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Research Article

Shifting Rhetoric of Teej Songs in the Context of Consumer Culture in Nepal

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Abstract

This paper examines the influence of consumer culture behind the shifting rhetoric of the songs performed in Teej, one of the major festivals for Hindu women in Nepal. By analyzing verbal and non-verbal elements in five selected Teej songs, two conventional songs and three modern songs, the study explores the shifting rhetoric of Teej songs. A comparative analysis is carried out to indicate how the modern Teej songs differ from the conventional ones. While the conventional songs deal with the women's experience after marriage, their pain and agonies, and their desire to return to their parents' home, the modern songs present themes of fashion, modern lifestyle and celebration. Drawing upon the insights of consumer culture of Steven Miles blending them with the concepts of cultural rhetoric of Tomás Albaladejo and multimodality of Carey Jewitt as a theoretical framework, this paper concludes with an assertion that due to the influence of consumer culture, the rhetoric of Teej songs is in flux caught between traditional practices and consumer culture. By shedding light on this shifting rhetoric of Teej songs, the study contributes to our understanding of how cultural expressions and traditional festivals are shaped by broader socio-cultural forces, highlighting the ongoing negotiation between tradition and contemporary influences in Teej songs.

Keywords: Teej songs, Hindu women, consumer culture, shifting rhetoric

Introduction

Teej is one of the major Hindu festivals celebrated by women in Nepal. The festival takes place on the third day of *Shuklapaksha* (waxing of the moon) in Bhadra, normally in the month of August or early September. On the day of Teej, Hindu women from various ethnic backgrounds in Nepal, including but not limited to the major ethnic groups like Brahmins, Chhetris, Newars, Gurungs, Tamangs, and others worship Lord Shiva and observe one-day fasting. Women of all age groups participate in Teej celebrations. Young unmarried girls, married women and elderly women all take part in

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the festivities. While married women observe this festival for the longevity and health of their husbands, unmarried girls celebrate it in the hope of being blessed with a good husband. The festival is a celebration that transcends socioeconomic lines and is joyfully and fervently observed by people of all socioeconomic backgrounds, whether they are from urban centers or rural villages. Behind the celebration of the festival is the myth of Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva. It is believed that Goddess Parvati was able to get Lord Shiva as her husband after leading an ascetic life in the forest worshipping Lord Shiva. In the celebration of the marriage of Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva, this festival is supposed to have begun.

Rooted in the ancient oral traditions, Teej songs in Nepal hold a significant social aspect as they express the cultural identity of Nepali women reflecting their joys, sorrows and aspirations in Nepali society and highlighting their roles, emotions, and experiences. Through storytelling and religious elements, these songs also narrate the festival's theme of marital bliss and devotion to Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva. Oral traditions played a crucial role in passing down cultural and religious knowledge in ancient times in the form of Teej songs; however, the songs have evolved over time and now also reach a broader audience through modern media platforms, serving as a vital part of the festive celebrations and reflecting the changing dynamics of Nepali society. For instance, *Bedanako Poko* (A Pile of Pain), a popular Teej song of the 1990s reflects the women's experience of pain and agonies after marriage and their desire to go to their parents' home (*maiti*) whereas the modern Teej songs like *Samjhine Paani Chhamkane* (Not Possible at All) deal with the themes of fashion, celebration and modern lifestyle. The modern Teej songs are different from the conventional ones in terms of their content and themes. The shift in terms of the themes of teej song brings forth a question: why is there a shift in the rhetoric of Teej song? Though globalization, change in family dynamics and consumer culture have shaped the way this festival is celebrated, this study is mainly focused on the influence of consumerism on the festival. In order to address the research question, this paper attempts to analyze the influence of consumer culture in the shifting rhetoric of Teej songs with a conclusion that Teej songs are in flux, caught between traditional values and consumer culture.

