादुर, पहल्मान, गोविन्द पुरा ३० मैना भए पछि हामि मने छैनौं यदि मर्न्यौं भने अनै सवाल बमोजिम बुझाउँला भन्ने अड्डाले कागज गराई छाडि दिए । धर्म भिक्षा सत्य कबोलको बदला श्लेष्मै नेल्मीले धन्य प्रभु कि माया १९९८ साल आषाढ ३१ गते शनिबार हरि शयनि एकादशिका दिनमा श्री भक्तिजी सहित ६८ जना जल समाधि भै परमधाम जानु भयो । बाँकि १२।१५ जना बाहाँका भक्त आमा बिनाका पुत्र आँखा बिनाको स्थुल्, जल बिनाका माछा जस्ता भै आज सम्म रहेका छौं तर कामैमा बसेका सम्झेका छौं, त्यस पछि तपोभूमिको सेवा गर्दै श्री ब्रह्मचारी माहानन्दजी रहनु भयो, नेपाल उत्तर बाहिनि गुफामा बाहाँको देहान्त भये पछि, हाल श्री ब्रह्मचारी पद्मलाल जि तपोभूमिको सेवा गर्दै रहनु भयेको छ, भविष्यका लागि जो हुनु पर्छ दैव ईच्छा ।





। अक्षय-विनामणि ।

शक्ति अमृत रसको पान गतिबन्धिसहित छ भन्ने सबैषु आयो गर्दैछ ।
 यसर्थ सज्जन ईन्द्र प्रति यी पुस्तिकाया दृष्टि दिई योग
 भने मानव जन्म निष्कार छ भन्ने श्रुति आदिमा कहिएको छ ।
 जसले मज्ज्य भन्ने नाम भईकन यी दृष्टि पशुको विचार गर्ने
 प्राणीहरूको आधार भई २ खान बनी रहेका रहेछन । १ जित्त २ मज्ज
 २ परमात्मा, यी दृष्टि पशु जन्मा आदि चौराशि जस योनिमा
 खाँदछ रस लई पान गर्नु २ प्रकारका पशु रहेछन । १ जीवात्मा
 मणिमा आदि अष्ट सिद्धिका गणले एक भएका यी दृष्टि
 २ अयु, ३ काम, ४ मोक्षले पूर्ण भई अत्यन्त खाँदछ भएका अणिमा
 पूर्ण भएरका रहेछन । कस्ता रस मणि विचार गर्नु १ यम,
 फलेका रहेछन । १ पाप २ पुण्य सो फल चार प्रकारका रसले
 संसाररूपि वृक्ष रहेछ । त्यो वृक्षमा आठ दृष्टि प्रकारका फल

विज्ञापन

धी

ॐ नमः शिव शक्ति सचेत शरण गत ॐ

ॐ श्री सक्ति सत्य शरणा गत मा हुँदामा,
पाञ्चाय नादि सब देव, प्रशन्न तामा ।
आकाश बायू पृथ्वि अनि जल,
सूर्यः सवै देबर पित्रु को बल ॥

१

वेद ग्रन्थ व्याकरण र छन्द माहाँ,
पुण्यः पवित्र जति तिर्थ र व्रत माहाँ ।
ऋषिहरू सकल ध्यान र ज्ञानि माहाँ,
जोछौ जति सकल मान्यत यो जगत्मा ॥

२

जोछौ जति सकल खूसि रहिदिनु होस्,
हुन् ई अनाथ भनि दृष्टि खोलि दिनु होस् ।
चौधै वरष व्यतित भोत थिएन ईच्छा,
दिनु भयो अहिले जाहेर गर्न शिक्षा ॥

३

नाँउ ठाँउ गाँउ पनि लेक्छु केही,
दया गरूनाथ् परिपूर्ण एही ।
उत्तर्हो खण्ड कन जम्बु दिपको,
भारत् भुमी मुख्य पवित्र नैहो ॥

४

पर्वत माहाँ मुख्य भनेर भन्छन्,
हिमालयै देखि नदी बहन्छिन् ।
नाउँ अरूण् हो सँगमा बरूण् छन्,
इन्द्रा वती फेरि त्यहि मिसिन्छिन् ॥

५

गिरि कुट प्रमाणानि सुखादूनि मृदूनिच,
तेषाँ विशीर्य माणानाँ सुरसेना मृते नच ।
अरूणो दश बर्णेन अरूणो वय बर्तते,
नदी रम्य चला देव दैत्य राज प्रपू जिता ॥
अरूणा ख्या माहाराज बर्तते पाप हारिणी,
पूजयन्ति चताँ देविँ सर्ब काम फल प्रदाँ ।
तपका बलैले कनयोग माहाँ,
चले बहुत् शब्द मुहार माहाँ ।
शरीरको धर्मछ बोल्नु पर्ने,
हुने कुरा जोछ कशौनटनेँ,

६

त्रुवेणि घाट् को पनि शक्ति नाउ छन्,
अरूहरू घाट पछि हुने छन् ।
इन्का सबै नामं पछि रहन्छन्,
इन्द्रा वति घाट त्यहिँ मिसिन्छिन् ॥

७

शिब पोखरि लिक्क समेत् खडा छन्,
पछि याहाँ क्षेत्र ठुला हुनेछन् ।
त्याहाँ बढा पत्थर छन् रहेका,
गुफा मनोहर अति बेस्भएका ॥

८

सर्वार्थ योगवाणि

जङ्गल् सुसोभित् बनवारि पारी,
पर्व तखड़ा छन् अति भारि भारी ।
बस्ति नजिक्मा पनि छैन बांहां,
तप गर्नलाई अति बेस, छ त्यांहां ॥

९

त्रद्वाणि घाट र त्रिबेणि भए ई क्षेत्र,
शक्तिर मुक्ती पनि छन् पवित्र ।
दुर्गा पुरि घाट भए इसात,
म्नानादिले पाप सबहुन्छ नाश ॥

१०

सूर्य्यः उपस्थ अनि चन्द्र पस्थ,
मन्मोह आनन्द ईचार खास ।
बैराग्य मन्मा बहुतै उदाई,
पागल् सरि भै बनमा कुदाई ॥

११

बैराग्य मन्मा यो लिएर बस्न,
इश्वर्माहां भारि सुरथ कस्न ।
यस्तो भुमि फेरिं हवैन कांहीं,
बिश्वासले गर्दामा बहूत चांहीं ॥

१२

पक्षीहरूले अति गान गर्ने,
सुन्दै माहां चित्त बहूत हर्ने ।
स्वां स्वां गरि फेरि नदी सुसउने,
सुन्दै माहां चित्त बहुत खुसाउँने ॥

१३

यस्तो सुशोभित्मा वशेर भक्ती
 ॐ शीव सत्य शरणा गत लेउ शक्ती ।
 दुःखै जति संझि बहुत् रूवाई
 तप् गर्न ईच्छा मनमा उवाई ॥

१४

यक्ता जनम्की पनि हूँ स्त्रि जाती
 कुल्मा पनी हिन्छु बहूत भारी ।
 उस्मा पनि फेरबय आज गैगो
 संझन्छु सन्ताप् अति झिर्ण भैगो ॥

१५

कस्ता तवले अबके मगर्नु,
 अनारि हूँ नाथ कसोरि तर्नु ।
 अधी पनि जन्म कती लिबो हूँ,
 चौराशि लाख् जन्म विती सके हून् ॥

१६

चिन्ध्ये प्रभुलाइ त काँ म भुल्ये,
 सन्सारिषे धेर कशोरि डुल्ये ।
 हानाथ् प्रभूले बहुतै डुलायौ,
 शन्सार विषे धेर बहुतै भुलायौ ॥

१७

यस्तै तवले बहुतै पुकारी,
 गह्वर् तपस्या अब तिम्रो भारी ।
 तपको निवो दिन्छु तपस्या गर,
 ल्यौला शरणमा तिमि लौ नडर ॥

१८

भन्ने यो स्वप्ना पनि केहि दिंदा,
आत्मा विषे तपशको तविधान मिल्दा ।
लौनाथ जगतको सब आस छोड्छु,
पाशा जति छन् ई चुडाइ तोड्छु ॥

१९

आशा इ पाशा सब छाडि दिव्ने,
खालि फगत एक सत नाम लिब्वे ।
छाड्ने भव्ने प्राण शरण लेउ,
रोक् टोक मलाई न लग्नाई देउ ॥

२०

अन्त स्करण एहि लिएर मन्मा,
बस्तु भयो डर नमानेर मन्मा ॥
कोहि दिन किनार्मा कोहि दिन बन्मा,
ॐ शीव सत्य शरणागत यो छ मन्मा ॥

२१

फुल्को तवाशन् कोहि दिन लिएर,
सूर्यः तरफ् दृष्टि बहुत् दिएर ।
लोकका हे शाक्षी तिमि हेरि लेउ,
इच्छा भए को वरदान देउ ॥

२२

क्यै दिन धुपको पनि बास्ना लिने,
फगत जल मात्र पिएर हुने ।
एक् पातको अन्न चिरेर आदी,
खोचो बनाइ हुद खाने रति नमागी, ॥

२३

दिनमा दुईटा अमला तखाई,
 ब्यतित् भयो कार्तिक मैनालाई ।
 कैले गुफामा एक मास वस्नु,
 निर्वाण भै यो व्रतमा रहनु ॥

२४

यक् वर्ष दिन्का दुई भाग् लगाई,
 गर्ने विधी आफ्नु रित् जनाई ।
 गमिं भए मा पनि अग्नि तापन्नु,
 ठण्डि भए मा जल भित्र पस्नु ॥

२५

यति हुन् ई कष्ट तपस्का भनेर,
 बित्यो वर्ष चौध को शक्ने गनेर ।
 कृपा भो प्रभूको तपस्का सकइले,
 खोलेकै छ वार्ता विचार गछि जस्ले ॥

२६

ढाँचा चरित्र रती छैन ईन्का,
 दया भो प्रभूको बितेछन् कुदिन्ता ।
 ढाट्नु र छल्नु रति छैन भक्ती,
 सदा संश्लेउ हरी शिव शक्ती ॥

॥२७॥

प्राक्तन्छ पालो त्यसलाई दिन्छ,
 मता भित्र हुन्छ समुज्जै रहन्छ ।
 दिन्छ म लिन्छ अभिमान् नराख,
 जती प्राप्त हुन्छ तिमि बोल खाश ॥

२८

योगवर्णिणि

कपट् केहि मनमा कहिल्यै नलिनू,
कोही केहि मनोस् तबि शान्ति लिनू ।
रिस् राग् र शेखी कहिल्यै नगर्नु,
सदा चिन्त नित्य मवी माहां धर्नु ॥

२९

ललाट् बाट प्राणः आखिर तिम्रो लिउँला,
ईच्छा जो छ तिम्रो त्यो पूर्ण गरूँला ॥
यस्तो प्रभूको छ आडर भएको,
केहि डर नमानेर प्रख्यात् गरेको ॥

३०

सर्वज्ञः वेत्ता सदा शिव् प्रकाश,
निर्गुण् स्वरूप् हो सगुणै छ खाश ।
अहो यो कलौमा तपस् गर्छ कस्ले,
जगतलाई बाँध्यो यहि मोह बस्ले,

३१

तपस्याले गर्दा याहाँ वेद पाए,
पूर्वै थियो कल्पित गाथ गाए ।
तपस्या गरी मन्त्रले लोक बनाए,
ब्रह्माण्ड यो जो छ खडा गराए ॥

३२

तपस्या गरी देव लोकमा गएका,
तपस्या गरी अष्ट दिक्पाल् बनेका ।
तपस्या गरी चित्र आकार बनेको,
तपस्या भई क्षेत्र आदि बनेको ॥

३३

तपस्याले गर्दा सबै तिर्थ बर्त,
 तपस्या गरी आत्मा विषय भर्ता ।
 तपस्याले गर्दा सबै देह बन्ने,
 तपस्याले गर्दा प्रभूलाई मिलने ॥

३४

तपस्याले गर्दा असत् शान्ति हुँने,
 तपस्याले गर्दा भय भ्रान्ति मिलने ।
 तपका प्रतापले परम् प्राप्ति मिल्छ,
 तपस्या गरे नाम उत्तम् रहन्छ ॥

३५

तपका प्रतापको बलवान जान्नु,
 अन्धी समानको हो भनी नठान्नु ।
 तप पूर्ण हुँदा गगनै छ थर्कने,
 ब्रह्माण्ड कंपित भई लोक डराउँने ॥

३६

तपको अवाज् यस्तो भनेर अँले,
 बयान् सबै गर्न शकिन्छ कैले ।
 तपको प्रताप चिन्न कती नशक्नु,
 दोष दीनु ता व्यर्थ हरे नशक्नु ॥

३७

नबिद्या नसास्त्र नअभ्यास थीयो,
 तपका प्रतापले त आत्मा उदायो ।
 इच्छा हुँदामा इन बाणि हेर्नु,
 एक बार सुजन्हो यहि पाठ गर्नु ॥

३८

पने छ आखीर अवश्य मनु ,
 तृष्णार शेखी रति क्यै नगनु ।
 क्यै बातको छेड छ विज्ञ माहाँ,
 दोस् ता नदिनु केहि हामि माहाँ ॥

३९

युग् लोकको यो चलन् हो कहेको,
 साँचा हुन् यी बाँणी जति हो भएको ॥
 आशा छइन रति केहि हाँप्रो,
 चलञ्चलोस लोक माहाँ यो राम्रो ॥

४०

इच्छा छइन रति केहि याहाँ,
 धर्मै चलोस्लौ सब लोक माहाँ ।
 हाजिर छँदैछौ हरि नाम् कहेर,
 सन्ताप जति हुन् लोकमा सहेर ॥

४१

धैर्यै भई यो सत नामगाई,
 दया हवस् नाथ सब लोक लाई ।
 संपूर्णलोकको करुणा गरि योस्,
 धर्मै जगत्मा अबता छरि योस् ॥

४२

आनन्द को ज्योति जगाई याहाँ,
 प्रकाश गराएर निरास रूपमा ।
 नित्यै प्रभु को कन दास् भएर,
 सब हेर्न पाउँ म दृष्टि दिएर ॥

