

Nepalese Folk Culture

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Silok: A Medium to Express the Feelings of Rural Women

Sushila Ghimire

1. Introduction

The word 'Silok' has come from the Sankrit word 'Shloka' in Nepali rural arena. It means 'Verse'. In our classical form of the poetry, four lines, making up a quatrain, make a verse. Such verses are popular in the rural areas, and are especially sung during the special function, gathering, and rituals and so on. When there were not many means of entertainment, the verses sung by the villagers during special occasions came to be an inseparable part of their culture.

The verses, which have been contextualized from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Krishna Charitra, Gunaratnamala etc. deal with morality, religious prospect and spiritual aspects. They have been developed in the rural areas, though in some cases, the verses originated in rural areas, commemorating the life style of the common people. In the recent years, the verses are recited by popular poets in certain poetry recitation programs. The example can be taken from Madhav Ghimire's Gauri, Rajeshwori, Bhimnidhi Tiwari's Mahina Magh Thiyo, and Balkrishna Sama's Ichchha and so on.

2. The Moment and the Singer of Silok

Siloks are sung especially in marriage ceremony, working with a grinding machine or while staying in vigil. It does not mean that it cannot be sung while going for firewood or fodder or while working in the field. While singing during

the vigil, it is accompanied by dance as well. But during the dances, the verses are rarely used. Mostly sermons and songs are used. Such verses are not only sung by females but also by males.

In marriage, Siloks are mostly used. There are both asking questions and giving answers in Silok, and the singers sing the verses the whole night. The singers also can be males. Therefore, such verses are not discussed here.

In spite of that the women can recite the verses during the religious rituals, festivals, celebrations, while making leaf plates, or preparing sacred light, they are not so popular. The grinding place is the exact one to compose, to sing, to express their feelings of sadness, agony, excitement and

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even happiness, as the village women are commonly from the worker's group. They are themselves exploited by the males. A woman goes through her whole-day activities like working in the field, collecting firewood, getting fodder for cattle, looking after children, cooking food, preparing breakfast, cleaning, scrubbing and even fetching water and so on. When males go to bed she takes a full bucket of grain and goes to the grinding machine to complete her job. The next day also she becomes the first to get up at home and completes her all jobs as the last day. She can obviously feel tired and sleepy as she is exploited in her own family from another class. So, the trend of telling verse might have begun so that she could not feel sleepy but go through her task. At the same moment, she expresses her feelings of sadness, agony, excitement, happiness, revolt, cursing her parents, appreciating her husband, cursing her

sisters-in-law, mother-in-law, father- in-law, and husband's sister, besides denouncing physical and psychological torture given to her etc. Mostly, they express such feelings to show their inferiority to be females.

3. Some examples of the Verses expressing the feelings of Women

1. Phool phulyo nadiparika bikatama launako mansub bhayo
Ti nadi ghatlan ma phool tipula bhandai joban giagayo
[Flowers bloom far away, beyond the river and I want to tuck them on my head; hoping for the river to run low, my youth is waning away.]
2. Simsim pani paro simali banma sari kasari rujam
Aaigayo chadbad samjhanchhu, aamalai yo man kasari bujham
[There's light rain in simal forest; how can I drench my sari? It's festival time and I remember my mother; it's difficult to hold the heart.]

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