Thus, in this paper, five Teej songs in total - two conventional songs and three modern songs- are selected purposively to examine the influence of consumer culture in the songs under study. In particular, the conventional songs like "*Bedanako Poko*" ("A Pile of Pain") and "*Teejako Rahara Aayo Barilai*" ("Teej Vibes Everywhere") are of the 1990s and the modern songs like "*Samjhine Paani Chhamkane*" ("Not Possible at All"), "*Chitikai Vachhu Re*" ("I Look Beautiful") and "*Soche Jhai Jindagi Rainachha*" ("Life Is Not What We Think of It") are of the 2010s. The discussion of these selected songs blends the ideas of cultural multimodal rhetoric and consumerism.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Teej songs have been interpreted by scholars with an ambivalent attitude. Some regard it as the continuation of patriarchal practice as women observe this festival for the sake of their husbands whereas some consider Teej songs as a practice for having opportunities for women to express their freedom and agency. Bishika Thapa speaks against the celebration of Teej arguing that the myth of Teej is a construction of not of female but of male. It was a male constructed practice that reinforces men's sovereignty over women. Thus, women should not follow it in the name of tradition. She raises a series of questions: "Where are the stories or tradition in which men have to undergo similar rigors to get a good wife? Why were they not crafted by the wise sagas, the learned men, the travelling minstrels? Or is a good wife not a prize of equal value as

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Shiva-like husband and instead is simply dispensable?” (4). Thapa holds a radical opinion and attempts to make women aware of the discriminatory practice.

Other scholars criticize the festival pointing out the influence of modernization and westernization in the celebration of Teej. They emphasize that the serenity and the sacredness of the festival should be maintained to preserve its unique culture and tradition. Aashutosh Aryal blames modernization and westernization for the loss of real tradition of Teej as he states:

[. . .] but due to the modernization and westernization coming in Nepal most of the women have forgotten the real tradition of teej. In the name of teej, they are just wasting their money in buying necklace and all other useless stuffs [. . .]. Not just wearing all kinds of designer clothes will make their husbands lives for 100 years. They should sense this festival very seriously and do accordingly as stated in our ‘purans’ or as our old tradition. (8)

Yet others blame political and economic factors behind the loss of the ‘originality’ of Teej festival. For instance, Kamala Sharma quotes the former minister of Nepal Urmila Aryal: “All songs are not good, some have brought consciousness, but some are likely to be censored. Some songs are only highlighting women’s physical beauty. These songs should be full of lesson of woman’s empowerment directed towards change” (3). The cultural sentiments in the Teej songs have been influenced by consumer culture and westernization, resulting in a deviation from the original cultural essence.

While Teej songs are interpreted as the continuation of patriarchal practice, however, there are many scholars who view Teej songs as the tool for women empowerment. People of different political ideologies, including both Rightists and Leftists, have expressed their thoughts appreciating the reformation shown in Teej in favor of women. Hisila Yami, the former Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation of Nepal appreciates Teej as a means to erase gender discrimination and bring revolutionary changes in the patriarchal Nepali society. She praises the solidarity of women during the celebration of Teej. Over time Teej also became a means to pour out the atrocity women faced under the feudal patriarchal society. The contradiction between being men and women, son and daughter, or like that in society is skillfully and poetically articulated in the writing of Teej songs. Educated and aware women use it as a means for change (Yami 8). It shows that cultural practices have dynamics to reform such practices.

Apart from these opposing views toward Teej Festival and Teej songs, there are some scholars who see paradox and contradictions in Teej songs. The paradox of the modern Teej songs lies in their attempt to promote gender equality by challenging the patriarchal ideology, while simultaneously objectifying women and reducing them to objects of consumption. In this regard, Mannu Shahi remarks that the contemporary songs represent women as mere tools of entertainment that are “similar to the notion of an ‘item’ song” and “the modern Teej music enhances the patriarchal concept further and employs a religious medium to objectify women” (4). Shahi draws attention to how contemporary Teej music not only upholds patriarchal ideas but also uses religion to objectify women, raising questions about the negative effects of such depictions.

Globalization and modernization have also influenced the way Teej is celebrated in Nepal. Sangita Rayamajhi, a feminist scholar, takes the influence of globalization and modernization positively and advocates that the celebration of Teej has undergone drastic changes. The conservative perspective in society tends to romanticize the notion of traditional culture and often places blame on women for being influenced by Western culture, yet it fails to offer any practical solutions. As Nepali women have already entered the third millennium and moved into a post-structural phase, their focus should be on gaining recognition and acknowledgement from the male-dominated society (56).

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Rayamajhi's perspective highlights the problematic nature of the conservative viewpoint that blames women for embracing Western influences and fails to provide practical solutions. Instead, she emphasizes the need for Nepali women to focus on gaining recognition and acknowledgement in the male-dominated society as they navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by globalization and modernization in the third millennium.