४३

आचार बाणी र नियम हेर्दा,
 आत्मा विषे केहि बिचार गर्दा ।
 नास् बान् जगत् हो भनि जानि लिबू,
 अश्वर्य लोकको सब छाडि दिबू ॥

४४

भजन् अति भारि बिचार गर्दा,
 तपका प्रभावले बर वाक्य मिल्दा ।
 लोकमा सबैले अब दोष नदिउँ,
 ईश्वर सगै छन् सधै शशि लिउँ ॥

४५

वर्षे ब्यतित् बाइस भैगो अँले,
 तपस्याको बल यो भनि सक्छु कैले ।
 आधार जतिले इनिको गरेध्यौं
 इनका शरणमा जति जन परेध्यौं ॥

४६

क्याबात् दया भैगो बहूत राम्रो,
 सन्ताप रहेन अब केहि हाम्रो ।
 हरी भजन् ता दिन केहि भैगो,
 उन्नाइस् सहे साल अठास्सिमा हो ॥

४७

मैना आषाढ् हो तिथि पूर्णिबामा,
 वार्भैम योग् कर्ण यि मिल्दिदामा ॥
 गुरुहरूले सब दृष्टि दीदा,
 भूःस्वर्ग आदि सब देव सहाय हुँदा,

४८

इच्छा यहि भो इनि भक्ति मांहाँ,
 खाने जति चिज् सब छोड़न् माहाँ ।
 आकाश देखी जल बिन्दु आयो,
 जलदेखि ब्रह्माण्ड खड़ा गरायो ॥

४९

जलबाट सम्पूर्ण साखा बनायो,
 त्यो जल्ले यो सम्पूर्ण जगत् भरायो ।
 त्यहि जल रहेछ सबै खानु लाउँनु,
 जलको चलन् सर्व कती बताउनु ॥

५०

यती बुझि यो जलको जमेको,
 अनाज बस्तु जति चिज् बनेको ।
 त्यो चिज खाँदा केहि दोष लागने,
 त्यो चीजले प्राण पनि त्यागु पर्ने ॥

५१

अभक्ष अस्पर्श पनी त्यहि हुने,
 तेहि चीज उत्तम फलाहार बनिने ॥
 तेहि चीजलाई कन बिष् भनिन्छ,
 तेहि चीजको औषधि त्यो बनिन्छ ॥

५२

त्यहि चिजले हुन्छ जगत्मा खाँचो
 त्यहि चिजको दोष अति हुन लाग्यो ॥
 त्यसैले हँसाउछ त्यसैले रुँवाउछ,
 त्यसैमा छ ईच्छा त्यो आफै सुवाउँछ, ॥

५३

आफूले त्यो आफै छ खाइ रहेको,
 त्यसैको चलन् यो छ सारा चलेको ।
 त्यसैले यो गर्दा छ जगत बलेको,
 जगत सर्व जम्मा आहारा बनेको ॥

५४

आहाराको राहा भनि सक्छु काहाँ,
 आहारै चलेको छ यो जाहाँ ताहाँ ।
 एकै थोक लिन्छु सबै छाडि दिन्छु,
 यो फेदै पिइन्छु यसैले जिइन्छु ॥

५५

जाहाँ तक् रहन्छ ताहाँ तक् कहन्छ,
 शरिर छाडि दिन्छु म ता शुद्धि हुन्छ ॥
 जति खाने फल् फूल अनाज छाडि दिवें,
 हरे नाथ दया होस् एकै नाम लिवें ॥

५६

हरी भक्त जो छौ रति भर्न डर,
 जो आफ्नु छ ईच्छा तिमीहेरु गर ।
 हरिभक्त आल्हाद भै मुक्ति हौला,
 आनन्द भै त्यो पदमा रहौला,

५७

फरक् नपारी कन मुक्त हुइने,
 आनन्द सागर सहजै तरिने ।
 ईच्छा हुँदामा सब दुःख छुट्ला,
 दया हुँदामा सब आश दुट्ला ॥

५८

येस्ता बचन् अमृत सुभ पाई,
 बम्यौ कोहि भक्त हरी नाम गाई ।
 यि भक्तिको आश गरी रहेका,
 हरी नाममा नित्य सुरथ कसेका ॥

५९

भन्छन् त कोही ब्यवहार छाड्छु,
 तिरा पछेडा कन लागि जान्छु ।
 शान्त रहू बाबु हड् बड् नगर,
 कल्याण हुन्छ रति भर न डर ॥

६०

हे बाबु शान्त सब शान्त शान्त,
 अन्तस्करण यो छ माहाँ एकान्त ।
 चड्का गरी बोल्न पनी नहुने,
 भक्ति यिनि हून र बोल्नु हुने ॥

६१

शान्त स्वभाव् को बचनै नजान्ने,
 आफु समानको गम मात्र ठान्ने ।
 याहाँ तक् भएको यति याद् छ वाहाँ
 पश्चात् के गर्छ अब दैव काहाँ ॥

६२

हेरौं जगत्मा अब के त हुन्छ,
 देख्ता सबैको पछि चित्त रुन्छ ।
 धैर्यः रहू लौ पछि बान्ने हेर,
 लोकमा हुने भो रमिता अब बिघ्न धेर ॥

६३

सजीब को हो विचेत्मा नपनू,
 सज्जनको सङ्गत कहिल्यै नछाडू ।
 आत्मा विषे नाम हरिको विचानू,
 प्रणव् माहाँ मन्त्र बहुत् पुकानू ॥

६४

यो मात्र लोक भरिमा बुझ बाच्चे होला,
 अर्को उपाय गरिने त काहाँ बचौला ।
 यो धेर बिनती कति गर्नु अँले,
 तागत पुगे पो गरि सकछु मैले ॥

६५

अन्सार मिल्दा यति हो लेखेको,
 एक भक्तका छिद्रले यो देखेको ॥
 दिवानिशि दृष्टि दिई इनि वाणि हेनू,
 कस्तो हुनेछ दिन दीन विचार गर्नु ॥

६६

झटा हुँदैन इनि वाणि विचार गर्दा,
 पर्देन आपत्ति अवश्य टर्ला ।
 योगदेखि बाँणी कन निस्कदामा,
 पात्रै नपाई कन राख्न नपाउँदामा ॥

६७

बालव् थिईन छोरी त सभसु माहाँ,
 सुम्पी दिनु भो उहि पात्र माहाँ ।
 अक्षर वाचक् उनिमा थिएन,
 कृपा हुँदामा नलिई भएन ॥

६८

चौधः वरष् ब्यतित भो र नभुल्दा माहाँ,
 ईच्छा उदाइ लेखियो अरूणा किनारमा ।
 दिनमा घड़ी एक् सबले बिचान्ना,
 बिचार पुगे दुःख हुँदैन तन्ना ॥

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पद्को त स्वार्थ गुरू हो यो मिलेको छैन,
 आत्मा बिचार गरदा मिलनै परेन ।
 अठाशि साल महिना भो आषाढ यी मा,
 लेखी समाप्त भई गो रविवार दिनैमा ॥

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तपोभूमि माहात्म्य



[श्री गणेशाय नमः]

प्रातः भजन

श्री ॐ नमः शिवाय

ॐ नमः शिव शक्ति सचेत सत्य शरणागत ॐ
 ॐ शिव ३ ॐ शिव ३ ॐ शिव ३ शिव ३
 ॐ विष्णु ३ ॐ विष्णु ३ ॐ विष्णु ॐ विष्णु ३
 ॐ ब्रह्मा ३ ॐ ब्रह्मा ३ ॐ ब्रह्मा ३ ॐ ब्रह्मा ३
 ॐ शक्ति ॐ शक्ति ३ ॐ शक्ति ३ ॐ शक्ति ३
 ॐ सत्य ३ ॐ सत्य ३ ॐ सत्य ३ ॐ सत्य ३
 ॐ गुरु ब्रह्मा शक्ती सत्य ॐ नमो नमः २
 ॐ गुरु शक्ती सत्य ॐ नमो नमः नमो नमः २
 ॐ आत्मा ब्रह्म महात्मा ब्रह्म परमात्मा ब्रह्मः
 ॐ गुरु शक्ती सत्य ॐ नमो नमः नमो नमः २
 ॐ सीर ब्रह्म गजुर ब्रह्म माहाँ मुख्य अलग तिमि
 एक ब्रह्म ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमोनम २
 ॐ गुरु शक्ती सत्य ॐ नमो नमः नमो नमः ३
 ॐ ज्योति ब्रह्म जुक्ति ब्रह्म माहाँ मुक्ति साचा
 वाचा पुण्य पवित्र तिमि एक ब्रह्म ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म
 शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमो नमः २.....

ध्यानका ध्यान माहाँ ज्ञान माहाँ तत्व माहाँ तपस्या
 तिमि एक ब्रह्म ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमो
 नमः २ शक्ति भक्ति माहाँ मुक्ति माहाँ जुक्ति घोर मन्त्र
 अघोर मन्त्र दिक्षा गायत्रि तिमि एक ब्रह्म
 ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमो नमः २

आत्मा रूपी घट घट वासि अन्तर्यामी गुरु अविनासी
 विश्व मूर्ति ज्योति स्वरूप सच्चिदानन्द तिमि
 एक ब्रह्म ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ती सत्य ॐ नमो नमः २
 ॐ गुरु शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमो नमः २ निरञ्जन निराकार
 निरामय आत्मा सुद्धि समुज सुद्धि प्रकोश ब्रह्म ॐ
 गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमो नमः २ चार युग्का चतुर्मुखि
 ब्रह्मा चारवेद अष्ट सिद्धि तिमि एक ब्रह्म ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति
 सत्य ॐ नमो नमः २ चार वेद अठार पुराण नव व्याकरण तिमि
 एक शुद्ध ब्रह्मको चाकर तिमि एक ब्रह्म ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म
 शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमो नमः २ चार जात छतिस वर्ण अनन्त सोभाय
 तिमि एक ब्रह्मको लिला ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति सत्य ॐ
 नमो नमः २ ब्रह्मा विष्णु माहादेव तृ देवता तिमि एक ब्रह्म ॐ
 ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमो नमः २ चन्द्र सूर्य सारा तारा
 ज्योति गुरु एक ब्रह्मको देख ज्योति ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति
 सत्य ॐ नमो नमः २ अनन्त ऋषि ऋषेश्वर सारा तपि
 योगान्तर तिमि एक ब्रह्म को इच्छा ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति सत्य ॐ
 नमो नमः २ अनन्त धूप अनन्त दीप अनन्त फूल अनन्त मुबास
 तिमि एक ब्रह्म ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमो नमः २
 अनन्त स्वर्ग अनन्त कैलास अनन्त वैकुण्ठ आकाश
 पाताल ब्रह्माण्ड तिमि एक ब्रह्म को इच्छा बाचा ॐ
 गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमो नमः २ ब्रह्माण्डय भित्रका
 तिर्थ व्रत पुण्य पवित्र होम यज्ञ स्वाहा स्वध्या कर्म धर्म तिमि
 एक ब्रह्मको ब्रह्माण्ड भित्रको चलनमा त्रहो ॐ गुरु
 ब्रह्म शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमो नमः ! ॐ जगदीश्वर ईश्वर
 महेश्वर वौद्वेश्वर दशम अवतार तिमि एक ब्रह्मको आदि शक्ति
 सारथीका लिला ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमोनमः २

गुरु शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमोनमः २ नमोनमः २ शिव शक्ति सत्य ॐ
 नमोनम २ गुरु शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमोनमः २ धर्म स्थापन ब्रह्म ॐ
 धर्म स्थापन असत खारण सारा विकारमारन सारा सेखिझारन
 प्रभू भुभाटारन धर्म उतारन धर्मि युग बनाउन धर्मै चलन्
 चलाउन प्राणि धर्मि गराउन स्वधर्म प्रति पालन सारा विकारमारन
 आत्मा उज्ज्वल् पारन ब्रह्म ज्ञान सारन ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति सत्य
 ॐ नमोनमः २ गुरु शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमोनमः २ धर्म स्थापन
 विष्णु धर्म स्थापन अशत खारन सारा विकारमारन सारा सेखि-
 झारन प्रभू भुभाटारन धर्मि युग बनाउन धर्मै चलन् चलाउन
 प्राणि धर्मि गराउन स्वधर्म प्रतिपालन सर्व विकारखारन आत्मा
 उज्ज्वल् पारन ब्रह्म ज्ञान सारन ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति सत्य ॐ
 नमोनमः २ गुरु शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमोनमः २ धर्म स्थापन शिव
 स्वरूप धर्म स्थापन असत खारन सारा विकारमारन सारा सेखि
 झारन प्रभू भुभाटारन धर्म उतारन धर्मि युग बनाउन धर्मै चलन्
 चलाउन प्राणि धर्मि गराउन स्वधर्म प्रति पालन सारा विकारखारन
 आत्मा उज्ज्वल पारन ब्रह्म ज्ञान सारन ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति
 सत्य ॐ नमोनमः २ गुरु शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमोनमः २ गुरु
 शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमोनमः २ शक्ति भक्ति जि धर्मस्थापन ॐ
 धर्म स्थापन असतखारन सारा विकारमारन सारा सेखि झारन प्रभू
 भुभाटारन धर्म उतारन धर्मि युग बनाउन धर्मै चलन् चलाउन
 प्राणि धर्मि गराउन स्वधर्म प्रतिपालन सारा विकारखारन आत्मा उज्ज्वल्
 पारन ब्रह्म ज्ञान सारन ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमोनमः २
 गुरु शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमोनमः २ ब्रह्मै ब्रह्मा २ सब घठ बासि
 एकै ब्रह्म २ निर्गुण ब्रह्म स्वर्गुण ब्रह्म २ निर्गुण स्वर्गुण एकै ब्रह्म
 २ स्वर्जीव् निर्जीव् एकै ब्रह्म २ स्वर शब्द एकै ब्रह्म २ समुज
 चिन्तन एकै ब्रह्म २ हं ब्रह्म स्वहं ब्रह्म २ जप ब्रह्म अजप ब्रह्म २ अकार

