

Remarks on Revolutionary Songs and Iconography¹

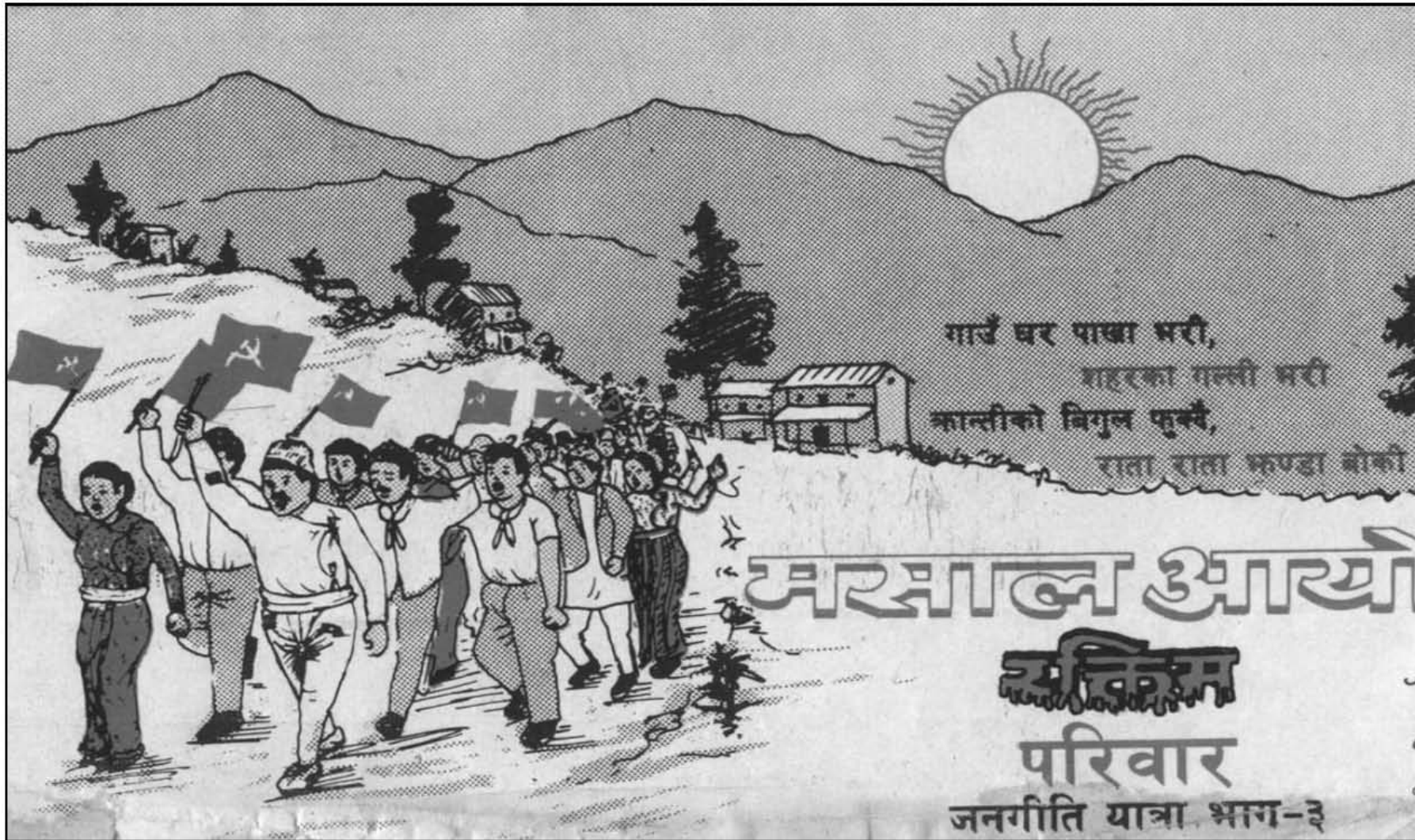
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Very soon after the outbreak of the Janandolan (democracy movement of 1990), cassettes of revolutionary songs began to circulate clandestinely. In 1994, I heard some of these songs in a Magar village which I had been visiting since the 1980s, in the north of Rukum district. It may be worth describing briefly the circumstances in which this happened, since the guerilla war was launched in this district a couple of years later. The scene took place on a veranda, at the end of a night-long shamanic seance, as everybody was served beer, a privileged moment for debates. A villager, specifically an ex-mayor of the Panchayat times, came along with his cassette player, the forbidden songs at full blast. He was wearing a pair of shorts rather than the traditional woven hemp *lungi*, and brand new training shoes, his general allure strongly reminiscent of the city and slightly odd for this man in his fifties in a remote village. In a vindictive and perhaps slightly intoxicated mood he accused the guests of remaining powerless in a dark age, still believing in superstitions, observing old customs and *jhākris'* prescriptions of blood sacrifices, rather than standing up and fighting for hospitals. The shaman faced this avalanche of criticisms with good humour, granting that hospitals were no doubt necessary, and that he had too many patients anyway. He added with modest confidence that his healing powers were given to him by spirits and he had to comply with them whether he liked it or not, and this kind of power the doctors did not have. The others discussed the need for a road to modernise the local economy, the question of its itinerary through certain villages and not others obviously being a hot issue. Nobody paid attention to the songs that gradually died in a gurgle as the batteries failed. After he left, some people mocked the ex-mayor's political convictions as well as his outfit: perhaps he wanted to look young.

A lot of ground would be covered within ten years of that incident.

In 1994, four cassettes had been produced by the *Raktim Parivār*, the 'Family of Blood', a cultural association closely linked to the Nepali Communist Party Masal (picture 1).