The word 'consumerism' is often used to refer to a life "excessively preoccupied with consumption" (Gabriel and Lang 3). Consumer culture is a concept that highlights the significant influence of consumerism on contemporary human society. It emphasizes the central role of purchasing commodities and services, as well as the power associated with them, as cultural practices that shape social behaviors. Mark Liechty, in his book *Suitably Modern*, traces the growth of a new middle class in Kathmandu and shows the influence of the modern cultural resources of mass media and consumer goods to build modern identities. He looks at the cultural practices of this new middle class, examining such phenomena as cinema and video viewing, popular music, film magazines, local fashion systems and advertising.

Like Liechty, Nanda R. Shrestha, in his book *In the Name of Development: A Reflection on Nepal*, finds the growing influence of consumerism in Nepal as he states, "What we are witnessing with amazement or perhaps even distress is a cultural epidemic of consumerism sweeping across Nepal" (25). According to Shrestha, the influence of consumerism can clearly be observed on everyday life in Nepal. He further states:

These days, it is hard to find Nepali villages that remain unspoiled by Coca-Cola signs even remote areas are infested with this patented logo. Famous tandoori chickens have yielded to KFC (Kentucky Fried Chickens) and the music of gainays (minstrels) to MTV. Beer, manufactured through joint ventures, has replaced *chhang* (local beer brewed from millet or rice) as a favorite drink, even during ceremonies and rituals. (25)

Thus, Nepali society is gradually becoming consumers of Western culture. Like Shrestha, Dev Raj Adhikari and Michael Muller in their article "Management in Nepal" also observe the growing influence of consumerism in Nepal, especially in the urbanized Kathmandu city. Despite the historical and traditional influences on Nepali culture, they find "[c]opying western popular culture and values in general and consumerism in particular has had a profound impact on Nepalese youths" (95). In tune with Shrestha, Adhikari and Muller emphasize how urban life in particular, is being influenced by consumer culture.

The discussion made so far in the literature review does not discuss Teej songs in relation to consumer culture. Though there is extensive study in consumerism in Nepal, but no study has significantly covered the influence of consumerism on Teej songs. Therefore, this study aims to fulfill this gap by investigating the influence of consumer culture in Teej songs, using multimodal cultural rhetoric and consumerism as a theoretical framework for analysis.

In this study, cultural rhetoric is proposed as a methodological approach to study the relationship between culture and rhetoric and to analyze rhetorical discourses. This approach is concerned with the cultural dimension of rhetoric and with the rhetorical dimension of culture (Albaladejo 17-21). In this paper, multimodal cultural rhetoric is used as a theoretical framework because the Teej festival is a cultural practice of Nepali Hindu women. When analyzing Teej songs as a cultural practice, various verbal and non-verbal elements such as language, music, dress and setting are taken into consideration. These elements collectively form the rhetoric of Teej songs. In the same way, Carey Jewitt's multimodality describes approaches that understand communication and

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representation to be more than about language, and which attend to the full range of communicational forms (14). Here, this study focuses not only on language but also on other forms of communication such as images, visuals and music; thus, multimodal rhetoric is a suitable theoretical tool for this study.

In the discussion of consumerism, this study relies on the ideas of Steven Miles. While Yiannis Gabriel and Tim Lang define consumerism as an excessive preoccupation with consumption (3), Miles considers consumerism as a psycho-social expression of the intersection between the structural and the individual within the realm of consumption. The consuming experience is psycho-social in the sense that it represents a bridge that links the individual and society (Miles 5). Miles' idea is significant for this study as it is concerned with how consumerism has influenced women psychologically and how such influence gets enacted socially through Teej songs. In addition, Miles states that consumerism should be considered an issue that has a fundamental influence upon the everyday experience of social life. Though Miles' focus is on the influence of consumerism on everyday experience of social life, this study incorporates his ideas to see the influence in terms of social life.

Methodology

This study adopts qualitative research method, using cultural rhetoric and consumerism as an approach to analyze five Teej songs. They are chosen from YouTube, considering their respective release dates. The selection includes two older Teej songs from the 1990s: "*Bedanako Poko*" ("A Pile of Pain") and "*Teejko Rahara Aayo Bari Lai*" ("Teej Vibes Everywhere"). Additionally, three modern Teej songs from the 2010s and 2020s are selected: "*Samjhine Paani Chhamkane*" ("Not Possible at All"), "*Chitikai Vachhu Re*" ("I Look Beautiful"), and "*Soche Jhai Jindagi Rainachha*" ("Life Is Not What We Think of It"). These songs serve as the basis for analysis.