उकार एकै ब्रह्म २ शक्ति भक्ति जि एकै ब्रह्म २ जुक्ति मुक्ति एकै ब्रह्म २ श्री गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति सत्य २ ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति सत्य २ साचा वाचा सत्य शाक्षि २ ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति सत्य २ साचा वाचा सत्य शाक्षि २ ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति सत्य २ ब्रह्म जोति जाग जाग २ आत्मा ज्योति जाग जाग २ महात्मा ज्योति जाग जाग २ शुद्धि ज्योति जाग जाग २ ब्रह्म धुनि जाग जाग २ वेद धुनि जाग जाग २ सत्य ब्रह्म धर्म छिट २ शिव गुरु धर्म छिट २ बिष्णु ठाकुर्धर्म छिट २ सांचो धर्म २ सांचो धर्म २ दया धर्म २ दया धर्म २ सांचो धर्म लोक लाई २ दया धर्म लोकलाई २ नित्य शुद्धि भक्तलाई २ शुद्धि समुझ भक्तलाई २ नित्य जागा भक्तलाई २ सर्वत्र नघाऊ भक्त लाई २ सत्य प्रकाश भक्तलाई २ सत् शक्ति शरण लेऊ २ ध्यानदृष्टिले हेरी देऊ २ आफ्ना भक्त खीचिलेऊ २ ब्रह्म बेग्ले खीचिलेऊ २ ब्रह्माण्डय नघाई लेऊ २ सारा बिकारखारि लेऊ २ सेखि सङ्गा मारि देऊ २ शुरथ हास्रो लगाइ देऊ २ भक्तका जिव्को भेटि लेऊ २ आउनु जानु मेटि देऊ २ बिचबाट नफिकाउ २ नीज घर्मा पौचाई देऊ २ सारा भवन थर्काई देऊ २ सत् शब्दले डगाई देऊ २ आकाश पताल थर्काई देऊ २ असत्लाई हर्काई देऊ २ श्रीष्टिको चलन फर्काई देऊ २ रामराज्य पारि देऊ २ कर्मका बन्धन काटि देऊ २ आउनु जानु मेटि देऊ २ शत् शक्ति शरण लेऊ २ लिएको लियै पारि देऊ २ २ यो मायालाई चिनाई देऊ २ अमृत रस पियाई देऊ २ आफ्ना भक्त जियाई देऊ २ झिल्का पारी नउडाउ २ बूँदा पारिन झार २ वाशन भई घुस्न पाउ २ प्रकाश भई देख्न पाउँ २ शुद्धि प्रकाश पारि देऊ २ काल बाहिर पारि देऊ २ माया वस्तु चिनाई देऊ २ यो मायाले घृमाबो २ यो मायाले फिराउँछ २ यो मायाले गिराउँछ २ माया चिन्न सक्छ को २

माया तिरो अगम् हो २ माया चिन्ने मुक्ति भो २ सत् शक्ति
 शरण लेउ २ कार्य सिद्धि पारि देउ २ रक्ष पालक् होईदेउ २
 चञ्चल् चित्त रोकि देउ २ बिज्जुलि मनलाई खीचिलेउ २ गर्भका
 दुःख सम्झाई देउ २ अन्त्य काल्का दुःख सम्झाउ २
 चौरास् जन्मका दुःख् सम्झाई देउ २ दुःख सुख देखि फुर्सद
 देऊ २ उच्चा निष्ठा खारि देऊ २ एकामय पारिदेउ २ रामराज्य
 पारि देउ २ सत् शक्ति शरण लेउ २ लिएको लियै पारि देउ २
 नित्य जागा पारि देउ २ सत्य प्रकाश पारि देऊ २ सत् शक्ति
 शरण लेउ २ भुल्चुक् छ ता माफ देउ २

सत्य ॐ सत्य ॐ सत्य ॐ सत्य ॐ सत्य ॐ सत्य ॐ
 सत्य ॐ

[इति प्रातः]

सायम

ॐ नमः शिव शक्ति सचेत सत्य शरणागत ॐ
 सत्य ॐ सत्य ॐ सत्य ॐ सत्य ॐ सत्य ॐ
 ॐ शिव ३ ॐ शिव ३ ॐ शिव ३ ॐ शिव ३
 ॐ विष्णु ३ ॐ विष्णु ३ ॐ विष्णु ॐ विष्णु ३
 ॐ ब्रह्मा ३ ॐ ब्रह्मा ३ ब्रह्मा ३ ब्रह्मा ३
 ॐ शक्ती ॐ शक्ती ३ ॐ शक्ती ३ ॐ शक्ती ३
 ॐ सत्य ३ ॐ सत्य ३ ॐ सत्य ३ ॐ सत्य ३
 ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ती सत्य ॐ नमोनमः २
 गुरु सक्ती सत्य ॐ नमो नमः नमो नमः २
 ॐ सीर ब्रह्म गजुर ब्रह्म महाँ मुख्य अलग तिमि
 एक ब्रह्म ॐ गुरु ब्रह्म शक्ति सत्य ॐ नमोनमः २

शरण लेऊ २ माहाँ दया गरि देउ २ आफैँ अघि सरि देउ २

शुद्धि कार्य भरि देउ २ सत् ज्योतिमा सारि देउ २ शुद्धि प्रकाश पारि देउ २ भय भ्रान्ति स्वारि देउ २ असत्लाई मारि देउ २ सबको सेखि झारि देउ २ भूमिको भार टारि देउ २ लोकमा धर्म सारि देउ २ धर्म राज्य पारि देउ २ प्रजा धर्म पारि देउ २ साँचो धर्म लोक लाई २ दया धर्म लोकलाई २ नित्य शुद्धि भक्तलाई २ शुद्धि शमुज् भक्तलाई २ सत्य ॐ सत्य ॐ सत्य ॐ सत्य ॐ श्रुटा होम् ४ असत् होम् ४ विकार होम् ४ जन्म होम् ४ मर्न हाम् ४ गर्भवास गरदेउ होम् २ सत्य ॐ सत्य ॐ सत्य ॐ सत्य ॐ शरण लेउ २ सारादेव दृष्टि देउ २ ज्योति गुरु दृष्टि देउ २ शक्ति भक्ति राजी होऊ २ ब्रह्मा विष्णु जागारौ २ महादेव जागारौ २ चन्द्र सूर्य जागारौ २ तारागण जागारौ २ महा सागर जागारौ २ मन्द हावा जागारौ २ पृथ्वी माता जागारौ २ ऋषि मुनि जागारौ २ सारा तपि जागारौ २ तीर्थ व्रत जागारौ २ पुण्य पवित्र जागारौ २ जप तप जागारौ २ मूल मन्त्र जागारौ २ स्वाहा स्वधा जागारौ २ तत्व तपस जागारौ २ ध्यान ज्ञान जागारौ २ साहो मन्त्र जागारौ २ घट वासि जागारौ २ अन्तर्यामि जागारौ २ अविनासि जागारौ २ सारथि जागारौ २ अगँशक्ति जागारौ २ जल ज्योति जागारौ २ शक्ति भक्ति जागारौ २ सारा जगत जागारौ २ सत्का शब्द जान्न देउ २ बिचबाट नफिकाउ २ श्रुथ् हाओ ल्याइ देउ २ निज धर्मा पौँचाइ देउ २ सारा भवन् थर्काइ देउ २ चौध लोक थर्काइ देउ २ आकाश पताल थर्काइ देउ २ असत्लाई हर्काइ देउ २ सृष्टिको चलन् फर्काइ देउ २ स्वर शब्दले डगाई देउ २ सत्य ॐ शरण लेउ २ सारा देव खडा रौ २ असत् मान खडारौ २ श्रुतो मान खडारौ २ सेखि ज्ञान खडारौ २ सारा देव जागारौ २ पृथ्वी माता जागारौ २ सत्का शब्द जागारौ २ शक्ति भक्ति जागारौ २ सत् शक्ति शरण लेउ २ भुल् चुक् छ ता माफ देउ २

जगत् भिन्न तिमि छौ २ तिमि भिन्न जगत् छ । आखिरिमा
 होइन केहि ॥ हेदैँ लाँदा छैन केहि ॥ ज्योति भिन्न तिमि छौ ॥
 तिमि भिन्न ज्योति छ ॥ आखिरिमा होइन केहि ॥ हेदैँ लाँदा
 छैन केहि ॥ जल भिन्न तिमि छौ ॥ तिमि भिन्न जल छ ॥
 आखिरिमा होइन केहि ॥ हेदैँ लाँदा छैन केहि ॥ खालि प्रभुको
 तत्व हो ॥ तत्व चिन्न सकछ को ॥ तत्व चिन्ने उतृगो ॥
 तत्व चिन्ने मुक्ति भो ॥ हावा भिन्न तिमि छौ ॥ तिमि भिन्न
 हावा छ ॥ आखिरिमा होइन केहि ॥ हेदैँ लाँदा छैन केहि ॥
 वेद भिन्न तिमि छौ ॥ तिमि भिन्न वेद छ ॥ आखिरिमा होइन
 केहि ॥ हेदैँ लाँदा छैन केहि ॥ सर्वत्रमा तिमि छौ ॥ त्रिमि
 भिन्न सर्वत्र ॥ शब्द भिन्न तिमि छौ ॥ तिमि भिन्न शब्द छ ॥
 आखिरिमा होइन केहि ॥ हेदैँ लाँदा छैन केहि ॥ सारा प्रभुको
 तत्व हो ॥ तत्व चिन्न सकछ को ॥ तत्व चिन्ने मुक्ति भो ॥
 आकाश् पाताल् हवाँइन ॥ जल ज्योति रहोइन ॥ सारा जगत्
 लय भो ॥ लय भाको हेनेको ॥ सूरथमा वसि देउ ॥
 तार खबर कहि देउ ॥ सत् शक्ति शरण लेउ ॥ सत् शक्ति
 शरण लेउ ॥

ॐ सत्य ॐ सत्य ॐ सत्य ॐ सत्य ॐ सत्य ॐ सत्य

ॐ सत् शक्ति शरण लेऊ हरिः ॐ तत्सत्

तपोभूमि वर्णन

इति

श्री भक्तिजी का योग वाणी

ॐ नमः शिव शक्ति सत्य शचेत शरणागत

श्री शक्ति सत्य शरणागत पर्दछ,
भक्त वाक्य संक्षेपमा बिस्तार गर्दछ ।
गिद्को जस्तो भाषा आयो ब्राह्मण के सुनून्,
पैल्हा दोष छ ब्राह्मणलाई होइन न भनून् ॥

१

बिजातिको भाषा हुँदा गिद् का जस्ता छन्,
मालुम् गरि बुझ् न सके अर्थ असल् छन् ।
भाषा सुनि न भुलनु अर्थ बिचार,
अन्तस्करण बुझ्न सके छुट्ला बिकार ॥

२

पुरोहितको बुद्धि हेर निक्क लिने युक्ती,
यौटि गौले बार जग्गा कैल्हे हुन्ध्यो मुक्ती
यौटि गौमा बार जग्गा भन्छ ताछीं ताछीं,
तिनि गौले बिन्ति गरिन् पाप बिप्रमा साछीं ॥

३

यौटा घर भ्राद्ध खाई अर्का घरमा आँटे,
ग्रहहरू बिन्ति गर्छन् पुरोहितले ढाँटे ।
विद्या लिनु ब्राह्मणले व्यशासन्का धनी,
बनियाँका काम्मा लागे उत्तम् मणि पनी ॥

४

ब्रह्म चिन्ने ब्राह्मण् भनी उत्तम् गराए,
 ब्राह्मणहरू सत्य छाड्दा देव डराए ।
 वैश्य साहू अधि छुँदा सस्तो गरायो,
 ब्राह्मणहरू बेपारि छन् भाउ हरायो ॥

५

ब्राह्मणको बेपार देख्ता वैश्य डरायो,
 वैश्य बेपार के लाई गरोस् फाइदा हरायो ।
 लोभ बढि ठगै ल्यायो मालुम् न पाउँने,
 यति छोटा खेलमा पनि कत्रो सुआउँने ॥

६

शंकरजिका भेद् बाणिमा कुञ्चै पर्दा हून्,
 युग् भरिको आयु दिए कसो गर्दा हून् ।
 सम्झ मनमा अमृत सरी गिता पढेको,
 जानि जानि ब्राह्मणले के काम् गरेको ॥

७

अधि ब्राह्मण भारि पण्डित् सुदामाजि थिए,
 दुःख थिए तै पनि ति कुन बेपारमा गए ।
 निति शास्त्र बिचार गरी ज्ञानका भरमा रहे,
 दुःख सुख कर्म चिनी धर्म थांदा भए ॥

८

धन्य ऋषि सुदामाजी धर्म छोडेनौं,
 आफ्नु धर्म न छोडनाले दुःख पाएनौं,
 नृग राजा धनि थिए माहा दानी भए,
 तैपनि ती सरा सरी खोइ स्वर्ग गए ॥

९

मनको भ्रमण् नष्टनाले शन श्वेपारो भए,
 त्यो अधिका भक्त काम्ले पिछे स्वर्ग गए ।
 गौरी शंकर व्यर्थ बेच्यौ विचार नगरी,
 सारै गोशा हुनु भयो शंकर श्री हरी ॥

१०

महाँराजका जागिरदारलाई कुछ दोष दिवें,
 जस्तो मनमा उब्जा भयो सोहि बतावें ॥
 यसै बात्का पिरोलाले धेरै प्राणि रोउला,
 अनाथहरू विन्ति गछन् जान्ने कसो होउला ॥

११

धर्म सम्झी विचार गरी इन्साफ् गरेन,
 पैसा भए वरेहा लाई दण्ड परेन ॥
 कुल् ता हाम्रो ब्राह्मण हो छैनौं कुलैमा,
 जातता सत्य छैन हाम्रो राख चुलैमा ॥

१२

यसै बातको अर्थ न लाई धर्ता पावैनौ
 पैसा धेरै पायो भने बेर ता लावैनौ ।
 धर्म थाम्ने निसाफिले यति चाल पाउन्,
 कुन कुन जातले जुन जुन ल्याउछ जात्मा मिलाउन् ॥