¹ This is a revised version of an oral communication at a conference on the Maoist Movement in Nepal organised by Michael Hutt in November 2001 at the School of Oriental and African Studies. I greatly benefited from various comments and suggestions and would like to thank Denis Blamont, Martin Gaenszle, Pratyoush Onta, Charles Ramble and Philippe Ramirez.



Picture 1:
The people's song tour (part 3) "Here comes Masal"

By 2001, 11 cassettes had been released, and 10,000 copies of a booklet with the song texts - about a hundred of them – were published every year. Their success gives enough grounds to consider these cassettes as a significant corpus, an open corpus that has been developing over the years of Maoist insurgency. The conflictual history of the affiliation of *Raktim Parivār* to revolutionary parties along these years deserves a study of its own, and it would be misleading to analyse this material as the faithful reflection of one party line. It nevertheless constitutes a rich source of information on revolutionary propaganda, using words and music as well as images, each cassette being differently illustrated. The following remarks are preliminary investigations in a vast domain of study concerning the Nepalese version of what became an international Marxist rhetoric over the course of the last century. How is this alien rhetoric adopted to the Nepalese context? What do Nepalese recognise in this new form of organizing the world? How do they make sense of it?

It is clear that the music is inspired by popular folksongs. For a native of East Nepal, the musical style sounds characteristic of the Western part of the country. The musicians of the Maoist propaganda draw from a traditional fund, more popular in villages than in urban centres. Surprisingly, these songs calling for rebellion are accompanied by gentle or lyrical melodies, although a few marches with the sound of a bugle display a more military style. The musical aspect of the songs would deserve an analysis of its own but these first observations lead to two interesting points: the revolutionary prose is expressed not in a newly composed type of music but on the contrary along the lines of a well-known and easily recognisable repertoire; people will be moved, it is hoped, by this familiar genre and the rather violent lyrics, as we shall see, are gently conveyed in this way.

A newsletter published by the *Raktim Parivār* on the occasion of the release of the eighth cassette takes up these points in the form of a debate which is worth presenting here.² All participants agree on the exceptional power of music to rouse people. The question is how best to use this power. One line of thinking encourages the modernisation of the Nepalese songs:

We need music that would stir the hearts of new generations through modernisation of Nepalese songs...In a modern world, many quality programmes are run or broadcast from international forums. Why not learn the modern technology from them?... We should accept even the technology developed by the class enemy. (*Raktim* 1998: 6)

By contrast the other opinion expresses, not without some puritanism, the need to keep Nepali culture away from foreign influences:

² The debate took place the 25th June 1997 and is reported in *Raktim* (1998).

Alien music has made a formidable attack on Nepali culture. So much so that people perform disco-dances to the tune of vulgar and sensational Hindi and English songs even on occasions like weddings, *bratabandha* feasts, religious ceremonies etc... We should not forget Nepaliness while composing any music... our music born in the hills and hillocks, streams and brooks, mountains, hills and Terai. The primitive age is where our hearts lie. (*Ibid.* 21)

There are at least two issues in this debate. One is ideological, concerning the borrowing of style and technology from your enemies; the other is pragmatic, with the end - moving people's hearts - justifying the means. This debate is strongly reminiscent of the debates that once animated Marxist dialectics. The question was whether it was appropriate to use a classical form in order to express a revolutionary content. Or, as the Russian G.V. Plekhanov put it using a famous metaphor, whether it was good to put new wine in old bottles. It seems that Mao agreed on a compromise: a minimum tolerance should be observed towards the old culture, which will nevertheless have to be transformed in order to suit the communist rhetoric.³ In the Nepalese debate the compromise is advocated on the grounds of pragmatic efficacy, in a contemporary musical context characterized by the fusion of genres:

Proper lyrics combined with a blend of modern popular and original Nepali music will be very beautiful. We should learn foreign music too, and study world music (...) our music should be a great cultural weapon against the tyrants. (*Ibid.* 21)

This fusion has had the desired emotional impact on villagers whom I know. They now like hearing the revolutionary songs again and again over the loudspeakers that Maoists bring to villages for their cultural shows.

The question I am addressing here takes up the issue that lies at the heart of these debates on political culture, although from a different point of view: to what extent does the rather recent revolutionary rhetoric merge with the various sets of interpretations that people have at their disposal and have had for a very long time? In what way precisely do the symbols, the images used in the Marxist discourse, make sense to people? It must be recalled that the events that are dealt with here do not even cover one generation yet. The interpretations lack historical distance and selection of facts. Like the people who are experiencing this new situation, observers, too, are faced with several possible interpretative frameworks within which to understand it.

³ Cf. S. Trebinjac (1997). The author mentions these ideological debates that animated Chinese intelligentsia in the 1920s, when the nationalist movement raised against the war lords of the north and the foreign powers.

Who are we?

There are a few recurrent themes in the songs. One prominent theme is the farmer's hard life in the hills, his *dukha*, his pain. The words give a realistic and depressing image of the living conditions of the rural population: "A thin body" (*pātalo euṭā śarira*), "So little grain and water" (*yati thorai anna pāni*), or "Poor inside that hut" (*garib tyo jhupro bhitra*) (*Raktimko gītharū*: 46, 57, 59). In "The long sigh of the porter" (*bhariyā lāmo sās phereko*), the singer looks back on his life as a porter since childhood, the loss of his wife who could not be treated in hospital and the death of his son in India where he had gone in search of work (*ibid.* 12). The same inspiration is found in the song called "When in the hills" (*pahārmā chādā*), in which a hillman remembers his modest patrimony, his fields and his house, that he lost while he was working in India (*ibid.* 19).