Document analysis, which is a qualitative research technique that involves evaluating electronic and physical documents to interpret them as cultural products, has been used to analyze the selected songs. In fact, YouTube videos fall under the category of public records as they are for everyone having access to the public platform.

Results and Discussion

This study is concerned with the role that consumer culture has played in bringing about the cultural change that is reflected in modern Teej songs. Teej songs have undergone a transformation along with the shift in consumer culture; the lyrics, style, ornament, clothing, etc. serve as examples of consumer culture. Earlier, women used the cultural expression tool of Teej songs to voice their injustice and suffering in their husbands' homes. Teej offered an opportunity for them to visit their parents' homes and form religious ties with their relatives. However, Teej songs have changed drastically in the present. Unlike the conventional songs, the modern Teej songs revolve around women's desire for commodities. The influence of consumer culture in Teej songs is analyzed with reference to the five Teej songs.

Conventional Teej Songs: Women's Experience after Marriage

Conventional Teej songs mainly deal with the women's experience after marriage, their pain and suffering, and their desire to return to their parents' home. Two conventional Teej songs such as "*Bedanako Poko*" ("A Pile of Pain") and "*Teejako Rahara Aayo Barilai*" ("Teej Vibes Everywhere") of the 1990s are analyzed in the light of multimodal cultural rhetoric and consumerism.

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1) “*Bedanako Poko*” (“*A Pile of Pain*”)

The song “*Bedanako Poko*” (“*A Pile of Pain*”) by Prajapati Parajuli and Haridevi Koirala was released in 1999. It is in the form of a conversation between mother and son; between brother and sister; and between son and sister’s mother-in-law. This song captures the traditional practice of sending a family member to bring the married daughter from her home. The song begins with a conversation between mother and son in which mother demands her son to bring his sister from her home to *maiti* (the married girl’s house) and moves to the daughter’s house along with a conversation between brother and sister on the one hand and brother and the sister’s mother-in-law on the other, thereby unfolding the pain and agonies of married women.

As the title of the song suggests, Parajuli and Koirala are concerned with the pain of married women in this song. For instance, it begins with a conversation between a mother and her son:

Mother: Go to fetch sister in Teej,
Greet brother-in-law well.

Son: Sure mother, I will

But what present should I take for her?

Mother: She has become hollow-cheeked nowadays
So, take ghee and special rice.

Brother: Let’s take the cucumber too for pickle

Mother: Take the money and have tea-biscuit while on the journey,

It might get dark soon so go early. (Parajuli and Koirala, 0:23- 1:51)

The given conversation between mother and son reflects some aspects of the socio-economic condition of women in Nepal. The conversation highlights the traditional gender roles and expectations in Nepali society. The mother instructs her son to go and fetch his sister, which implies that it is typically the responsibility of male family members to visit their female relatives during such occasions. This reflects the prevailing patriarchal norms where women are often confined to the domestic sphere while men take on more active roles outside the home.

In this song, the mother's concern is that her daughter has become "hollow-cheeked," suggesting that she might be facing economic hardships or health issues. Women in Nepal, especially those from rural areas, often face economic dependency on their male family members, which can limit their access to resources and opportunities. The fact that the son is asked to take ghee, special rice and cucumbers for pickle, which also indicates that these items might be considered as special treats, implying that the sister might not have regular access to such luxuries. This is expressed in the following lines:

Brother: I am here to take me sister by your permission

Mother-in-law: Why did you come early?

Brother: Please let her go by your permission

Sister: Did you ask permission with mother-in-law?

They don’t let me go easily

Brother: No matter, let’s go sister

We will enjoy at home with parents

Sister: I can’t go brother as mother-in-law has not permitted

She always criticizes me for going home. (Parajuli and Koirala, 2:23- 3:57)

The above lines present a conversation between the brother and his sister’s mother-in-law in which the brother asks for the permission of the mother-in-law to take his sister home. The mother-in-law, instead of offering permission, blames him for coming early. Such blame indicates her intention not to send her daughter-in-law to her *maiti*. It is

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because she regards her as a working machine. The conversation between brother and sister unfolds the pain and agony of married women. A married woman lacks agency, individuality and freedom. She is a matter of severe criticism.