१३

बिग्रनेलाई मासि दिनु चोरलाई दिनु काटी,
 धर्म संझी निसाफ् गर्नु यौटा न ढाँटी ।
 सारथि उत्रने छुन धर्म जाग्नेछ,
 राजा मन्त्रि भारदारलाई ठक्कर लाग्नेछ ॥

१४

होइन मैले बोले को ता योग् छ चलेको,
बिचार गर्ने सज्जनलाई तत्व खोलेको ।
हरिजिले आँटेको काम् नभई छोड्दइन,
जान्न त म जान्ने होइन फेर ता परोईन ॥

१५

धन्य हरी कृपालु को दया भएछ,
सूर्यबाट दुर्पिन हेर्दा वेला गएछ ।
रिस् र सेखि सत्य मैले होइन गरेको,
जगत् भरको दुःख मैले देख्छु भरेको ॥

१६

छाड् बाबु पाजि काम् यो बियाज् बढाउँने,
भगवान्मा लयो लावो बिनित् चढाउँने ॥
अमृतसरि वाणि चले योग्मा भए जती,
धेर दौलथ् छाड्नु पर्दा होउला के गती ॥

१७

गर्दा गर्दै लाँदाँ माहाँ हुँदै जाँदामा,
कुन् कुन् बिरता पर्नेछन् लौ पाएका फाँदामा ।
भन्नु होला यस्तो भाषा कस्ले गुनेछन्,
भगवान्का भक्तजनले यस्तो सुनेछन् ॥

१८

स्वपनामा देख्न लाग्ये सागर मथेको,
भगवान्का शक्ति बिना होइन कथेको ।
भन्नु होला यस्तो भाषा कस्ले गुनेछ,
हेर्नु होला कुछ दिनमा कस्तो हुनेछ ॥

१९

स्वपनामा देखिएथ्यो भष्म पार्ने चाला,
महाँदेवले लिनु भयो बिजुलिको भाला ।
बिजुलि र बज्रसंगै असिना भई झर्ला,
त्यसै बेला जगत भरमा को कोहोलो पर्ला ॥

२०

हावा चला बृक्ष ढला पानि बगाउँन,
सृष्टि सफा गर्नु हुन्छ धर्म जगाउँन ।
भन्नु होला यो बात त्यस्ताई कस्ले बतायो,
तपसका प्रभावले शक्ति यो आयो ॥

२१

आज मलाई भन्नु भयो धर्म हरेको,
त्यसै बेला सब थोक्को संयोग् परेको ।
धर्म छाड्नु क्या हो भने आफ्नु नियाँ छाडी,
ब्राह्मण् हरू बन्न लागे शुद्र जात्का जोडी ॥

२२

ब्राह्मण् भई सर्व चिज्को बिक्रि गरेको,
मालिक् भई दुःखिहरूको वृत्ति हरेको ।
अहिले गछौं भलाद्मिहो आफ्ना खुशइले,
भित्र जरा हालि सक्यो लोभि घुसइले ॥

२३

अन्त्य काल्मा त्यो घुसले फटाउला धाँदा,
बडो कष्ट मिलि जाला त्यो घुस् निस्की जाँदा,
अहिले मात्र पचेको छ भरे पच्ने छैन,
सम्झि राख सत्य बचन् झुटो हुने छैन ॥

२४

जत्ति कमाउ सम्पत्ती प्यारि घरैमा,
 दौल थिया पर्ने भये ज्यम डरैमा ।
 घुमाई घुमाई दुष्टहरू दुःख दिने छन्,
 राक्षस् जस्ता दैत्यहरू इज्जत लिने छन् ॥

२५

थितिदेखि बिधि तिता भएकै छ अइले,
 त्यहि थिति बिप्रनाले बिनित गरेँ मैले ।
 आसामिले पहिले कर्जा तिरि सकेछ,
 साहु भन्ने लोभिले ता बाँकि भनेछ ॥

२५

दौल थिया हुनु भयो त्यहि निर्धा बाटै,
 आसामिले कर्जा तिन्चो तमसुकछ ठाडै ।
 छोरो थियो बालख बाबु मरेछ,
 लोभि साहु माग्न गयो तिर्नु परेछ ॥

२७

हेर्न केटा तमसुकमा येति बडेको,
 अन्तरयामि प्रभु देख्छन् धर्म छाडेको ।
 लोभर अन्यायका अक्षर लेखेको,
 आफु सत्य भगवान्ले रछ देखेको ॥

२८

होइन मैले बोलेको ता योग् छ चलेको,
 बिचार गर्ने ज्ञानिलाई आत्मा खोलेको ॥

२९

श्लोक वद्ध

जन्म नर अन्न पक्षीसा लायो,
 साना ठुला पाथिहरू चलायो ।
 लिनू ठुला दिनु पर्दा त्यो सानू,
 अधम् त्यो हो कुम्भिकाक् बाश जानू ॥

३०

त्यस्को फल् ता आज के भन्नु मैले,
 सम्पूर्ण कष्ट भनी सक्छु कैले ।
 कही सक्नु छैन बडो कष्ट पाउँला,
 सदा यम दण्ड पिई दिन् बिताउला ॥

३१

फेरि जन्म हुन्छ बडा दूःखि कुल्मा,
 हिजै नष्ट भईगो लिंदा दीदा धर्म ।
 एक बाको योनि कदापि यो होइन,
 बिना दैव ईच्छा जनम् ठने छैन ॥

३२

धर्म नष्ट पारी फेरि काहाँ जानू,
 जन्म हुन्छ याहिँ भिक्षा माँगि खानु ।
 शरिर हुन्छ रोगी नराम्रो छ हेदैँ,
 सबै प्राणि हेर्ला न बडा नेत्र तदैँ ।

३३

बताउँछु ज्ञान् म सबै चित्त लाउ,
जन्म हुन्छ याँही धर्म खूब मगाउ ।
जगत्मा म भ्रष्ट एकै नाम लिन्छु,
चलन्को यो धर्म म सम्झाई दिन्छु ॥

३४

माछ्छन् कि भन्ने डर छैन केही,
आखिर काल गतिको छ भिरेको देही ।
प्रभूका कृपाले गरि जन्म हुन्छ,
निहुँ काल् गतिले गरि जानु पर्छ ॥

३५

गई तिर्थ बस्ने र ज्ञानीहरूले,
एक सत् पुकारुन् भने होत मैले ।
बहुत् बित्ति लाउन् सत शब्द गाउँन्,
प्रभू छन् कृपालू धर्म खूब मगाउन् ॥

३६

नहीं धर्म लोकमा डुबेको छ शोकमा,
छोडी धर्म दिँदा परे दुःख भोगमा ।
प्रभू सत् कृपालू त खाँनि दयाका,
म ता देख्ने लाग्येँ प्रत्यक्षई भएका ॥

३७

केही दोष दिन्छु सुनि लेउ अँले,
झुटो ता यो होइन देउ माफ् सबैले ।
सरकारका इ अड्डा अदालत् रहेका,
लोकको निजा हेर्न राखि दिएका ॥

३८

लोभ्ले गर्दा धर्मको नष्ट पारी,
नियो त्यसको थियो लियो घुस् हकारी ।
दोहोरा त्यो दण्ड त्यसैमा लगायो,
थियो जित्ने मुद्दा त्यो मुद्दा हरायो ॥

३९

यसै लोभ्ले गर्दा अन्याय परेको,
मालिकहरूले आशा राखे नौ भरेको ।
प्रभु देख्न लाग्ये त्यो निर्धो मरेको,
मालिकहरू हो यो के काम गरेको ॥

४०

बाबा बिन्ति भन्छ ममा दोष नराखी,
निच्चा छाडि दिए घुसैमा तयारी ।
कलियुगका मालिक् घुसैमा छन् राजी,
कलियुगको बुद्धी कति कच्चा पाजी ॥

४१

दोस्रो भाषा

योगि जन्को चलन् केहि बिस्तार गर्दछ,
उच्च निच्छ माफ दिनु शरण पर्दछ ।
योगि जन्ले आशन् बांधी बस्ला बनैमा,
आफ्ना मालिक् माहादेव जप्ला मनैमा ॥

४२

शिखर त्यो हो कैलाश जान्छु नगई छोड़ुदइन,
सबै योगि कैलाश जालान् भन्नु पर्दइन ।
बनका गौरि शङ्कर नभई योगि भएन,
मन्का गौरि शङ्करजिको यादै रहेन ॥

४३

बनका गौरि शङ्कर मागि भर्न लागे झोला,
मन्का गौरि शङ्करजिलाई खुम्काइसके होला ।
रूद्राक्ष ता योगि जनले एउटा लाए हुन्छ,
झौन बाबा झौन बाबा वर्षौनि त्यो भन्छ ॥

४४

योटा लाए पुगि जान्छु घेर के गर्नु,
दुनियाँकै स्वभाव् लिन्छु अप्ठारामा पर्नु ।
दुनियाँको चलन्दाना योगि के गर्दछु,
ज्ञानको बिचार नगरि त्यो त्यसै दगुर्दछु ॥

४५

योगि झोला बन्न लागो भित्रि पत्रै पत्र,
त्यो सम्पत्ति लुकाउँन बन्नु किन नत्र ।
योगि जनको चलन यस्तो धर्म काहाँ जाग्नू,
ईश्वरमा सत्य सुरथ् कुन दिन तिनको लाग्नू ॥

४६

माया त्याग्न सजिलो छ लोभ् छ त्याग्न कोटी,
लोभि चित्त भयो भने कर्म हुन्छ खोटी ।
कशि जस्तो माया रछ रङ्ग जस्तो लोभ् छ,
जाहाँ माया बस्न गयो त्यहिं लोभ्ले छोप्यु ॥

४७

अरकाको चिज् हो भनी बिचार गरोइन,
लोभि चित्त भयो भने धर्म हेरोइन ।
यस्तो स्वभाव् बस्यो भने दुःख पाउँनेछ,
संसार तरी जादैन त्यो याहि आउँनेछ ॥

४८

बाबु त्यस्को मरि गयो काहाँ गएछ,
कुल्को माया नमनाले छोरो भएछ ।
आमा त्यस्कि मरिजन दोस्त्रा कुल्मा सरिछ,
दोस्त्रा कुल्की कन्या भई जन्म लिईछ ॥

४९

माया जिले संयोग् पारि फेरि घुमाई फर्काई,
त्यो अधिकी नातिजिकि प्यारि हुन आई ।
यतै हुँदो घुम्द छन्ति वाहि खेल्दा रछन्,
मुक्ति पदको रस्ता छोपि यतै ठेल्दा रछन् ॥

५०

मुक्ति हुने युक्ति हेर छैन कसैमा,
आफ्नि प्यारि मायाजिका परे बशैमा ।
घरकि माया त्याग्यौ भने अकि हुने छन्,
चारै पट्टि तिनै माया फकि दिने छन् ॥

५१

तिनि माया हसाउँछिन् प्रिति बढाउँछिन्,
शेखि गने सिद्ध जन्को जन्म भसाउँछिन् ।
हे दैव कृपालु माया तिघ्री सिपालू,
मायाजिको चरित्र म कत्ति निकालू ॥

५२

मृतक् हुने दिक्को दुःख कहन्छु म थोडा,
लेखेको छ ग्रन्थ हरूमा बिचार गर्नु होला ।
सबै बात कहन्न म झुट्टो हुने छैन,
सबै दुःख कहूँ भने सुनि सक्नु छैन ॥

५३

मृतकस्यलाई फिनेहरू भन्छन् आज मर्न्यो,
कर्म अनुसार त्यसलाई बढो दुःख पर्न्यो ।
चार पाउ कसि कसि डल्लो गराउँछ,
बन्धुवर्ग सुनुन् भनि उग्र कराउँछ ॥

५४

काँढावाला लट्टि लिई लागि हाले हाम्न,
नांगो छ त्यो बस्त्र छैन दुत्ले लागे ताम्न ।
कुटि कुटि चूर्ण भैगो निक्लदैँन श्वास,
छोरो चाँहि भन्छ बाहाँ गछुँ क्षत्रो पास ॥

५५

कुटि कुटि निलो पारि दुत्ले घिच्याउँछ,
नाताहरू सुनुन् भनि उग्र चिच्याउँछ ।
फर्सा भालाहातमा लिई च्वास्स च्वास्स घोच्चन,
त्यो शरिरको खुन झिकी कुंभि पाक्मा थप्न ॥

५६

पापिहरूको खुन झिकि कुण्ड भरेको,
कुहेको छ गन्ध चलने किरा परेको ॥
यमराजका दुतहरू जम्मा भइ जान्छन्,
कुंभि पाक्मा थप्न भनि तेस्लाई लैजान्छन् ॥

५७

बहँदो छ शरिर भरी धारा रगतको,
दुत्ले भन्छ कमाई तेरो यै हो जगत्को ।
डरलाग्दा छन् दुतहरू सातो हरिदिन्छन्,
बिच्छिलाई डस्तु भनी हुकुम् गरि दिन्छन् ॥

५८

कालो साँप्ले डस्ता डरतै तालु फोरि दियो,
यमराज आई फेरी तालु जोडि दियो ।
दण्ड लिन दियो देह मर्न नपाउँने,
यमराज निठुरि छन् दया नआउँने ॥

५९

ल्याउ यसको खाता हेरौं कस्तो रछ काम,
कुन् दिन् भज्यो यस् चोरले खोई हरी नाम ।
हेरि सक्थौ बहि पत्र छैन हरी नाम,
जन्मे देखी आज सम्म लोभि तेरो काम ॥

६०

कति थियो धन तेरो साँचिस् कुन् दिनलाई,
कति थिए सन्तान् तेरा छोरा नाति भाइ ।
कसले लिन्छ शरण् तेरो अहिले याहाँ आई,
यसो भन्दै दुतहरू थुकछन् त्यसलाई ॥

६१

तेरो बुद्धि बिप्रियो (त) दोष नदे कसैलाई,
छैन तेरो कल्याण् गर्ने अहिले याहाँ आई ।
हेर्दा माता जाति छ त्यो केहि गर्देन,
भिन्न भने चोर बुद्धिको संगत् छोड्दैने ॥

६२

त्यसका निति लाइदियौ पुराण् स्वर्ग तर्देन,
निर्धो होला यजमान् र धेर दान् गरोईन ।
लोभि होला पुरोहित् र चित्त परोइन,
यस्तो डक्याङ्क. पर्ला जसूका पितृ तरोईनन् ॥