The melodies are gently sad or nostalgic, and words are in simple prose with no trace of abstract political jargon. Villagers identify themselves easily with the characters and the life depicted in these songs. As I was working out their meaning with Magar villagers, they would state with conviction that these stories were *true* - which meant that to their eyes the rest of the propaganda was not. In other words, these songs speak to them, even if they may remain ambivalent about other revolutionary cultural performances. When a villager says "this is true", he partly legitimates the movement that can express this truth.

India definitively appears as the evil place where poor Nepalese are forced to go for economic reasons. Several songs are addressed to these expatriate workers, exhorting them to come back home and fight for their own country. In the songs entitled "When I was travelling in India" (*ḍuldai hīddā bhāratmā* (*ibid.* 9), the singer remembers many Nepalese spending "their life in tears, blood and sweat", working as porters, factory workers, miners, making roads or breaking stones, with their "children born in a foreign land". More specifically the song "Come back Lahure" (*pharkideu lāhure*) reminds the expatriate that he should not live as if he did not have a country "like a Palestinian":

Come back to your own country and don't think only of yourself.
This is what the Nyauli bird sings, giving hope everywhere in the
jungle.

Let's go back to change Nepal, Lahure,
Carrying your *khukuri*, carrying your *khukuri*. (*Ibid.* 78)

Several songs are devoted to women. Once again expressive details of everyday life in the village are picked up and contribute to give a credible picture of hill women who see themselves in the characters featured in the lyrics. The following song starts with the image of the bodice of a woman

soaked with sweat as she is working (*coli bhijcha*) and goes on to lamenting that her husband is away:

The whole morning at the fireplace,
 The whole day in the field going barefoot and drinking dust,
 When I carry the load of the rich merchant
 My husband is abroad, he does not hear me weeping.
 Who can see the tears of the mind?
 The heavy heart is washed clear. (*Ibid.* 54)

Other songs take up the theme of the woman left alone at home, bearing not only the heavy burden of daily works but also the responsibility of elderly parents and more generally of social cohesion. Here the sister reminds her brother serving in the Indian army, of the Tihar festival, when he should be back home to receive her blessing with a garland of marigolds (*ke diū maile kośeli*):

What shall I give you as a present, elder brother who is weeping in your
 barracks,
 Hey! Everybody knows that this is Tihar in the maternal house;
 Now who is there in my maternal house?
 How could we forget our old parents?
 Where to keep the love of your own parents?
 Hey! How do you like it, brother, to stay in barracks abroad?
 How much pain did you cause to your father and mother?
 Let's hear now the signal of the poor,
 The garland of marigolds faded away,
 The night is gone, this is the morning of a new day
 Now it is time for you to come back
 Whether you lose or win your life,
 Come back to your own country. (*Ibid.* 86)

As the flowers are withering away, waiting for her brother to return, the sister's song takes a more combative tone, calling him to fight for his country.

All the songs above ensure that singer and listener feel they are of the same kind, in the sense that they share the same life. The songs are addressed to rural communities among which farmers would live a peaceful life with their own kin, in their fields and in their own houses, celebrating festivals, in a sort of golden age, if only the enemy did not disrupt this harmony. The songs below encourage people to fight this enemy, who is a composite "other", built up of words and images.

Who is the enemy?

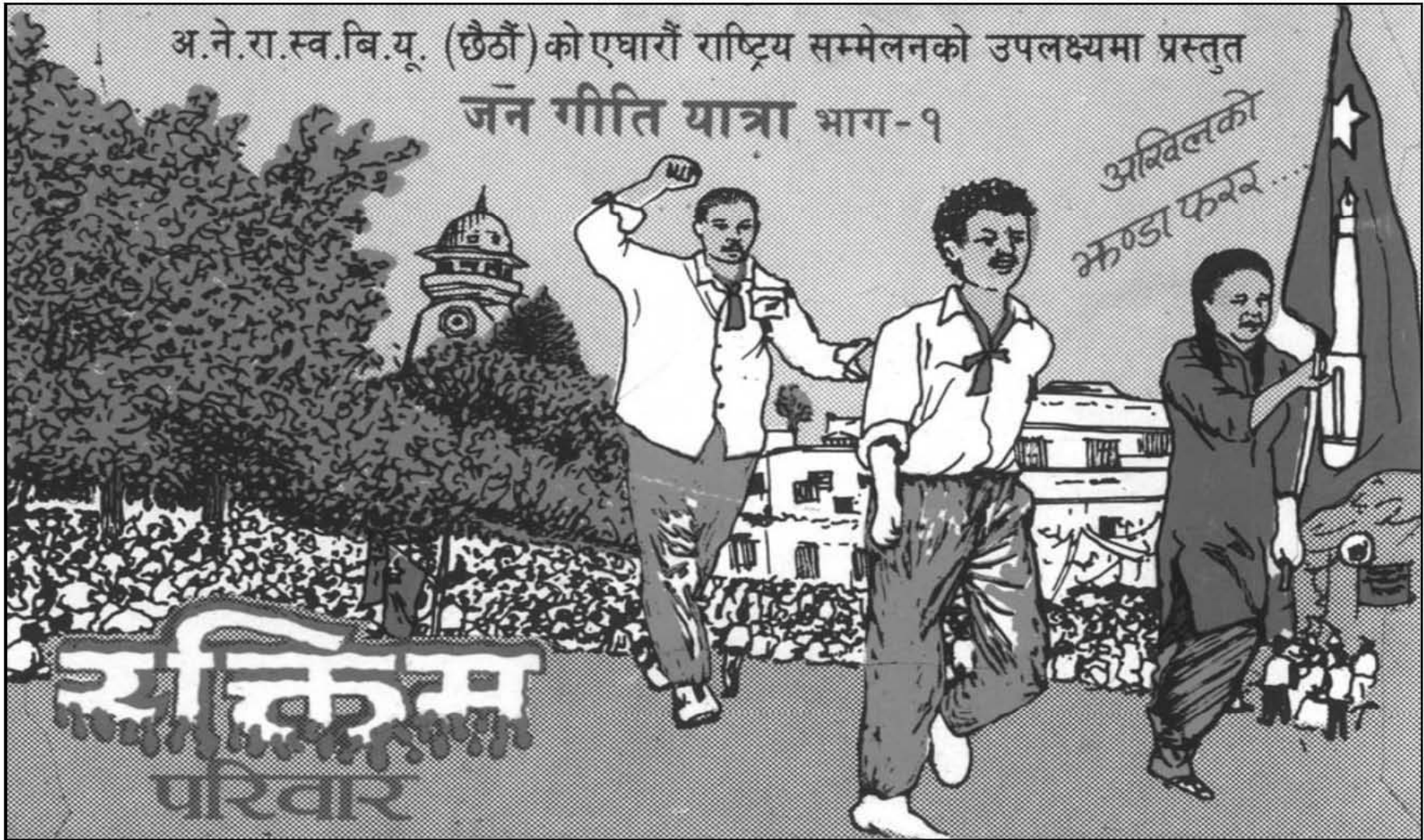
The illustrations on the covers of the first four cassettes are particularly interesting in that they present a historical progression of the revolutionary movement. They start in Kathmandu with student demonstrations under the red banner of Akhil, the Maoist student union, passing Trichandra College, the first Nepalese college established under the Rana (picture 2). Then the demonstration involves a wider public and takes a more military turn as the title of the song that is depicted suggests: "left, right, step ahead" (*lephṭ raiṭ kadam baḍhāu*, *ibid.* 23). However it is still confined to the capital, the demonstrators walking down Darbar Marg. The only recognizable emblem remains the ink pen and the star of the Maoist student union (picture 3). Whereas in the third phase the movement reaches villages in the hills where a population of farmers is now marching under the hammer and sickle of the Communist Party of Nepal (Masal)⁴: "Here comes Masal!" (*Masāl āyo*, picture 1).