On the surface, it seems as if the daughter-in-law is being controlled by her mother-in-law but in reality, it is a manifestation of how patriarchy internalizes as well as pits women against each other. Patriarchy is about the social relations of power not only between men and women but also between women and women. Patriarchy has circulated the image of daughter in law as a machine who needs to be controlled by mother-in-law in Nepal and this internalization of the stereotypical image sets mother-in-law in a conflict with her daughter-in-law. This sort of conflict created by patriarchy further divides women for what threatens patriarchy is the unity of women against it. If they are too busy fighting against each other, they are unable to understand how patriarchy is playing the game of “divide and rule” for their domination. Therefore, mother-in-law herself has become a puppet in the hand of patriarchy.

The analysis of non-verbal elements in the song suggests the fact that traditional values are unaffected by consumerism. The song projects the rustic life. The setting of the song is a rural area as evident by the shed, animals, paddy field and mud house in the song. In addition, the song also projects the cultural practice of taking cucumber and rice as gift while visiting the house of the married girl. The dress is traditional Nepali dress and the dominance of the musical instruments such as *madal* and *murali* implies how the song is unaffected by consumer culture.

2) “*Teejko Rahara Aayo Barilai*” (“*Teej Vibes Everywhere*”)

This song “*Teejko Rahara Aayo Barilai*” (“*Teej Vibes Everywhere*”) by Deepa Jha and Sushma Shrestha from the movie *Tilhari* (1990) is one of the most popular Teej songs in Nepal. It echoes the voice of a married lady who invites other girls to join her in the celebration of Teej festival by singing songs. The song with the invitation for singing, unfolds the pain and agonies of married women.

The song is sung by women who have returned their homes for the celebration of Teej. The main lady invites other fasting women to join her in her song as she feels the vibes of Teej everywhere. The following lines express this feeling:

Let’s sing sisters with our voices
Let’s sing together with fasting sisters
There is Teej’s vibes everywhere
Girls who have gone across nine hills
Have come together by fate
No one knows where we will end up

And whether we will meet again next again. (Jha and Shrestha, 0:54-1:31)

Literally, it appears to be a song of joy, happiness and reunion but the note of happiness is undercut by the pain and agonies of married women. They have been sent across nine hills after marriage; it is the fate which has brought them together again. That means, they are reunited not by their choices but by fate. The focus on fate implies the lack of freedom of woman after marriage. They have become like a puppet in the hand of fate after marriage.

In the song below, the main lady persuades others to join her as she is unsure whether they will get a chance to meet again or not in the future. Here are the lines:

Even the flooded stream
Could not stop us from us
Coming to our parents’ home
Let’s forget the complain of mother-in-law

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And pain given by sisters-in-law

Let's play and sing Teej songs. (Jha and Shrestha, 2:11-3:21)

The song also reflects patriarchy's game of setting women against women. The married women in the song are the victims of the complain of mother-in-law and of pain given by the sisters-in-law. By setting women against each other, patriarchy fulfills two purposes: it continues the domination of women on the one hand and on the other, women who are busy in their own conflict cannot get united to fight against patriarchy.

Apart from language, the analysis of visual of the song reflects the old custom and tradition of Nepal. The married women in the song have gathered nearby a temple wearing traditional dress. They sing and dance holding each other's hands. The musical instrument used in the song are traditional and cultural. Moreover, the setting of the village area reflects a rustic life untouched by consumerism.

Modern Teej Songs: Desire for Consumer Goods

Unlike the conventional Teej songs, the modern Teej songs present women's desire for consumer goods such as clothes, gadgets, ornaments. Three modern Teej songs: "*Samjhine Paani Chhamkane*" ("Not Possible at All"), "*Chitikai Va Chhu Re*" ("I Look Beautiful") and "*Sochejhai Jindagi Rahinchha*" ("Life Is Not What We Think of It") of the 2010s and early 2020s are analyzed using multimodal rhetoric and consumerism as the theoretical framework.