६३

पुरोहित ले सन्तोषि भई दक्षिणा हो लिनू,
यजमानका पितृ तने आशिर्वाद दिनू ।
शान्त स्वाभाव् लिनसके धर्म पलाउला,
आम्ना ज्ञाति बंशादिमा बासन् चलाउला ॥

६४

पण्डितले चाल् पाउँनु गडुर लाउँनु,
धेर कर्ममा नभुलनु प्रेतमा नहुलनु ।
यो बात सुन्दा पण्डितको चित्त दुखनेछ,
भक्तजिका दृष्टि पर्दा नर्क सुक्नेछ ॥

६५

श्री शिवलाई बासन् चलने ज्ञानको धुप होल,
चोर बुद्धिलाई पयटलाई बाहिर निकाल ।
ईश्वर बस्ने हृदयमा चोर बुद्धिको भाला,
दुःख पाउँने जिव्को गति सम्झि लोभि चाला ॥

६६

चटक जस्ता संसारमा स्वप्ना जस्तो खेल्छ,
प्राणिहरूका हृदयमा तृष्णाको भेल छ ।
सम्पातिको त्यो तृष्णा कुछ घटाउ,
भगवानका भजन् पट्टी चित्त लगाउ ॥

६७

बेला बखत् भने सब्को आयो होला बित्तै,
सम्पति ता याहि बस्थ जानु पछै रित्तै ।
सबै चिज पगलने हो सबै याहि बिल्ल,
ठुला भाग्य सत्सङ्गतले आनन्दि पद, मिल्ल ॥

६८

भगवान्को भजन् गरे बुद्धि पाइन्छ,
ठुलो भाग्य सत्सङ्गतले उत्रि जाइन्छ ।
कल्प वृक्ष बिरूवालाई जंगलले ढाक्यो,
यो हो भनि नचिन्दामा पत्कर हुन आँट्यो ॥

६९

कल्प वृक्ष बिरूवा आत्मा माहाँ छन्,
जंगल सबू नाश गर्दा तब देखिन्छन् ।
कल्प वृक्ष बिरूवा चिन्नु यसो गरी,
एक वटा पत्ता होला सम्झ बेस गरी ॥

७०

गिता पढ्दा ज्ञान ता हुने तत्व नबुझिने,
अगम् चिज्को मालुम् नभई मुक्ति नमिलने ।
गुण ता दिने अन्तरयामि दर्शन् दिने बिष्नु,
शिवजिका नामबाट छ उक्लने लिख्नु ॥

७१

गुण् दिने ता अन्तरयामि दर्शन् दिने शीब,
यी आत्माका गुफा भित्र बसेको छ जीव ।
फुलको थुँगो रुजि रहन्छ बासन, रुज्दैन,
अगम् तत्व खोलि सकै लोक, ता बुझ्दैन ॥

७२

बासनका महिमाले मसला ता किन्छन्,
 भक्तहरूको स्वभाव् पनी भगवानले चिन्छन् ।
 भगवानको नाम् मध्ये विष्णुको नाम् जबर,
 लेखि सकें बिनित् पत्र छाडें तार खबर ॥

७३

आयो मेरो तार खबर मन्त्रिहरू धरि देऊ,
 आफू सत्य महादेवले यसको निसाफ् गरि देऊ,
 गिद्को जस्तो भाषा आयो सवाल सुनाई देऊ ।
 के के भन्छन् कुन् कुन् जन्ले त्यो बात् यहीं लेऊ,

७४

अधि पनि राम्चन्द्रले यसै भनेथे,
 धोबिदेखि दुष्ट बचन् त्यो ता सुनेथे ।
 धर्म स्थापन् गर्न भनी औतार लिएथे
 लङ्का पति रावणलाई मारि दिएथे ॥

७५

अहिले पनि भुभार्हने चाला लिनू भो,
 हो कि होइन् शङ्कर जानुन् संक्षेप् दिनु भो ।
 बैकुण्ठमा जाने ईच्छा लिएँ मनैमा,
 आफ्नि सिता लक्ष्मिलाई त्यागे बनैमा ॥

७६

राम्चन्द्रका हुकुमले बनमा जाँनु भो,
 निचा पुगि लक्ष्मिजि ता स्वर्ग जानू भो ।
 अहिले पनि भुभार्हने चाला लिनू भो,
 हो कि होइन् शङ्कर जानुन् संक्षेप् दिनु भो ॥

७७

काला बख पोल्दै हिङ्ने बिचार गर को हो,
अघि बिर धनुर्धारी गाँण्डिब लिने जो हो ।
जान्न त म जान्ने होइन यत्ति भने अहिले,
युधिष्ठिरका वंश होलान् भन्ने ठान्छु मैले ॥

७८

कालो बख सत्य भन्छु सब्ले मालुम् पाउँनु,
गायतृको जप गनेले कहिले नलाउनु ।
गायतृ ता लक्ष्मिजि हुन् श्वेत भूषण लिनछिन् ।
कालो बख कालो गाजल् तिनले त्यागि दिन्छिन् ॥

७९

होइन मैले बोलेको ता योग् छ चलेको,
बैराग् लिनं जन्हरूमा तत्व खोलेको ॥

८०

श्लोक

अघि बिष्णुजीले गायतृ दिनु भो,
ब्राह्मण् नष्ट हुँदा उ आफै लिनु भो ।
गायतृको जप यो साँचो छैन याहाँ,
गायतृ पढ्छिन् बिष्णुका समिपमा ॥

८१

बिप्रादिलाई जपता लोभको दिनु भो,
गायतृ माता प्रभुले लिनु भो ।
रूद्राक्ष देखिछ इबि उठेको,
प्रत्यक्ष धर्म शिवले लुटेको ॥

८२

चार युग मध्ये कलि युग् अध्यारो,
कलिका पदार्थ करेलो पधेरो ।
यिन तीन युग्ले अमल्लिए मिठो,
कलियुगको अम्मल् कांचो पातको तितो ॥

८३

यिनै तीन युगले कलिलाई ढांटे,
कलि युगको बख छ कालो र पाठे ।
यिनै तीन युग्ले बांधे यस्तो रोहा,
कलिको गहना रंगिएको लाहा ॥

८४

शरिर छन् कलिमा कुप्रा निर्धा टेढा,
धर्मः युग्मा होलान् यिनै बेस्ख रूप्का ।
कलि युग्मा शाख श्री कृष्ण चरित्र.
धर्म युग्मा शाख माहाँ ज्ञान पवित्र ॥

८५

कलि युगको स्वभाबिब चार गछुं यस्तो,
धर्म युगको स्वभाव् फटिक् झल्के जस्तो ।
धर्म युगको स्वभाव् कहन्छु म थोडै,
नारी जन्ले विश्वास मानुन् है अघोरै ॥

८६

सुन्दर सपेटका पहिरेर सारी,
हात्मा लिएका अति श्वेत झारी ।
मधुर बचन्ले गरि बोलि दिने,
ज्ञानको स्वभाव् नारिहरूले लिने ॥

८७

हि हि गर्ने हाँसो रहदैन जान्छ,
एक बार मुसुक्क हाँसो यां रहन्छ ।
रहदैन स्वभाव अघोरी अबोला,
मधुर बचनको स्वभाव फिर्ने होला ॥

८८

लक्ष्मिको स्वभाव छ धर्ममा रहेको,
सारा लोक सुनन् यो अधमले कहेको ।
प्रभु अन्तरयामि आफू जानु होला,
जातकी म छु छी स्वभावकी अबोला ॥

८९

को हो लायो लोकमा म जस्ती अभागी,
तबि बिनित गर्छु (म) दयाका लागी ।
हितै भन्छु मैले हितै जानि लेऊ,
भक्ति अधम हूँ शुभाशिष देऊ ॥

९०

यो प्राण त्याग्नलाई खि जाती छु आँटी,
साँच्चो बिनित गर्छु रति भर नढाँटी ॥

९१

दोस्रो भाषा

सूर्यजिका वरिपरि सावा रहन्छन्,
लोकमा साक्षि सूर्यजि छन् साँच्चो कहन्छन् ।
कसुर हेरि दण्ड दिन्छन् बेसि दिदैनन्,
सूर्य जिता साँच्चो बोल्छन् घुस ता लिदैनन् ॥

९२

लोक भन्छ ज्वालामुखि बिक्रि गरें धेर,
बिष्णु ठाकुर घुम्नु हुन्छ गोशा भई हेर ।
धेरै दिन भो सम्झाउँदैछु लोक टेदैँन,
ज्वाला आफै प्रकट हुन केहि बेर छैन ॥

९३

ज्वाला उत्रि अग्नि रूप्ले जगत जलाउलान्,
ज्वाला उत्रि जल्यो भनि कस्ले मालुम पाउलान् ।
धेर दिन भो सम्झाउँदैछु पत्यार मानेनन्,
हित्का बचन् दिव्ने मैले लिन जानेनन् ॥

९४

भगवान्को शक्ति मैले अन्सार कहेको,
कसो गरि हेर्नु मैले भस्म भएको ।
सांरथि सांरथि हो हो मेरो नाम्,
ज्ञान्का गर्भ भित्र म छु बुझ मेरो काम् ॥

९५

ज्ञान्का गर्भ भित्र म छु खाँनु पर्दैँन,
यो ज्ञान्वाट उत्रे पछि नखाई हुँदैँन ।
यस्ता चौराश लाखौं खटाउ खाँदा अघाईदैँन,
नखाई र नअघाई राजि हुइदैँन ॥

९६

सांरथि सांरथि हां हो मेरो नाम्,
ज्ञान्का गर्भ भित्र म छु सम्झ मेरो काम् ।
ज्ञान्का गर्भ भित्र म छु बोस्नु पर्दैँन,
यो ज्ञान्वाट उत्रे पछि नबोलि हुँदैँन ॥

९७

एकै शब्द बोल्न नपाई जगत रहदैन,
 सारथि सारथि यो हो मेरो नाम् ।
 ज्ञान्का गर्भ भित्र म छु बुझ मेरो काम्,
 ज्ञान्का गर्भ भित्र म छु खेल्लु पर्दैन ॥

९८

यो ज्ञान्वाट उत्रे पछि यो खेल थामिदैन,
 गुडु गुडु खेल्लु पर्ने जगत पक्का छैन ।
 होइन मैले बोलेको ता योग छ चलेको,
 इच्छा गर्ने संगत संग शब्द खोलेको ॥

९९

यो संसारको रित जो छ विन्ति चढाउँला,
 ब्रह्मा विष्णु महेश्वरको आसन् डगाउँला ।
 सत्य शिव माहादेवको ध्यान म धरूँला,
 विष्णु ठाकुरन झिकाइ के को छोडूला ॥

१००

अन्तर्यामि ईश्वर सित यैत पडुदैछु,
 दुष्ट बुद्धि झुट्टो कर्म त्याग् म गर्दैछु ॥
 अन्तर्यामि ईश्वर सित यैत पढूँला,
 शक्ति चल्ने विद्या न पि के को छोडूला ॥

१०१

अन्तर्यामि अबिनासि मालिक् भित्रै छुन्,
 ब्रह्मा विष्णु महेश्वर ता कर्म दिने हुन् ॥
 शक्ति शालि अबिनासि मालिक् दोश्रा छुन्,
 अबिनासि को हुन् भने कर्म मेट्ने हुन् ॥

१०२

अन्तर्यामि अविनासी देख्छु यसोरी,
ब्रह्म ज्योति मस्तक भरी मर्थ कसोरी ।
यो शरिरमा रहू यिन बिहोस मा होइन,
शुद्धो रति कहुइन बिचेतमा छुईन ॥

१०३

ईश्वर उत्रेस्वर शब्दमा शक्ति नलोई,
हत पत गमता पाउने छैनौ सेवा न दीई ।
सेवा टहल् सन्सारमा जसले जानि गर्ला,
अन्त्य कालमा सम्झनाले सन्सार त्यो तर्ला ॥

१०४

सबै रस्ता खुल्ने रछन् रोक्का परोईन,
भ्रामि सबै उड्ने छन् दोष केहि रहोईन ।
रुद्र कण्ठ एक मुखि ले अर्जि गरेछन्,
अर्जि सुन्दा भगवान्को आसन् डगेछन् ॥

१०५

ब्रह्मा विष्णु शिव तिनै जम्मा भएछन्,
त्यै दिन्देखि लोकमा खबर गर्दा रहेछन् ।
देवाहरू बिनित्ति गर्छन् भुभार घेर भयो,
उत्रि देउ विष्णु ठाकुर लोकमा बेर भयो ॥

१०६

कोहि प्राणिले मखान् बेचे कपट मिलाए,
कोहि प्राणि मखान् किने त्यो धूप चलाए ।
धूपको वासन् छैन एउटा कपट गनाए,
लोक भो शुद्धो देवाहरू बिनित्ति चढाए ॥

१०७

ब्राह्मणले सत्य धर्म सब छाडि दिए,
जगतमा भ्रष्ट कर्म सब गर्दा भए ।
त्राहि त्राहि पन्थो प्रभू झुट्टा कर्मैले,
सारा लोकमा छाड्यो प्रभू साँचा धर्मैले ॥

१०८

यसो भन्दै देवताहरू जोडले कराए,
बिष्णु ठाकुर गुस्ता भई सबलाई अराए ।
योगि जनले दृढ गरी शङ्कर पुकारून
माझ मिहान् पर्न लाग्यो सत्य उतारून ॥

१०९

सत्य जपि ध्यान गरि देउ चार वेदका सोजि,
आफु आत्मा गर्नु हुन्छ ब्रह्म ज्ञानको खोजि ।
सत्य जपि ध्यान गरि देउ बिष्णुजिका सोजि,
आफु आत्मा गर्नु हुन्छ माहाँ ज्ञानको खोजि ॥

११०

सत्य जपि ध्यान गरि देउ शिवजिका सोजि,
आफु आत्मा गर्नु हुन्छ शक्ति ज्ञानको खोजि ।
सत्य जपि ध्यान गरि देउ हिमालयका सोजि,
आफु आत्मा गर्नु हुन्छ तपि ज्ञानको खोजि ॥