All around the village houses,
 In all the streets of the city,
 The bugle of the revolution is blown,
 The red red flag is held up. (*Ibid.* 33)

In the fourth illustration the Congress party, identified by four stars, is hidden in the shade and shoots at the communist demonstrators (picture 4). Some of them already lie on the ground in a pool of blood. This cassette was released in 1993 before the "People's War", but there had been several cases of political murders by then. It is worth noticing that the song "Yankee go home", illustrated here, goes back and forth between Peru and Nepal, associating in the same breath the Americans and the corrupt government of Nepal:

O Yankee go home, dirty Yankee go home,
 Our red flag is fluttering in Peru,
 The poor grasped their guns in order to take power;
 Our vocation is class war, our task is revolution,
 Our red salute to the Peruvian revolution,
 The soil is soaked with the blood of the brave,
 The fearless war makes the world vibrate; Watch out corrupt people, we
 are not afraid!
 A hundred countries will get freedom, we will not lose!
 Those who say socialism is over are liars. (*Ibid.* 43)

⁴ Masal (derived from *masāl* 'torch') is the name of a Maoist faction.



Picture 2: The people's song tour (part 1) "The flag of Akhil [the student union] is fluttering"



Picture 3: The people's song tour (part 3) "Left, right , step ahead"



Picture 4: The people's song tour (part 4) "The reign of dictatorship again at work", "yanki go home"

In the shadow of the Congressman lurks India, adding a third element to the category of the enemy. India is the closest enemy and is asked to leave Nepalese territory. Kalapani⁵ is a recurrent issue in the propaganda, as expressed in the song "Leave, leave" (*choḍa choḍa*):

Imperialism, leave the Nepalese soil
Oh! Indian army, leave Kalapani. (*Ibid.* 99)

At this early stage of the guerilla war the main task of the propaganda is to forge the 'other', by fighting against whom 'we' become one:

Once the bugle of freedom is blown in the poor people's hut,
The ignorant mind of the people is enlightened and awakens;
Once our own people (*āphanta*) are distinguished from the others
(*parai*), The fort of the enemy can be destroyed. (*Ibid.* 2)

These few lines show that 1) the territory "is soaked with the blood of the brave", 2) the alien, the "other" (Westerners, India and exploiters) must leave Nepal and 3) the borders must be defended. These images stress the nationalist concern of the movement: all within the fixed bounds of the territory have to be of the same kind, even of the same blood, and the alien has to be removed.

The territory as a *maṇḍala*

A remark should be made about the revolutionary territory as it is presented in the songs. When place names are mentioned they all refer to a few districts in Western Nepal: Rolpa, Rukum, Pyuthan, Salyan, Baglung. In the song "In the shade of Dhaulagiri" (*dhaulagiri chāyanmā*), "all of us, let's learn how to live for ever in the love for this country, in the shadow of Dhaulagiri, stretched out in the cool of the evening" (*ibid.* 4). By contrast with these first lines expressing an emotional attachment to the place, the next lines take up the conventional and general revolutionary style, speaking of "the infinite power (*apāra śakti*) of the young people, ready to destroy the parasite" and exhorting Nepalese to wake up "in order to go forward on the way to progress, by lighting the lamp of consciousness shining over the world" (*ibid.* 20). The point is that revolutionary discourse is centred on a specific place, from where it addresses not only Nepal but the world.