3) "*Samjhine Paani Chhamkane*" ("Not Possible at All")

This song "*Samjhine Paani Chhamkane*" ("Not Possible at All") was released by Unicorn Motion Picture on YouTube in 2021. This song is set in the form of a conversation between a husband and a wife. The wife demands consumer goods as a gift from her husband who in response tells her it is not possible at all. In her demand, the wife moves from iPhone to golden necklace, which is the influence of consumer culture in Teej songs.

Set in the urban setting, the song begins with the happy mood of a wife who with smile demands her husband to buy various products. Here is an excerpt:

Wife: Buy me an iPhone

Husband: Not possible

Wife: Buy me a golden necklace

Husband: Not possible

Not possible at all, you can just imagine it in this Teej. (Unicorn Motion Picture, 0:52-1:23)

Unlike the traditional Teej songs, this song revolves around the wife's demand for consumer products such as iPhone and necklace. Miles argues that consumerism should be considered an issue that has a fundamental influence upon the everyday experience of social life (5). In this line of interpretation, the wife's demand is the product of the influence of consumer culture, which is dominating a social life in Nepal. What is interesting here is to see the position of woman. Though the wife is demanding and commanding, she is still dependent on her husband. That means, in Nepal, women are still dependent upon their husbands in terms of economy. Here is another excerpt:

Husband: I will love you much, why you need that golden necklace?

Wife: What I need is not your false love but golden necklace at any cost.

Husband: Not possible at all, just you can imagine it in this Teej. (Unicorn Motion Picture, 1:46-2:16)

The husband in the song is reluctant to buy the golden necklace reminding her that his love is more important than the product. However, the wife prefers the golden necklace

to her husband's love. This is the local transformation due to consumerism as the lateral extension of social connectedness across space (Giddens 27). The media has circulated the flow of commodities in such a way that consumerism has become an integral part of life. The flow of commodities and media has constructed a new ground meaning and identity in the global realm (Sharma 129). Due to the impact of consumer culture, some individuals may prioritize material possessions and personal desires over their relationships, leading to situations where a wife may disregard the love of her husband.

The influence of consumer culture is suggested by the setting, costume and musical instruments in the song. The setting of this song is a party palace. While the traditional Teej songs take place in a religious place like temples or open space like a playground, this song is set in the party palace where people are seen enjoying consumer products. Similarly, both husband and wife are wearing seemingly the expensive modern/western dress. The song is dominated by the western musical instruments such as guitar and drum set. The dance step is non-traditional followed by colorful chorus.

4) "*Chittikai Va Chhu Re*" ("*I Look Beautiful*")

This song "*Chittikai Va Chhu Re*" ("*I Look Beautiful*") by Sindhu Malla was released on YouTube in 2019. This song is a female's expression of the appreciation of her self-beauty but what is interesting to note is the version of beauty she advocates for throughout the song. She advocates for an external beauty made possible by the consumption of goods.

The song captures the speaker's consideration of her beauty in relation to the consumer goods suggesting body aesthetics in consumer culture.

I look so beautiful
Wearing red sari
Bangles and necklace with colourful beads
Red bindi
Matches a woman. (Malla, 0:32-1:20)

The song begins with the speaker's declaration of her beauty made possible by the consumer goods. In the appreciation of self-beauty, she highly regards consumer goods such as red sari, bangles and necklace.

In Nepali society, a well-mannered, cultured and responsible woman was considered beauty but going against this notion of internal beauty, this song advocates for beauty in relation to consumer culture, suggesting that consumption of goods makes a person beautiful. The following excerpt has been taken from Malla's song:

I look beautiful
Wearing diamond earring
It must be true
As everyone is staring at me. (1:51- 2: 40)

Once again, the speaker emphasizes on the consumer goods, diamond earring while appreciating her own beauty. The representation of beauty in the song is the product of consumerism. There is a significant cultural shift in the representation of female. Thus, at present, beauty is defined in relation to the image of woman as a sexually assertive subject. In consumer culture, beauty has become what Rosalind Gill named "a bodily property" (Gill 154]. The speaker sees herself as such a beautiful image that she thinks everyone considers it as her true identity. The association between women's personal identity, beauty and style is a contemporary construct within the consumerist hegemonic discourse (Gill and Scharff 27; Wolf 53; Bordo 143; McRobbie 82).