१११

सत्य जपि ध्यान गरि देउ सूर्यजिका सोजि,
आफु आत्मा गर्नु हुन्छ प्रताप ज्ञानको खोजि ।
सत्य जपि ध्यान गरि देउ चन्द्रमाका सोजि,
आफु आत्मा गर्नु हुन्छ अँविज्ञानको खोजि ॥

११२

सत्य जपि ध्यान गरि देउ समुद्रका सोजि,
आफु आत्मा गर्नु हुन्छ सागर ज्ञानको खोजि ।
शक्तिदेखि कृपा हुँदा मैले पाएको,
आफ्ना भक्त दुःखमा पर्दा सुचन दिएको ॥

११३

सम्पूर्णको मै हूँ एउटा बोल्ता बसेको,
गुरुजिको मजि हुँदा छु सवमा पसेको ।
फौज मेरा धेर छन् जम्मा बिचमा रहन्छु,
एकै छिन्मा हराउछु एकला म हुन्छु ॥

११४

ब्रह्मा बिष्णु महेश्वर ता एक स्वरूप हुन्,
म मात्र ता हुइन भन्ने मालिक दोश्रा छन् ।
बिष्णु गुप्त भाको अहिले चौकोट्टि साल भएछ,
ब्राह्मणको साँच्चो धर्म तब उडि गएछ ॥

११५

भगवानले साँच्चा भक्त राखे हुनर काहि;
बिष्णुस्वरले उत्रने छन् आफ्ना भक्त माहि ।
लोकले भन्ला बिष्णुस्वरलाई कुन प्रमाणले जानू,
आफनु विश्वास बस्छ जाहाँ बिष्णु उनै मानू ॥

११६

उनै बिष्णु पुकार्दा ऋ दुःख टर्नेछ,
धिरे धिरे भक्तदेखि धर्म सनेछ ।
सानु कम्मर कलिलो बर्ण सिधा उभीए,
सारा चौरास् काँधमा राखि अल्लिएका थीए ॥

११७

सामु विन्ति तिनका गर्दै कांधमा चढ्दै थीए
छैन जगत भवन भो फगत तमासा हेदै थीए ।
क्या हो कोनि देख्छु यस्तो भने कसो होला,
सिद्ध मुनि ज्ञान वान्ले सुने सेखि गर्ला ॥

११८

गौका धनि गुवालालाई दया हुँदैने,
गउ राम् छिन् गुवालिमा झट्ट फुकाउदैने ।
चरन् सम्झि जङ्गल् छैन रुन्छिन् धुरु धुरु,
शिवजिमा विन्ति गर्न जान्छिन् खुरु खुरु ।

११९

गाई जांदा गोरू पनि सँग गएछ
गोरू जांदा दुनियांमा दुःख भएछ ।
दुःख पर्दा गाई सबै कैलाश गएछन्,
दुःख देखि देवताले दया गरेछन् ।

१२०

देवताहरू विन्ति गर्छन् गोरू फिराउन,
मजि भयो गाई साथ गोरू फिराउन ।
छाड् देउ सवाल् पुगोस् नेपाल् सबले मालुम् पाउन,
माहाराज्मा मालुम् हवस् मन्त्रिहरू जानुन् ॥

१२१

पत्यार परे आफ्ना राज्मा धर्म चलाउलान्,
धर्मि राजा भन्ने लोकमा नाउ कमाउलान् ।
पृथ्वि मनि रछ ठुलो तलाउ जमेको,
त्यहि तलाउले रछ जम्मै चौरास थामेको ॥

१२२

धर्म सम्झि सत्य मान सेखि नगरी,
 नहिँ चौरास् दुबाई देलान् सङ्कर श्री हरी ।
 तलाउ मनि दोस्रो किसिम् बन्दो भएछ,
 त्यहि भित्र पाताल् पुरि शहर रहेछ ॥

१२३

उज्यालो छ सुन्दर सबै शहर देखीदा,
 प्राणिहरू ससाना छन् देह छ रीता ।
 मधुरै छ शब्द सबको बाणि ललीता,
 क्रोध सेखि छैन रत्ती छैन ममता ॥

१२४

सारा मैले राम्रा देखेँ छि पुरुष नारि,
 जय शब्द गर्दा रछन् बलि राजा भारि ।
 कुछ घडि त्यहि बसि नेत्र धुमाएँ,
 सिद्ध रूपि तपस्विको दर्शन त्यहि पाएँ ॥

१२५

नमस्कार त दुबै जनको बराबरी भएछ
 मेरा मनमा शिद्धलाई सोध्ने लहङ्गो ।
 कति सम्म बस्नु हुन्छ पाताल् पुरीमा,
 याहाँदेखि उठि गुरु पाल्नु हुन्छ काहाँ ॥

१२६

शिद्ध रूपि तपस्वि हुन् साञ्चै बताए,
 भगवान्कि भक्ति भनि तिनले मालुम् पाए ।
 बिष्णुजिको मर्जि हुँदा बसेकोछु याहि,
 बिष्णु लोकमा प्रकट हुँदा उत्रि जान्छु बाहि ॥

१२७

शिद्ध रूपि तपस्वि हुन् धेरै नबोल्ने,
जाहि ताहि प्राणिसित तत्व नखोल्ने ।
शिद्ध रूपि तपस्विको मन्को ईच्छा पाएँ,
जाहाँ सम्म ईच्छा पाए खबर बताएँ ॥

१२८

साना खात्का माकुराले धागो छाडि दियो,
त्यो धागामा सारा चौरास् झुण्डिएको थियो ।
क्या हो कोनि देख्छु यस्तो शङ्का गरौला,
विचार गरि चिन्यौ भने सन्सार तरौला ॥

१२९

श्लोक

इता छन् यिनैमा लहै दिन् दिनैमा,
यिनैको नमस्कार छ है छिन् छिनैमा ।
यि ता छन् यिनैमा यिनैमा उनिन्छु,
यिनैका कृपाले म यिनै बनिन्छु ॥

१३०

यिनैलाई भन्छु यिनैलाई जप्छु,
यिनै दिन्छिन् युक्ती र पो थुन्न सक्छु ।
यो माया छाडी जउन् पस्ला झाडी,
मिले पूर्ण ब्रह्मा उता जान्छ पारी ॥

१३१

कस्तै बिकट् होस् असल् हो इ जान्छ,
 एकै छिन्मा हाजिर ब्रह्म लोकमा रहन्छ ।
 निराकार भन्नु रति छैन काहीं,
 देखिन्छ झल् झल् सब लोक वाहीं ॥

१३२

अगला अटोली सहर झल्किएका,
 धेरै छन् तलाउ अनेक् टल्किएका ।
 छन् बृक्ष उज्ज्वल् छ छायाँ तलाउमा,
 अत्यन्त सुन्दर बयान् के लगाउमः ॥

१३३

बृक्षः उपर पक्षि गाना गरेका,
 बुझियो अगमूतत्व सुन्दा खोलेका ।
 त्यहि एक छ उच्चा फटिकले चिटेको,
 दश लाख योजन् छ त्यो अल्लिएको ॥

१३४

पर ब्रह्म प्राप्त हुकुम् शिघ्र पाई,
 उतै ब्रह्म बेग्ले लिने झट् उद्दाई/छा
 त्यसै उच्चा माहाँ चडि हेर्दा ताहाँ,
 देखिन्छ लोक् सर्व नजीक माहाँ ॥

१३५

उनै ब्रह्म बेग्ले खिचेर ल्याउछन्,
 सम्पूर्ण लोक ता नजिकमा देखाउछन् ।
 कोहि नजाने छ उ ब्रह्म लोक् माहाँ,
 सबै जन भुलेछौ यहि शोग भोगमा ॥

१३६

त्यो ब्रह्म लोक् ता अगम् हो अपार,
मेरो नमस्कार पुगोस् बार बार ।
मनुष्यहरू हो सबै के भएका,
गति आफ्नु आफै नचिनि रहेका ॥

१३७

सबै डुलि डुली कति सुख खाँज्छौ,
निसिन् ता सगै छ के को भाग्य रोज्छौ ।
ज्वाला र मुग्दार भए अमोल्का,
के हुन्छ कोनि र म देख्छु उल्का ॥

१३८

इ दाना बेचन् त दुगुर्छ काशी,
हरे काशि साक्षि भरे पर्छ फासी ।
एक मुखि रूद्राक्ष उडि गए छन्,
शङ्कर माहाँ केहि अरज गरे छन् ।

१३९

अरज कठोरको छ काहाँ खपौला,
रूद्राक्ष बेचने त काहाँ बचौला ।
यो बिनित्त गर्छु म दयका लागी,
रूद्राक्ष बेचनेछौ सारै अभागी ॥

१४०

धमैको ढोका बिचमा छ सानू,
ढोका नछिरेर हुँदैन जानू ।
भक्ति सुकेका सहजैमा छिरे,
ठुला शरिरका अहङ्कारि फिरे ॥

१४१

भक्ति मलिन्द्रा सहज्मा ति फड़के,
 क्रोधि घमण्डि अभिमानि अड़के ।
 भक्ति अभक्ति कन छानि लिए,
 रूद्राक्ष बेचनेलाइ अति कष्ट दिए ॥

१४२

त्यसै बखतमा म सुरथ् पुगेछु,
 बम् बम् सदा शीव पुकार दिएँछु ।
 भूःलोककि प्राणि तिमि किन आयौ,
 कस्ले बतायो र यो थाहा पायौ ॥

१४३

ईच्छा के छ मन्मा सब ई बताऊ,
 मालिक् ता मबि हूँ अब ता नडराउ ।
 शङ्कर प्रभूको यति मजि पाबे,
 मैले पनी श्ट पाउ समाबे ॥

१४४

शङ्कर प्रभूले गरि दृष्टि दिनु,
 भूमै घसेको छ ललाट् माचिनु ।
 बालुवा माहाँ छ त्यो चिनि मिसेको,
 यही टिप्न मैले मिहिनत् गरेको ॥

१४५

बालुवा मिश्री त चिनि छुष्ट्याई,
 पाछुँ यसैको अब लौ मिठाई ।
 माथमा सदा शिव छन् यहि भोग लगाउला,
 यस्को यसैले यो पियास् मंटाउला ॥

१४६

यो कलिको मुख्य आसन सुवर्णहो सुन,
धिरे धिरे ज्ञानिहरूले लाउन छाड्ने छन ।
यो कलिको सुन हुनाले चोरि हुँदैछ,
लोक ता भन्छ दौलथ मेरो जोरि हुँदैन ॥

१४७

मृतक् हुने दिनमा पनि त्यहि सुन खुवाउछन्,
स्वर्ग जाने भए पनि येतै फिराउछन् ।
सम्पत्ति ता शत्रु मात्रै सन्ताप भिराउने,
देख्न लागे हरि नाम् यो मति फिराउने ।

१४८

धिरे धिरे यो कलिको स्वभाव टार्नेछन्,
माहा राजका पल्टन् सबै सपेत पार्ने छन् ।
जान्न त म जान्ने हुइन यति भने लौ,
अहिले हत्पत् गर्नु छैन पछि बुझ्ने छौ ॥

१४९

यो पैसाका चलन् भित्र लोभ पाप रहेछ,
खाने लाउने चिज वस्तु घट्ता भएछ ।
पहिला मालान् कम्पनलाई पिछे मालान् मोहोर,
मासि देलान् पैसा चलन् निकिल जाला फोहोर ॥

१५०

यो पैसाका चलन् भित्र लोभ पाप रहेको,
कोहि दिनमा हुने बात यो अन्सार कहेको ।
महा राज् छन् दवारिमा हेर्न आउदैनन्,
दुःखि जन्ले निवा निसाफ सिधा पाउदैनन् ॥

१५१

जागिरदार लोभि छन् नित्रा हेदैँनन्
 मर्नु पने शरिर हो बिचार गर्दैँनन् ।
 दुःखि जन हो हात जोडि सत्य पुकार,
 अर्को हात्रो सहायता छैन बिष्णु गुहार ॥

१५२

आफै बिष्णु लक्ष्मिले कल्याण गर्ने छन्,
 चैतन्य जिव खुलेकामा दर्शन दिने छन् ।
 होइन मैले बोलेको ता योग छ चलेको,
 थामि सक्नु नहुदामा शब्द खोलेको ॥

१५३

बिग्रनलाई बिग्रेकि छु भनि सक्छु काहाँ,
 तै पनि केहि बिन्ति गर्छु बिष्णु शरण माहाँ ।
 हरि शङ्कर माहादेवले शिक्षा दिनु भो,
 मेरो पनि चित्त बुझयो जात्ता लिनु भो ॥

१५४

मेरो जात्ता शङ्करजिमा शरण पर्न गो,
 तत्व खोलौ मजि छैन बुझ्न सक्ला को ।
 करतै ज्यात्रा तमास् गरुन् हेर्न म जाबैन,
 भगवान्को दया भए लोकमा म आवैन ॥

१५५

भगवान्को दया भए जन्म लिबैन,
 करतै दौलथ सुख भन्नु चित्त लाबैन ।
 छैन मेरो चित्त याहाँ लगे हरेर,
 आफु बिष्णु दर्शन दिन्छु बिच्मा झरेर ॥
 एकान्तमा बसेकै छु बिन्ति गरेर ॥

१५६

दोस्रो भाषा

गोरषा राज मै तपस गर्दछ,
सत्य शीव कै ध्यान् म धर्दछ ।
साँचा धर्मकै खोजि गर्दछ,
विष्णु ठाकुर कै पाउ पर्दछ ॥

१५७

मनका मालिकमा पेच् पो पछि की,
तम गुण् पाल्दा हुन् त्यो अघि सछि की ।
सेखि देखि त्र बहुत इर्दछ,
हरिका आइमा बात गर्दछ ॥

१५८

रिस्का पेचमा पर्नु पर्दैन,
यो देह मर्ला के शक्ति मर्दैन ।
सुनेर बुझ्नु हो भित्रु ज्ञानले,
मस्त छौ कि कोइ झुट्टा मानले ॥