The image of a height like the Dhaulagiri mountain dominating and therefore protecting the country that it overlooks is taken up in the song

⁵ Kalapani is in a corner of the north-western Indo-Nepalese frontier where the Indians were allowed to put a radio station in 1954. Nepal asked them to leave in 1969 but Indian troops are still occupying this piece of strategic Nepalese territory. This has been an object of friction between the two countries ever since.

entitled "At the foot of Jaljala" (*tyo kākh jalajalako*). The Magar village of Thawang, which played an important role in the history of communism in the region and which is by now the 'capital of the Maoist country', is located there.

At the foot of Jaljala, the army is on parade
 Like Ching Kyang⁶, the settlements will remain intact.
 The soldiers patrol everywhere carrying their guns,
 (But) our iron fort will remain.
 Whatever the threat over Thawang village
 A thousand villages will stand up. (*Ibid.* 28)

Other songs mention important market places in those districts such as "In Baglung bazaar" (*Baglung bajārmā, ibid.* 72) or "Let's meet in Burtibang" (*Burtibaṅgmā beṭh*). The latter is about a farmer who walks along the Barighat river on his way to Burtibang, listening to its murmur and watching people working hard in the fields, and porters who are scolded like dogs. Magar villagers like to recognise the itinerary that they follow from their villages in Rukum district to the bazaars in the plains, stopping for the night in Burtibang.

The references to these districts in particular should be explained by the simple fact that the revolutionary movement took root there (cf. de Sales 2000). The songs are not just abstract revolutionary rhetoric: they refer to events that happened at a certain time in a specific place and relate the history of the guerilla war.

I also suggest that, by being geographically centred, the propaganda constructs a cosmos, the centre of which can be identified with the whole: what might, in terms of the Hindu system of thought, be called a *maṇḍala*. The point here is that the propaganda has to be legitimized or, more precisely, that the voice which exhorts villagers to die for revolution must have some authority to do so. If it did not, the demands would go unheeded. This legitimacy rests on the idea that the Maoist militants as well as the villagers share a common identity: We are the same, and I am ready to die as you are ready to die. We share the same centre, we are part of the same bounded circle, the same *maṇḍala*.

However, my informants, the villagers who listen to these songs, would not speak of a *maṇḍala* centred on their districts. They may feel a certain pride in seeing their remote villages, formerly ignored by Kathmandu the political centre of the country, becoming the centre of revolution. The names of Rolpa and Rukum are all-too-often on the front page of the national press. This sudden fame carries a high price, considering the number of deaths in the area, and people's adherence to the movement remains

⁶ A non-identified place, supposed to be located in China.

ambivalent, to say the least. It is nevertheless a fact that those districts are now seen as a source of power.

Natural metaphors

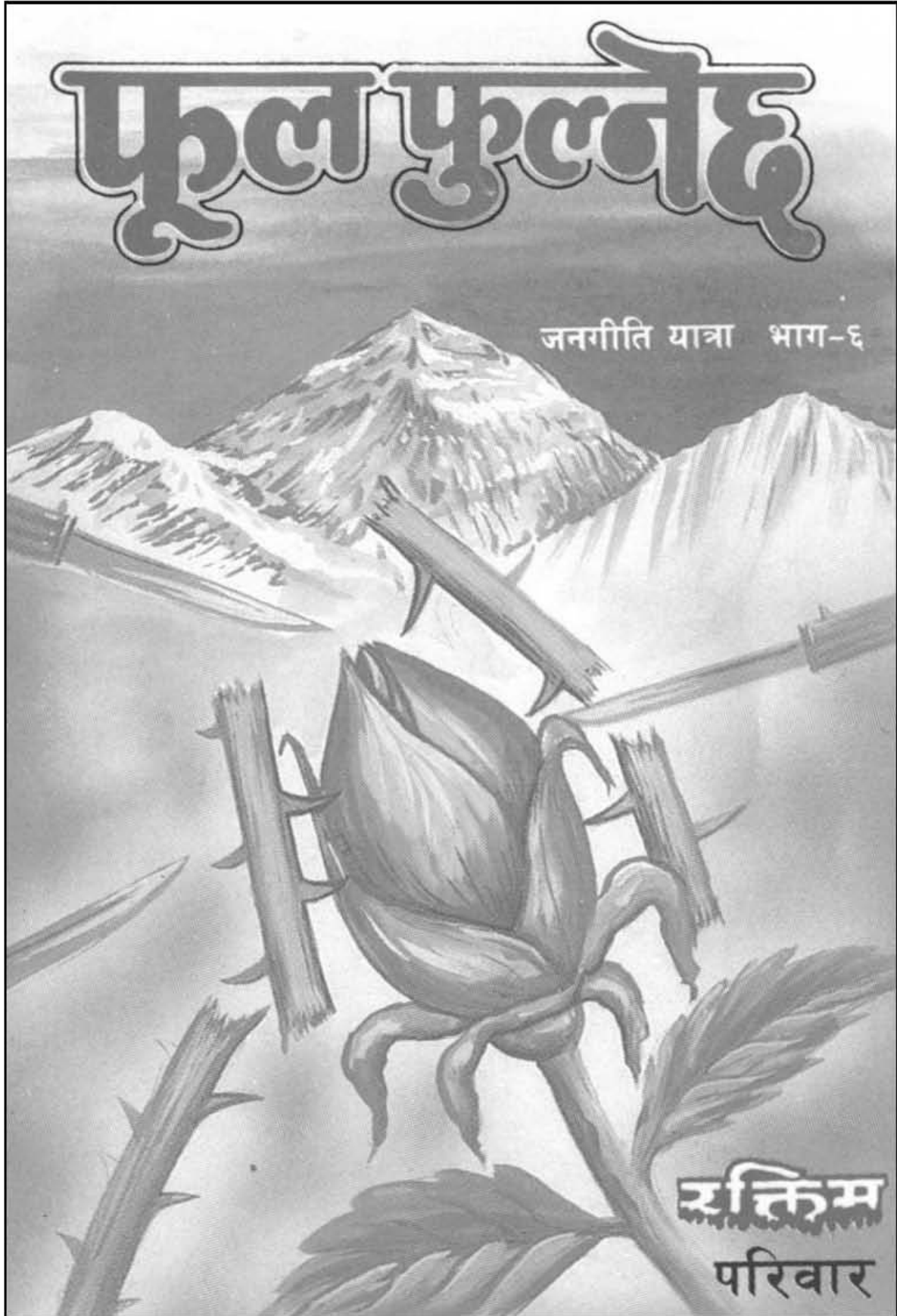
Metaphors related to nature are widely used in the songs, presenting the revolutionary process as inevitable as natural phenomena. The vitality of a bud depicts the newborn Maoist movement (picture 5). However fragile it may look at first sight, it will soon break its chains, and "the flower will blossom" (*phul phulnecha*):