In the discussion of the intersection between beauty and consumerism, one cannot ignore the fact that the act of engaging in the prescriptive beauty norm is

constructed as a performed personal choice. The speaker in the song prescribes a form of external beauty by bringing the reference of the consumer goods and she presents the beauty norm as her personal choice. The dominance of the personal pronoun 'I' in the song implies her personal choice.

From the perspective of multimodal rhetoric, the setting, costume and musical instruments are worth analyzing. The song is set in a party palace where many women dressed beautifully gather, sing and dance in a new way. Their attire is modern and so is the musical instruments. The dance step of the women in the song reflects the western dance step. Overall, this song captures the influence of consumer culture.

5) “*Sochejhai Jindagi Rainachha*” (“*Life Is Not What We Think of It*”)

The song “*Sochejhai Jindagi Rainachha*” (“*Life Is Not What We Think of*”) by Khem Century and Madhu Chhetri was released on YouTube in 2020. It reflects the voice of women who are sad with life realizing that life is not what we think of it. However, the sadness stems from their unfulfilled desire to consume the goods. The song shows how the longing for consumerism is causing sadness in the life of women.

The song begins with the desire of a woman to wear Japanese product which she is not available, which makes her realize the absurdity of life. The following lines are taken from the song by Century and Chhetri:

I wish I could wear Japanese Sari,
There is a mirror and comb on the table
I have to live killing that desire

Life is not what we think of. (Century and Chhetri, 0:36-1:18)

This song reflects the sad tone of women with a realization that life is not what we expect. It begins with their desire to wear Japanese sari, a commodity which is expensive in Nepal. On the one hand, they have a strong desire for consumer goods and on the other, they are unable to fulfill it. Therefore, they realize that they have to live their life killing the desire for consumer goods. The inability to gain the consumer goods make women realize that life is not what we think of. In that sense, the song suggests how much notion of happiness for women is shaped by consumer culture in Nepal. Here are another lines from the same song:

Where is my anklet?
Where is my earring?
There is mirror and comb on the table

Life is not what we think of. (Century and Chhetri, 2:28-3:10)

The preoccupation of the woman in the song with the consumer culture is what Stanley Diamond calls a “rage to consume” (8). In the word of Erich Fromm, these women represented in the song can be called *Homo consumens*, one who is only concerned with consuming more and more (214). Their excessive desire to possess the consumer goods as the key to happiness aligns with the notion of “consumer orientation” as developed by Alex Inkeles. Consumer orientation is a belief that possessions are the key to happiness (331). Thus, women in the song too want to possess more consumer goods of various kinds considering them the source of happiness.

Conclusion and Implications

The above discussion of the selected Teej songs along with their verbal and non-verbal elements, reveals a distinct shift from the 1990s to the 2020s in terms of their subject matter, word choice, style, and use of musical and visual elements. The conventional Teej songs mainly deal with the women’s experience after marriage, their pain and suffering, and their desire to return to their parents’ home projecting a rustic life

untouched by the influence of consumer culture whereas the modern Teej songs deal with women's desire for consumer goods such as clothes, gadgets, or ornaments. The study of three selected modern Teej songs shows how the modern Teej songs are dominated by the demand of consumer goods. The differences in the lyrics and visuals of the modern Teej songs also suggest a shift in the rhetoric due to the influence of the consumer culture. The modern Teej songs are not what they used to be. The rising consumer culture has influenced Teej songs in such a way that the rhetoric of Teej songs is shifting.

The implication of the shifting rhetoric of Teej songs implies loss and gain; what is lost is the religious values and cultural practices and what is gained is women's access to consumer culture. The conventional Teej songs were the reflection of cultural practices of Nepali society such as fetching married daughters home, married women gathering at the temple and singing, but such practices are rarely captured in modern Teej songs which are more concerned with consumer culture. Although the modern Teej songs have provided a platform for women to have access to consumer culture, women are still dependent upon male in terms of economy. Few Teej songs even today are more concerned with the traditional and cultural values. Therefore, in the present context in Nepal, the rhetoric of Teej songs is in flux, caught between traditional values and consumer culture.

This study is a contribution to the existing scholarship; it might be useful for the scholars interested in the intersection of culture, rhetoric and multimodality. This study also calls for an attention to the other factors such as globalization and family structure which have influenced the rhetoric of Teej songs. Lastly, the study opens the floor for future research related to the domain of Teej rhetoric.

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