१५९

बिन्ति गर्दछ सकार माझु होस्,
अब ता धर्मको स्थिति बाझु होस् ।
लोभि लुब्ध चाल् सकल टुट्नेछ,
उल्का लोकमा ज्यादा उठ्ने छ ॥

१६०

| | | | |
|-------|-----------|------|---------|
| लोभि | चालले | दुःख | पाउछ, |
| अबत | धर्मको | यूग | आउछ । |
| दुष्ट | बुद्धिकां | सेखि | गिनै छ, |
| अबत | धर्मको | यूग | फिनेछ ॥ |

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| | | | | | |
|------|--------|------|--------|--------|-------|
| सुनन | सत्य | नाथ् | बिन्ति | लीनु | होस्, |
| अबत | धर्मको | योग | दीनु | होस् । | |
| सकल | घट् | घटै | ज्ञान | छिट्नु | होस्, |
| अबत | धर्मको | ढोल | पिट्नु | होस् ॥ | |

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| | | | | | |
|--------|-------|-------|----------|------|-------|
| लोक | लोभि | भो | धर्म | छैन | गो, |
| तिमि | बिना | प्रभू | धर्म | साने | को । |
| शुद्धा | बातले | | अत्याचार | | भयो, |
| सकल | दुखि | छन् | भूभार | घेर | भयो ॥ |

१६३

| | | | | |
|--------|-------|--------|--------|---------------|
| सत्य | शक्ति | नाथ् | सकल | जान्दछौ, |
| तिमि | त | भक्तको | बिन्ति | मान्दछौ । |
| आफ्ना | लोकको | हाल | हेर्नु | होस् |
| बिन्ति | गछु | नाथ् | शृष्टि | फेर्नु होस् ॥ |

१६४

| | | | | |
|-------|----------|------|--------|----------|
| सकल | प्राणिले | धर्म | छाड् | दिए, |
| सत्य | फिर्दो | हो | क्रिपा | गर्दिए । |
| सत्य | छोड्दा | धर्म | गइ | गयो, |
| तिर्थ | व्रत | सब् | ब्यर्थ | भइ गयो ॥ |

१६५

सर्वार्थ योगवर्णि

शुद्धा वातमा सब अधि सर्दछन् ,
 पछि त दुष्टले विहिजत् गर्दछन् ।
 सांचो छोड् दिए र सुट्टो बोल्दछन्,
 पछि त दुष्टले हुर्मत् खोल्दछन् ॥

१६६

अधम भक्ति हूँ बिनित् लेख्छु,
 तिम्रा लोकको हाल् यो देख्छु ।
 बिनित् गर्दछु हित छ बिनित् यही
 तिम्रा लोकमा स्थिति छैन केही ।

१६७

सत्य नाथ कै पस्छु धाममा,
 अंहिले पो रहे यस्ता काममा ।
 विषय दुःखका छाड्यो मानले
 मग्न छु म ता तिम्रा ज्ञानले ॥

१६८

आफ्ना लोकको रक्षा गर्नु होस्,
 धनको भाग्य सब् दैव हुनु होस् ।
 धनका भाग्यमा दुष्ट लाग्दा हुन्,
 ज्ञानको भाग्यभा शत्रु भाग्दा हुन् ॥

१६९

धनका भाग्यले पोल्दै ल्याउदो हो,
 ज्ञानको भाग्यभा गुण पाउदो हो ।
 धनका भाग्यले सेखि गर्दो हो,
 ज्ञानको भाग्यभा मग्न पाउदो हो ॥

१७०

धनका भाग्यले यमपुर भर्दो हो,
 ज्ञानको भाग्यभा स्वर्ग सर्दो हो ।
 धनका भाग्यले प्रेत्मा सर्दो हो,
 ज्ञानको भाग्यभा शिव लोक् सर्दो हो ॥

१७१

सुनन सत्य नाथ् बिनित् लीनु होस्,
 अब त ज्ञानको भाग्य दीनु होस् ॥
 बौलाहाका छाटले उत्रे आफ् आटले,
 मुलुक खायेछ ढाँटले यो अर्काका राजमा ॥
 आएकि छ काजमा,
 नौले छु र जान्दिन बुट्टो बिनित् मान्दिन ॥

१७२

हरिका तिर्थ हुन् महिमा गर्नलाई,
 जान लागे सब् वार्हि मर्नलाई ॥
 अघि त निर्धाको सम्पती हरे,
 क्षत्रमा बसेर खर्च त्यै गरे ॥

१७३

घटिया काम नभै दौलथ् जम्दैन,
 होइन भन्नता कोहि पाउदैन ।
 सम्पति हुनेको तिर्थमा छ फल्,
 दुखिले गर्दछै आत्मा चिन्ने बल् ॥

१७४

हरि त नित्य छन् हृदयमा संगै,
मुक्ति छैन की तिर्थमा नगै ।
अधम भक्ति हूँ र बिनित्ति लेख्छु,
मुक्ति दिने नाथ् सब ठाउ देख्छु ॥

१७५

काशि क्षत्रमा गै बस्तछन् नुहाई,
कस्ले देख्छु ति कृष्ण चन्द्रलाई ।
महिमाले गरी बस्छन् क्षत्रमा,
हरि ता उत्रये हाफ्रा नेत्रमा ॥

१७६

देख्छु हरी शकल लोकभरी,
काहाँ जानु हो भ्रान्ति मन्गरी ।
जान लागे सब् काशि मर्नलाई,
इच्छा गर्दछन्देह फेर्नलाई ॥

१७७

वाहिरि बिद्या हुन् लोभमा पार दिने,
भिन्नि बिद्या छन् ज्ञान सार दिने ।
आफ्ना चित्तमा पसेर हेर्नु होस्,
हरिको नित्य ध्यान बसेर गर्नु होस् ॥

१७८

अर्को दोखो काम् साँचो छैन क्यै,
आत्माको बिचार गर्दछु म यै ।
आत्मामा पसी पिरोलो लाउनेको,
अमालि काम् लिदा गर्न लाउने जो ॥

१७९

अमालि काम् लिदा कति बिप्रि गो,
 काशिराजले प्यादा छाड् दियो ।
 चित्तमा पसी खान लागि गो,
 डर देखाई देखाई लान लागि गो ॥

१८०

माया त मर्देन आफ्नि प्यारिको,
 आफ्ना साथ मा जान तयारि भो ।
 अधम भक्ति हूँ लेख्दिबैं यती २,
 सकल जान्ने छौ बिनित लाउ कती २ ॥

१८१

होइन मैले बोलेको ता योग छ चलेको,
 दुख मात्रे भक्त जनलाई संक्षेप कहेको ॥

१८२

चौरास भित्रै डुल्छन् सबै चौरास बाहिरको,
 चौरास बाहिर डुल्न जान्ने ब्रह्म लोकमा गयो ।
 चौरास भित्रै हेर्छन् सबै चौरास बाहिरको,
 चौरास बाहिर हेर्न जान्ने ब्रह्म ज्योति भयो ॥

१८३

चौरास भित्र खान्छन् सबै चौरास बाहिरको,
 चौरास बाहिर खान जान्ने माहाँ तपि भयो ।
 अक्षर भित्रै बोल्छन् सबै अक्षर बाहिरको,
 अक्षर बाहिर बोल्न जान्ने अन्तर्यामि भयो ॥

१८४

आयु भित्रै देख्छु सबै आयु बाहिरको,
आयु बाहिरको सम्झि राख एउटै सुत्रा हो ।
उहि हो सुत्रा उहि हो निर्गुण दोस्रो होइन केहि,
निर्गुण अहिले चाहिदैन सगुण बताउ येहि ॥

१८५

अबि नाशि निराशमा नित्य वाश गर्ने,
अबि नाशि को हुन् भने कर्म नाश गर्ने ।
अबि नाशि जाहि ताहि बस्तै वस्तइनन्,
निराशमा नभै त्यस्को कर्म मास्तइनन् ॥

१८६

सारा कर्म तोडि यस्मा चित्त लग्नाउ,
हितका बचन सुनाइ दिएँ सबले मालुम् पाउ ।
अजि गर बिनित गर आशा छोडेर,
सत्य भक्त भए जाउला रस्ता लिएर ॥

१८७

छाप यिन्का जाहाँ लाग्यो ताहाँ लाग्यो चीनु,
हुकुम् भइ गो त्यस्लाई रस्ता खुला गराई दिनु ।
मस्तकबाट निस्केको जिव् प्राप्ति हुन्छ वाहि,
छैन त्यस्को देह याहाँ रहदैन काहीं ॥

१८८

विष्णु देखि थोडै मुनि माहादेवको रूप,
माथमा मुकुट नाग, (को) माला ठूलो शिर छ खूब ।
कोहि भन्ला हो हो यो बात् कोहि भन्ला होइन,
दुबै रकम् नबोलित याहाँ हुने छैन ॥

१८९

कोहि भन्ला हो हो यो बात् होइन भन्ला जस्ले,
सम्झि राख केहि दुःख भोग्नु पर्ला त्यस्ले ।
होइन मैले बोलेको ता योग छु चलेको,
इच्छा गर्ने सजन् जन्मा तत्व खोलेको ॥

१९०

गजल

पुर्खा मेरा सुन्ना भवन् पृथ्वि मेरि माता,
(यी) पृथ्वि भित्र जम्मा जति सम्बन्धिका नाता ।
जाति मेरा आत्मा गुरू सागर मेरा साखा,
आकास् मुनि पृथ्वि माथि बास् हो मेरो खाशा ॥

गुरू मेरा अन्तर्यामि बिनित्ति कति लाउ,
यहि सुन्ना खला भित्र चेत भई बस्न पाउ ॥

डुबि डुबि स्नान गर्छु सन्ताप हर हर,
शिवजिको ध्यान म धर्छु नित्य खर खर ।
हरि हरि हरि ॐ सत्य ॐ हरी,
आखिरि तनमन् सुम्पेकै छु हरिलाई नगरी ॥

हरि मेरा मन भरी लाई गर मनपरी,
हरि हरि हरि ॐ सत्य ॐ हरी ।
तन मन मैले सुम्पेकै छु हरिलाई नगरी,
हरि मेरा मन भरि लाई बनाउ साफ गरी ॥

हरि हरि हरि ॐ सत्य ॐ हरी,
हरि हरि हरि मन भरि तिम्रो नगरी ।
बस हरि साफ गरि तिम्रो मन परी.

यो सम्झना समचारि भइ श्दृ पौचि गइ गो,
सुरथ् माथि सवार गरि याद आउनु भैगो ।
बस्तु भयो हृदयमा याद मेरा आई,
यि गुण् दिन लाग्नु भो है साचा मलाई ॥

१९१

हृदयमा सूर्य प्रकट् लागे झल मल्ल,
चन्द्र माजि उदाउनु भो मेरा घट्मा बल्ल ।
गुरु मेरा घट्मा प्रकट् सम्झ नबिचारि,
जाला मेरो चित्त काहाँ ल्यौ ल्यौ लछारि ॥

१९२

बसोस् चित्त थिर सित सत नाम् यो पढ्दै,
जावस् मेरा सङ्करजिमा सुरथ् खुब बढ्दै ।
गुरु मेरा अन्तर्यामि सत नाम् पढाइ देउ,
ब्रह्मा बिष्णु महेश्वरले शक्ति चढाई देऊ ॥

१९३

प्राण मेरो ओहोर दोहोर गळ्ठ बारम्बार,
या प्राणको मूल अड्डा नाभि हात्ति सार ।
नाभिदेखि बडि प्राण मन्तक् सम्म गैगो,
मस्तक्देखि फिरि उधो नाभि सम्म भैगो ॥

१९४

नसा मासि जागेका छन् प्राणका रशैले ।
अगम् तत्व छिटियो लोकमा बुझेन कसैले ॥

दोस्रो शब्द

धर्मका राजा उत्रन लागे लोक हो अब ता बेर छैन,
कलिको कर्म चञ्चल भयो लोक हो आयु ता धेर छैन ।
भक्तका दर्शन हरि नाम् बिना लोक हो मुक्ति ता मिल्दैन,
शिव हरि सत्य मनमा लिए लोक हो दुष्टले छुदैन ॥

१९५

आखिरि जन्म भइ गयो नरमा लोक हो नमरि हुँदैन,
शिव हरि सत्य मनमा लिए लोक हो दुःखले छुदैन ।
विष्णु ठाकुर शिव हरि सत्य लोक हो यहि नाम् पुकार,
आखिरि जन्म भइ गयो नरमा लोक हो गाल ता नपार ॥

१९६

जन्म छ नास कर्म यो खोटि लोक हो अब ता नभुल,
अनित्य खेल्मा मायाका जाल्मा लोक हो लौ अब नडुब ।
औसर पर्दा पालाले गर्दा लोक हो मनुष्य जन्म भो,
ईश्वरको भजन् गरेनौ भने लोक हो यो जन्म व्यर्थ गो ॥

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तिर्थ जावे तिर्थ नुहावे मन की भ्रमण नहि छुटि आवे ।
 बिना ज्ञान से भेद नहि पावे कैसे जनम छुटावे ॥
 बिना दया से कौन सुख पावे ।
 आशा नहि मारत फेर जग में घुमि आवे ॥
 आशा मारा जोहो सो भक्त इमारा रस गुणले चीन ।
 ब्रह्मा विष्णु महे सतसङ्ग छु आये दर्शन दीन ॥
 भेटि पुष्प कछु नहि चाहिये आसिर्वाद लिनि लाई ।
 अनृत्य काल्मा पर्ला विपत्ति रौला है मन पछुताई ॥
 हरि हरि चरणको मङ्गलु गाई ।
 भक्ति दिये ज्ञान बताई ॥
 शिव शिव हरी हरी निस दिन भजना नहि राख्ना तु सक्यै ।
 अनृत्य काल्मा पर्ला विपत्ति रौला है मन पछुताई ॥
 माथमा मुकुट मोति जड़ावे ।
 हिरा रत्न से सिर छपावे ॥
 कानन कुरडल कङ्गण लावे ।
 जगमग जगमग ज्योति जगावे ॥
 हूं हूं सदा शिव शम्भु आये ।
 भक्तले दर्शन पाये ॥
 ताल मृदङ्ग बेणु वजावे ।
 चौसट्टि योगिनि मङ्गलु गावे ।
 लक्ष्मि आफै चमर डोलवे ।
 माहादेव में मिलि मिलि ध्यान लगावे ॥
 मै माहादेव कि भक्ति संग मिलि जावे ।
 फेर जग में कुछ नहि आवे ॥
 जनम जनम का दुःख निभावे ॥