When the throne falls,
The moon will appear tearing the clouds;
The feudal lords (*sāmanti*) keep tightening the rope,
But the flower will blossom when the throne falls. (*Ibid.* 60)

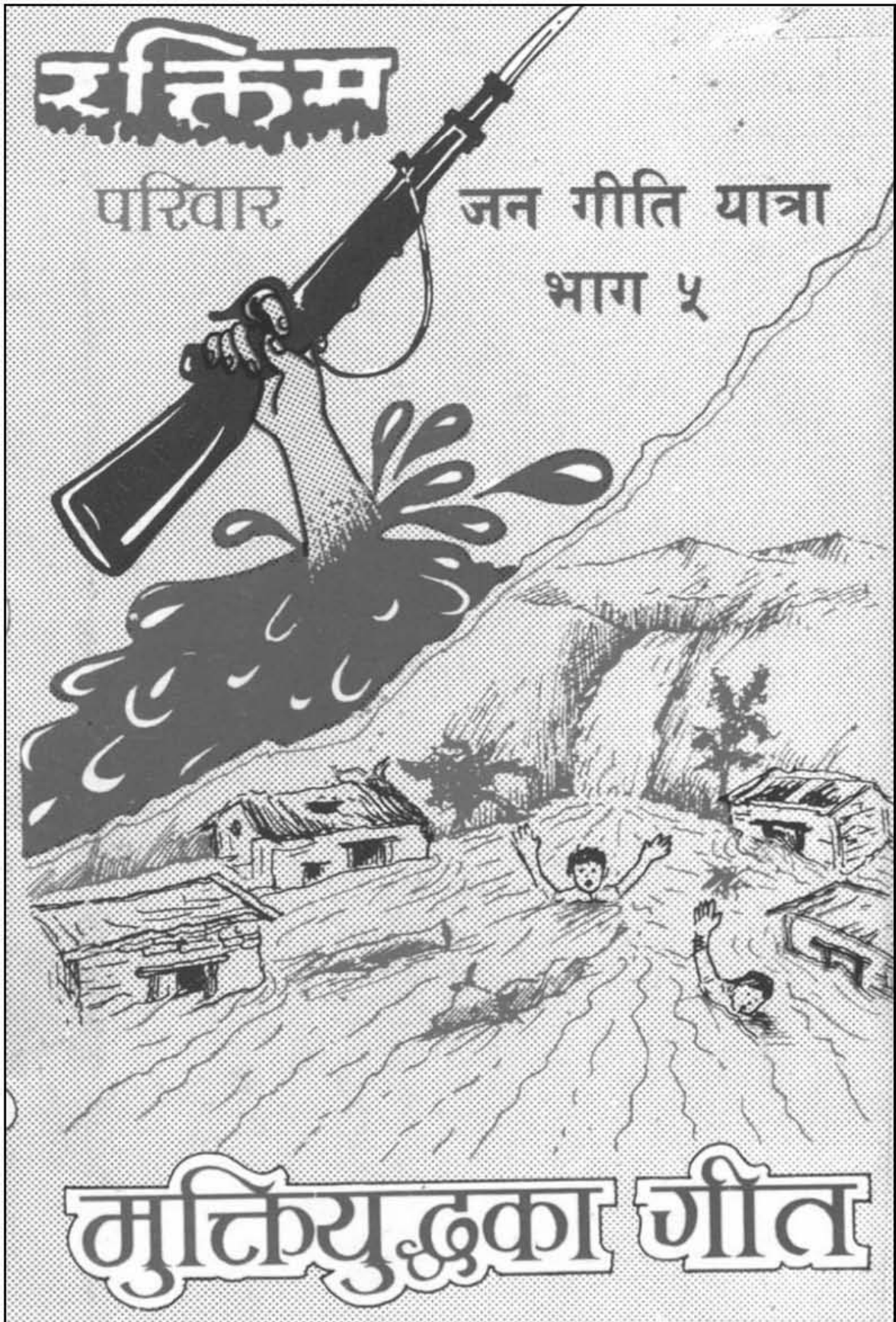
The same contrast between apparent fragility and destructive power is taken up in "The song of the bird as a storm" (*huri carako git, ibid.* 66).