श्लोक

मेरा उपर ता दयालु हुनु भो आफै प्रभू देखियौ,
 लोक्लाई पनि दर्शनै दिनु हवस् सब ज्ञानका भेकि हौ ।
 दर्शन बक्सनु भो हरे हजुरले यसको काहाँ तक् भनू,
 आश्चर्य पनि मान्छु यस् बखतमा मजा व यस्तो हुनु ॥

१९८

कर्म मात्र गरेर दुःख यिनका छुट्ला कसोरी याहाँ,
 दर्शन बक्सनु होस् श्री सत्य रूपले भक्तादिका बिच् माहाँ ।
 विन्ती गछु शरण म पछु भगवान् सत् शक्तिका हौ पुरा,
 हे ज्ञानका चतुरा प्रकाश हुनु हवस् मेरा यिनै हुन कुरा ॥

१९९

मेरा जन्म बहुत बितेछ नरमा धेर कर्मको भोग् गये,
 मेरा दोष सब माफ् गरी दिनु हयोस् यस्मा शरणमा पये ।
 भक्त हौ कि अभक्त हौ म पनि सब बुझनु हजुरले परो,
 मेरा आशय छैन केहि नरमा सेखि अर्घीको झन्थो ॥

२००

गर्ने छैन म आश केहि अब ता सेखि ममताहरू
 गर्नु केहि पन्थो भने पनि प्रभू यै तप् गरूला बरू ।
 गर्दैछु यहि तप् तपस् जति सबै दया भए पाउला,
 ब्रह्मा विष्णु महेशका हजुरमा यो अर्जि सब लाउँला ॥

२०१

याह्नादेखि सिवाय दोस्रो अरू क्यै लाग्दैन लागोस् मती,
मेरा बिनित् सुनी प्रकट हुनु हवस् साचै भनिस् लौ भनी ।
ॐ शृष्टि उ० तर्फ पछाडी नभइ कन भयो पूर्वका कल्पनाले,
सत्का चित् बाच्य बाच क् अ० उ० म० स० हुँदा ब्रह्म शक्ती हुनाले

२०२

कुन् हो सत्ता बिचारुन् बुध जनहरूले गोचरागो चरैको,
वाक्या तित् जो समाधि तिन गुण रहितै शुद्ध एक चित् रहेको ।
हुँदामा जो भयाको नभए नभएकै एक दुइ देखि भिन्न,
जोहो सो सोहि होला अ० ह० म० बिच हुँदा साक्षि भूत् आफु भिन्न ॥

२०३

वद्का बाणि बिचारुन् परम जनहरू भेद कुन् वेद को हो,
कस्मा के भन्न सक्ला अगम पदविको रूप् अरूप् सत्य कोहो ।
ब्यापक अग्र्यक्त हुँदा सम रस सुख रूप् शान्ति निरवाण जोहो,
सोहि हो सत्य साँचो अघटत घटना सचिदानन्द को हो ॥

२०४

यस्ता जो नाथका नाथ अ० ह० म० त्रुपुटिमा स्वास निस्वास जोहो,
जानुन् सब्ले बिचारी अगुण मय स्वरूप् शुद्ध चैतन्य जोहो ।
कस्मा के गर्छ कस्ले गरिकन गरिने कुन् कुरा के कहुन् हो,
सङ्कल्पै छैन जस्मा कसरि हुन गयो यो लठारो फजुल हो ॥

२०५

सत्यै सङ्कल्प ईश्वर भनिकन श्रुतिको जो हुकुम् सत्य साँचो,
 सङ्कल्पै सत् स्वरूप् हो अझ पनि नबुझे भै गयो कत्रो खाँचो ।
 अन्तर्यामि प्रभू बिना स्वरूपका के गर्नु तिम्रो बयान्,
 शङ्करदेखि कृपा भयो र अहिले मेरा सुफल भो नयन् ॥

२०६

यी सब् गुण मिलेका तपस्का सकसले ।
 यी गुण् पाउन सकला र सहज्मा कसले ॥

२०७

दोश्रो भाषा

भगवान्को इच्छा यो छ (कि) भक्तलाई न चाँउने,
 हरि वाणि घेर उत्रलान् हुषि मञ्चाउने ।
 दुबो बन्सो इलामे सिरूवाले काने,
 सम्झाइ दिन्छु सभ्ले सुनून् दुःख पर्दा खाने ॥

२०८

कर्कलो र निगुरो सिस्नाहरूका मन्टा,
 दुखिले खानु सुत्तु आनन्दिका गुण्टा ।
 माहाँजन्का सम्पतिले चित्त पोल्दै ल्याउछ,
 मन्मा सन्तोष् नहुनाले गुण्टा विजाउछ ॥

२०९

सन्तोष् दिने ईश्वर छन् भित्र हेर्नु होस ,
बाहिरि सन्तोष् नखोज्नु होस् बिचार गर्नु होस ।
बाहिरि सन्तोष् क्षिणमा नाश हुनेछ,
भित्तु सन्तोष् लिन जाने कामता हुनेछ ॥

२१०

घडि घडि इनै बाणि हेर्ने गर्नु होस ,
इ बाणिको भेद पाये छुट्टा सबै दोष ॥
मर्मत् गरि हेर्नु होला दुःख नमानी,
गर्ने छैन इ बाणिले कोहि केहि हानी ॥

२११

कोलाहाल शब्द चला सबै डराउला,
आत्यस् भइ बिचार नपाई त्यसै कराउला ।
यिनै बाणि बिचार गर्ने धैर्य हुने छौ,
हा हा नाथ शक्ति सत्य शरण हाम्रो लेऊ ॥

२१२

निन्दा बेसि नहुनेको आत्मा डरोइन,
आपनु सत्य भजन् पनि त्यसले छोडोइन ।
भगवान्को सुचन् हुँदा भक्त जन्मा केही,
मालुम् हुँदा बिनित् पत्र लेखेकै छौ एही ॥

२१३

बेसि कम्ति जो भएको माफ गरि दिनु,
जम्मैले यहि धर्म तिर चित्त धर दिनु ॥

२१४

(अवतारि भाषा)

लङ्कूर पारि लामा गांड । ज्ञान ज्ञानैको इष्ट लांड ॥
बप्पको मन्त्र झिकाउला । उडि जाने ज्ञान म सिकाउला ॥

२१५

पत्थर बृक्ष जङ्गल झार । भस्म हुन्छ भस्मै खार ॥
यो बिल्नेलाई बिलाइदे । सब सागरमा मिलाइदे ॥

२१६

कैलाशको ढोका खुलियो । दुनिया तो के मा भुलियो ॥
यहि धन जन्मका गुल्मात्मा । हामि त जाइ जांड यहि हुल्मा ॥

२१७

मायार पास्को लहरो । रस्तालाइ पाच्यो पहरों ॥
चन्द्रमा सूर्य अग्नी जल । साखा त उच्यो सैन्य दल ॥

२१८

शक्ति ज्ञान छाड्दे गाल्नलाई । पृथ्वि ता दुव्वाइन् पाल्नलाई ॥
शक्ति ज्ञान छाड्दे यो गाल्ने । पृथ्विले दुःख पाइन् को पाल्ने ॥

२१९

पिता पुर्खा हाम्रो मरिगो । टुहुराको बथान भरि भो ॥
टुहुरा मध्ये को मै लाटो । मुक्ति पद पाउनु कुन् बाठो ॥

२२०

मुक्ति पदको रस्ता जान्दैन,
 शृष्टि गुरु तप् गर भन्दैन ।
 सत् गुरु साहेब महादेव,
 मैथाङ्नेको शरण लेऊ ॥

२२१

पारस्मणि जस्तो ज्ञान मेरो,
 गांभ्रे च्याउ जस्तो धन् तेरो ।
 त्यही स्वर्च गरन त बिलोभ गर्छ,
 कसो गरि तेरो पाप मर्छ ॥

२२२

लोभ पाप चुड़ि चढाइदे
 यहि शिव ॐ मा होम् लाइदे ।
 शिव शिव शिव ॐ शिव ॐ,
 भय भ्रान्ति सङ्का गर्दे होम् ॥

२२३

शिव शिव शिव खोइ शीव,
 यहि शिव भित्र को मै जीव ।
 कृष्ण कृष्ण कृष्ण खोइ कृष्ण,
 सोर हजार राधेको एक तृष्ण ।

२२४

राम राम राम राम रामै,
 रामायण को धुम धामै ।
 राम राम राम श्री राम राम,
 आत्मा भित्र बनो बिष्णु धाम ॥

२२५

| | | | |
|---------|------|--------|---------|
| चारै | भाषा | बोल्ने | भो, |
| अन्तर | कुरो | एउटै | हो । |
| भाका | र | भाषा | घुमाउछ, |
| अभिमानि | मुढो | रमाउछ | ॥ |

२२६

| | | | |
|------------|--------|-----|-----------|
| अठार | पुराण | नौ | ब्याकर्ण, |
| यहि सचेत् | जिव्को | सबै | चाकर । |
| ब्राह्मणको | छोरो | बेद | पढ्छ, |
| म थाङ्गने | लाई | भेद | पछै ॥ |

२२७

| | | | |
|------------|----------|-------|-----------|
| पर्व त् | कि | छोरी | बालकी, |
| यहि सृष्टि | माया | जालकी | । |
| अहिले | ता भन्ने | सत् | खालकी, |
| मेरै ज्ञान | भिन्न | देख् | रथ् पालकी |

२२८

| | | | |
|--------|-------|-------|-------------|
| तेरा | काखको | मै | नानी, |
| मेरा | काखको | तै | नानी । |
| दोस्रो | त | अर्को | होइननी, |
| तेरै | आखा | भिन्न | देख् पानी ॥ |

२२९

| | | | | |
|--------|--------|---------|----------|-------|
| त्यहि | पानि | भिन्नको | मै | नानी, |
| दोस्रो | त | अर्को | छैननी | । |
| सब | सागरमा | हेर | पानी, | |
| दोस्रो | त | अर्को | होइननी । | |

२३०

एकान्त सुत्रे माहाँ ध्यान,
 मागि राख बाबू लामा ज्ञान् ।
 यहि लामाज्ञानको विचार गर,
 बाहिर त नहेर भित्र हेर ॥

२३१

मुलुक् का दाशी रमाए,
 राजाले धर्म कमाए ।
 राजाले धर्म गरि दिए,
 पैसा त धेरै छर दिए ॥

२३२

धन्य हो राजा तिन् सर्कार,
 सलामि दिन्छु बारम्बार ।
 माकुरो कपास्को कमाइ नलाउने,
 धागै धागाले र उहि घर भने

२३३

यो माकुरा भित्र को होला,
 कति छ है माकुरा (धागै) धागाको (त्यो) पोला ।
 यो बिचार गर्ने को होला,
 चैतन्य जिव जो होला ॥

२३४

ॐ नमः शिवाय

सर्वार्थ योग् बाणि भनेर जान्नु
 विदान्तकां भेद् पनि केहि ठान्नु ।
 मिल्दैन सामन्य यि ग्रन्थ माहाँ,
 मिल्ने छ पिछे सब शास्त्र माहाँ ॥

कसैले यसैलाई गिद् झइ मान्नु,
 कसैले अगम् तत्व भनेर ठान्नु ।
 एक एक पद्ले गरि अर्थ बन्टा,
 आउला यो धर्म युग नाम यसै को चह्ला ।

जो बन्नु पछ महिमा यसको बनावोस्,
 लोकले पनि अब त झट्ट यो होस पावोस्,
 सर्वार्थ योग् बाणि छ नाम यसको,
 लेखी समाप्त कन आज भई गो ॥

(सर्वार्थ योग बाणि)



प्रबन्ध

प्रर्थना

ब्रज झञ्जी भयो रहदा तिमी,
 स्थिर भई याहाँ श्री बसिन् जमी ।
 हजुरमा लगी प्राण राख्छौं,
 दरश बक्सियोस् नाथ खोज्छौं ॥

हजुर कि कथा भक्ति जीवनी,
 स्नेह भै लिदा पाप नाशिनी ।
 श्रवण नित्यले शान्ति दायिनी,
 ग्रहण गर्छ जो दानि हुन्तिनी ॥

अति मिठो बचन्दिव्य वाक्य झन्,
 कविहरू पनी मन पराउछन् ।
 दीन दास हूँ मोहमा परी,
 अभय बक्सियोस् अमृतै सरी ॥

—चिन्तामणि



T
(oral)

स्वर्से राजन परिपूर्ण पुरा
सुनिदिनुहोसनत हाम्रो कुरा
धर्मात्मी राजन तिमि धर्म धाम
ज्ञानात्मी राजन तिमि ज्ञान विनार
विवेकी राजन तिवेकु रकुव गरियोस
स्वराज्यमा धर्म अब अहृष्ट छरियोस
स्वराज्यको धर्म र कर्म माहा
सम्पूर्ण नास अब त म माहा
अपूर्ण सारा यि छोडेर ता हा
जानु भयो लौ अब देश माहा
तहोसन माहाराजको राजमा दुःख
पाउन दुःखीले केहि चिज सुख

Oral by Manakale

provided by Manamaya



मणि प्रेस, १० माइल, कालिम्पोंग ।



Poet Parizat and the author

Barbara Nimri Aziz is an anthropologist who has travelled extensively in Nepal. After completing her Ph.D. at the University of London, she worked in Nepal and other parts of the Himalayas for two decades and published widely in scholarly journals. Her first book was *Tibetan Frontier Families* (1978). She is co-editor of *Soundings in Tibetan Civilization* (1985).

This book combines Aziz's growing interest in politics with women's history. During the past decade, since leaving the academy, Aziz has worked in the Arab World, fusing an enduring love for ethnography with journalism. She is based in New York where she is a radio host and producer.

*Translation of the poem on the cover by Shakti Yogamaya.
Fat bellies burst. / And those bribes ooze out / to poison you.
So savour your riches . . . while you can.*



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