The awesome power of natural disasters (earthquake, flood) is used as a prophetic image of the revolutionary movement, that will create a *tabula rasa* (picture 6):

The flood of revolution surged today, sweeping away leaves and grass;
Rise up with enthusiasm for war,
Hey! Towns and villages,
How could our faith die in front of burning fire (and the threat) of a
bayonet?
Whether in Russia or in Peru, where did the Red Army bow?
Who can stop the torrential stream, the waterfalls?
Who can survive now, suffering the rule of the exploiters?
All the poor are now rising up;
Hey! Provoke an earthquake!
Carrying a *khukuri* at the waist, a gun on the shoulder, with fire in the
eyes,
A world will come to birth, reddened by the gun with a river of blood...
How can we stay without doing anything when our rivers and streams
are sold off? (*Ibid.* 74)



Picture 5: The people's song tour (part 6) "The flower will blossom"



Picture 6: The people's song tour (part 5) "The song of liberation war"

The image of rivers and streams conveys several ideas. One is the main stream of revolution that keeps growing as it is joined by the tributaries flowing down from hills all over the country. The main stream eventually bursts its banks and becomes a deluge from which a new world will emerge "in a river of blood". More precisely, in the song just mentioned the country is irrigated by its rivers in the same way that a human body is irrigated by the blood in its veins. This image is illustrated on both pictures 4 and 6. It is worth recalling at this point that the Nepalese government agreed on selling hydroelectricity to India, a crucial issue in national politics and, for the opposition, one of the main points of disagreement with the government. Keeping in mind that water is transformed into electrical power, into energy, it becomes clear that beyond any economic reason or political strategy, selling off the Nepalese rivers to India is symbolically extremely violent, especially in a Hindu tantric system of thought. Once her energy has been drained, Nepal ceases to exist. The underlying idea here is to keep the boundaries of the *maṇḍala* closed in order to retain one's energy.

Sacrifice of and sacrifice for

The overwhelming presence of blood in the songs, most often associated with the land, the soil, the ground or the earth (*bhumī, māṭo, dhartī*) and one's own country (*deś*) or flag, introduces the theme of sacrifice. This theme, central to the Nepalese revolutionary ideology, presents several possible developments. One song is devoted to "the infinite power of the people" (*janatāko śakti cha apār*):

The reign of the demon is vanishing,
 The morning of the people is coming,
 The soil of the country is coloured (with blood), the mountain cracks,
 The chests of the brave are pierced (by bullets), the eyes have holes.
 Don't cut the throat of revolution!
 Don't stop! Go ahead, oh people! (*Ibid.* 20)

The lines describe the death of the brave and their blood being shed on the ground. This, we understand, generates more *śakti* to fight the enemy. Soaked with the blood of the martyrs, the soil germinates, power grows. The reasoning here reminds us of a standard Hindu sacrifice according to which the ritual is supposed to generate more life by taking life. There is however an important difference: in a standard sacrifice, the beneficiary of the sacrifice, the sacrificer in Hubert and Mauss' terminology, sacrifices a substitute of himself in order to obtain more vitality or prosperity for him and his people – his family if the sacrificer is a householder, his subjects if he is a king. He himself does not die but instead has the sacrificial victim killed in his place. With the martyrs, who give their own life, we are dealing with another pattern of sacrifice, more common in religions of salvation, such as

Christianity or Islam. Revolutionary ideology can be brought into the same frame of thought, since the martyr is dying here and now for a better world beyond his or her death. S/he displays exemplary behaviour. S/he is not a sacrificial victim whose life is taken away for the benefit of the person who performs a sacrifice. The martyr is the beneficiary of his or her own death through which S/he will live on if only in the memory of the people of which S/he is a part. The following song takes up this idea of self-sacrifice generating power and implicitly contrasts it with another vision of the people's death.

The fluttering red flag unites all the students.
 The white terror of the enemy always frightens people.
The blood of the martyrs reddened our fluttering red flag.
The blood of the poor was drunk by the corrupt feudal lords.
 Our existence was taken away by the partyles. (Emphasis added)

By giving their lives, the martyrs create unity among the people who remember them and worship them. In becoming one kin the powerless gain power against the enemy. This is the meaning of the flag of unity that is red with the blood of the martyrs. What is expressed in the next line is different. Poor people here are victims whose life and blood benefited the rulers in Panchayat times. The two lines implicitly contrast the self-sacrifice of the martyrs generating more power with simple murder committed by the rulers.

There are two competing models of sacrifice in the songs: self-sacrifice and sacrifice of the other. The second pattern is dominant in Hindu ritual practices and may orient the understanding of the sacrificial scenarios set up in the songs. But at the same time, revolutionary propaganda stresses another pattern of sacrifice: self-sacrifice for a cause. This second pattern is not new, and neither is the figure of martyr. We were reminded of this shortly after the *janāndolan*, in a review of the Nepali literature concerning the recent events, in the second issue of this Bulletin: 'In the rituals of Nepalese political culture the martyrs of 1990 joined those at Martyrs' Gate, who two generations earlier had given up their lives in the overthrow of the Ranas (Burghart and Gaenzle 1991: 15). It is worth quoting at length from the authors' conclusion:

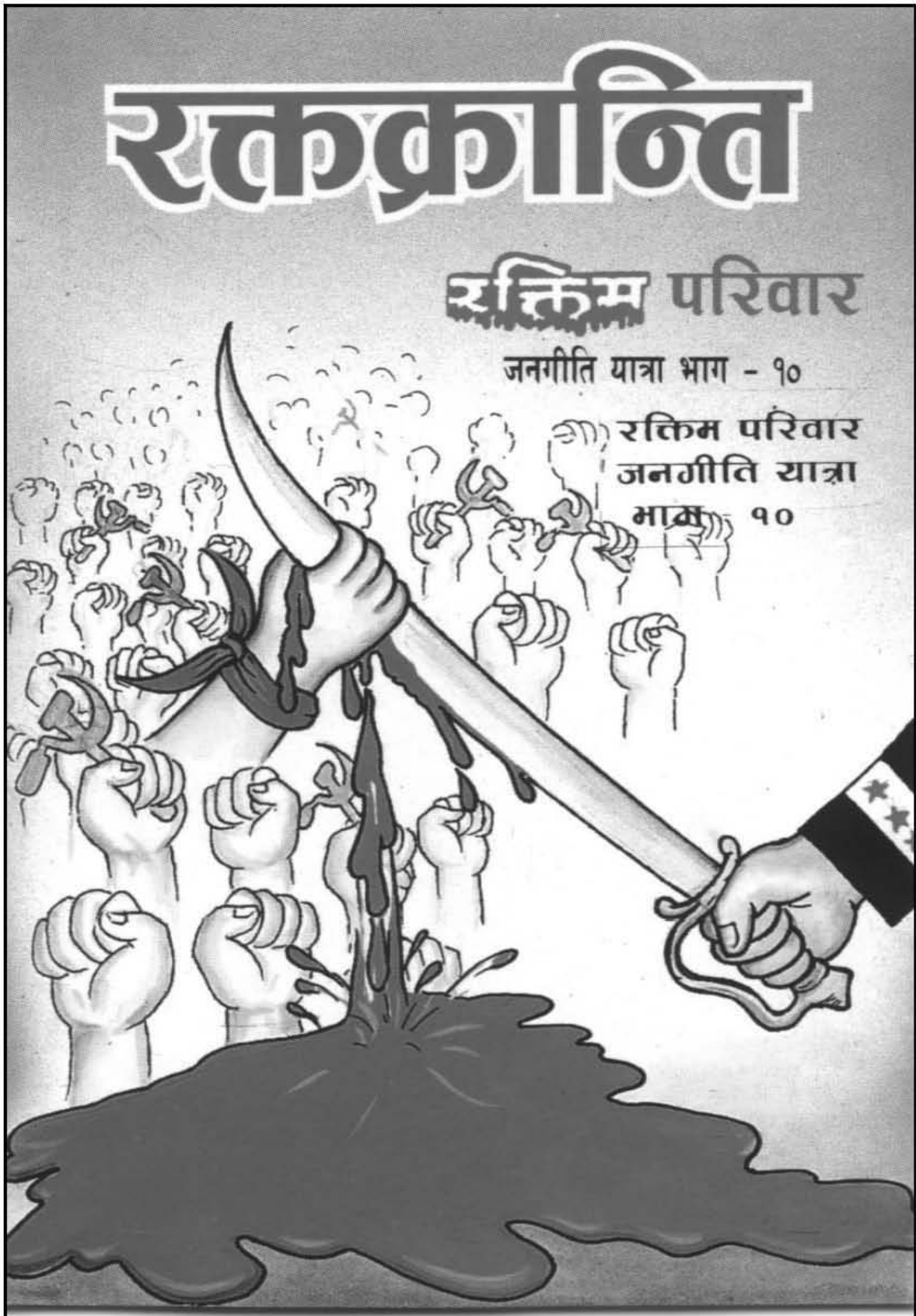
Despite their deaths, the martyrs continued to play a decisive role in the negotiations concerning the new Constitution...and it was clear in the rhetorical construction of the people's movement that sovereignty had already transferred from the king to the people. *The king was no longer the mediator between deity and people who by sacrifice preserved the well-being of his subjects.* From the Nepalese texts under review, it is clear that *the martyrs had sacrificed their lives to the motherland for*

democracy which *they*, not the king, gave to the people. Powers of legitimate agency had shifted within the kingdom. (Emphasis added)

The italicised phrases implicitly distinguish the two patterns of sacrifice mentioned earlier: the royal Hindu sacrifice and the self-sacrifice of the martyr for democracy. It could be argued that these two patterns share the same structure: a larger self (the people or the king) gives a part of itself in sacrifice to obtain a higher goal (freedom, prosperity, here sovereignty), or, as Mauss put it in his *Essay on the Gift*, they give less to obtain more. In this perspective the martyr would condense the positions of sacrificer and victim without altering the purpose of sacrificial killing, which is to generate power. However the distinction between the two patterns remains relevant in order to understand how the shift in sovereignty operates. The illustration of the 10th cassette suggests a hypothesis.

The image (picture 7) shows the slaughtering of the Maoists by the government. It is remarkable that this slaughter is set up as a royal sacrifice: the sabre of the king in the hand of the Nepali Congress is beheading a crowd of fists raised in the red salute. According to a Hindu conception of sacrifice, the rebels would be depicted here as sacrificial victims for the benefit of the ruler who takes their life away.

But according to the other pattern of sacrifice, the self-sacrifice, the local logic of the standard sacrifice is diverted. The ruler who is performing the sacrifice is, so to speak, deprived of his efficacy. The benefit of the sacrifice no longer goes to him but *directly* to the people who share the same blood in accordance with the martyrs' self-sacrifices, that generates one kin. In this perspective, the beheaded rebels are not passive victims any more, but intercept the generative power of Hindu sacrifice for the benefit of the people's revolution. This interpretation presents the advantage of remaining within the framework of a Hindu sacrificial scenario, as is strongly suggested by the royal sabre.



Picture 7: The people's song tour (part 10) "The revolution of blood"

These revolutionary lyrics and iconography have shown how propaganda aims at mobilizing people by creating empathy and by "othering" the enemy using the powerful concept of blood to draw the line between "we", the *Raktim Parivār* or "family of blood", and "them", who are of an other kind, drinking human blood. The naturalisation of revolution is strongly suggested by the recurrent metaphors drawing from the natural world: the revolution ineluctably follows its course. This leads to the people's self-empowerment which, as I have tried to argue, is achieved through a manipulation of the royal sacrifice. The shift of agency, as it was first noted by Burghart and Gaenzle, is achieved not only through political processes. This brief tour (*yātrā*) of revolutionary songs shows culture at work.

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