

# Building social capital through music participation: A case of a female dapha/bhajan ensemble

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## Abstract

Nepal, a heterogeneous country with more than 120 ethnic groups, carries the label of being one of the most gender unequal countries in South Asia. Music plays an important role in the native ethnic group of Kathmandu valley, the Newar community, incorporating practices that are also often divided along gender lines. Although It is a broad group consisting of various ethnic, racial, caste and religious communities, older men in the family often hold the responsibility for making important decisions. The majority of Newari women are excluded from household and communal decision making, and as such, lack opportunities for active decision making concerning their own lives.

In this research report, I outline the findings of a case study of Newari women participating in a Dapha/Bhajan ensemble, which is usually reserved for men. The focus of this study was on how participation in such an ensemble as affected the social capital of members of a women-only ensemble in Nepal. Through focusing on their participation in two public events outside their community surroundings, this research attends to changes in the womens' self confidence, musical and social horizons, social support, and political and social participation. The findings suggest that participation in music-making can be seen as a vehicle to female empowerment and should be taken into consideration when thinking about future music education in Nepal. Music making and participation could have a potential for more equal society.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, Gender, Music Education, Music Participation, Nepal

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## 1. Introduction

The research reported in this paper is about the change in the perception of how women see and feel about themselves as active members of a community. Through focusing on activities and participation of female musicians in a Newari Dapha/Bhajan ensemble in Nepal, this research investigated how women singers participation in two major events in March 2017 affected their self-concept, understood through the concept of social capital. A Dapha/Bhajan ensemble is of particular interest as traditionally women have been forbidden to be involved in such music activities, particularly as the repertoires are all devotional songs. In this way, this research is about social change through music, and equality in Nepal.

### 1.1 The Dapha/Bhajan music of the Newar community in Nepal

Nepal is a heterogeneous country with more than 120 ethnic groups/castes with their own cultures, musical practices, and habits. In this study I am focusing particularly on Dapha/Bhajan music that is a part of Newar community's traditional music making. Newars are the original inhabitants of the Kathmandu valley, and are a broad community consisting of various ethnic, racial, caste and religious groups. Music plays an important role in newar community, accompanying more than twenty lavish traditional festivals a year. Among other musical forms from Newar community, Dapha/Bhajan probably the oldest surviving devotional music of Nepal, with its "origin in the 16th century" (Richard Widdess, Preface xxi). Dapha music consists of instruments like Khin, Ponga, Babuu, Moo Dhime, Paschima, Nagara, Damaru as percussions, Taa, Bhusya and Kyanpin as cymbals, along with Flutes and Singing. The dapha songs use certain ragas. Nepal has its own ragas which has been used only in the dapha music and in different ethnics groups' tradition music settings.

"Nepali Hinduism forbids menstruating women to enter a temple or kitchen, share a bed with a husband or touch a male relative. During menstruation, women are 'untouchable' " (Crawford, 2014, p. 426). This phenomenon also translate into material objects such as musical instruments. Traditionally, women have been forbidden from performing dapha. Although the gender equality

has been introduced by law, it seemed to be very less practiced. It seems like the old social stigma, according to which, women are impure as they go through menstruation cycle. Hence, they should not touch any musical instruments or sing as all these processes are done for the gods. Consequently, females playing music or singing devotional songs is a fairly recent phenomenon. Indeed, females started playing the Dhime drums or the flutes not more than 10 years back. But it is hard to find any females singing/playing music in Dapha/Bhajan groups even today.

## Chapter 2: Music Education for Change in Nepal

As per the National Review of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2017)<sup>61</sup>, Nepal has made significant progress in poverty reduction and human development over the last two decades. The “percentage of people living below the national poverty line dropped from 38 % in 2000 to 21.6 % in 2015” (Nepal Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Profile, 2017, p.9). However, it was emphasized that there is still work to be done, particularly with regards to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The report particularly noted the need to 1) reduce “wide gaps between the level of poverty across all regions, social groups, age, sex, and by disability status” and 2) increase the grade promotion rates of “girls in secondary schools and the enrolment of women in technical and vocational education and training” (Nepal Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Profile, 2017, p.9). As one of the most unequal countries in South Asia (Lawoti, 2007, pg. 25), Nepal consists of more than 120 ethnic groups/castes with their own cultures, musical practices, and habits. Newars are one of those 120 ethnic groups. They are the natives of the Kathmandu Valley, consisting of various races and castes but a single linguistic community. There has been a lot of studies done on the social status of the Newari women as the dominance on them by male has been seen and written a lot about. Women are subordinate to men in Newar society. Especially, married women are highly discriminated against in their homes. Amongst the Newars, according to Shrestha (2007), the need for change is clear: “It is not possible that the Newars will preserve everything of their culture and tradition either, nor is it desirable... for instance domination of women by men and caste discriminations, must be brought to an end” (p. 214).

Music education also has a role in implementing this change, to promote respect between people and social justice. However, this is not necessarily only an individual change, and many scholars have claimed that musical practices... reflect changes occurring in a society (Koskoff, 1989; Wolf, 2009). For example, on research with youth in England, Rimmer (2009) found that “Over recent years... participation in small-scale, locally based arts activities has increasingly come to be viewed by policy-makers as capable of playing a valuable role in both re-engaging ‘at-risk’... with mainstream education and providing a means through which communities might combat social exclusion.” (Rimmer 2009, pg. 71). The women dapha/bhajan group can also be viewed as a locally based arts activity and the “domination of women by men” as “at-risk”. The still

existing social stigma that the women are not preferred performing could also be seen as social exclusion.

In another study, Butler, Lind & McKoy (2007) found that “As our profession continues to develop a research agenda focused on equity, social justice, and music learning, we must find ways to think deeply about how the issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and culture might mediate music learning.” (Butler, Lind & McKoy 2007, pg. 249) Although this study was focused on school music education, it sheds the light that the “at-risk” “domination of women by men” might negotiate the music learning and vice versa.

## Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Many researchers have found “the theoretical concept of social capital to be very useful while examining issues relating to community cohesion, social inclusion and broadening participation in the arts” (Wilks, 2011, p. 289). Social capital can be understood as both individual and collective property that benefits the societies and individuals to enrich participatory engagements. As Franke (2005) writes, “Social capital is *neither an individual nor a collective property*, but rather a property arising from the interdependence between individuals and between groups in a community” (Franke 2005, 2; italics added). In this way, social capital is both something that benefits each individual woman in the dapha ensemble, but also helps towards building a society of people respecting each other’s differences.

Coleman (1988) argued that social capital can benefit larger groups, especially if ‘one should forgo self-interest to act in the interests of the collectivity... leads persons to work for the public good’ (Coleman 1988, p. 104). This resonates with social theorist Putnam’s (2000) claim that social capital is important to democracy. Putnam (2000) argues that the arts have the power to promote wellbeing through social cohesion, “allowing the production of mutually beneficial norms of reciprocity, generalised trust and cooperation. Putnam suggests that the extent of volunteering and philanthropy is a central measure of social capital in a community, although he explains that the social connections gained from ‘doing with’ are more important to social capital building than the cheque in an envelope approach of ‘doing for’ (Putnam, 2000, p. 116). Putnam also claims that arts events could be used to transcend social barriers: people may make new connections with others whom they perceive to have a different, though equally rigid set of values.” (Wilks, 2011, p. 289).

## 4. Methods

### 4.1 Research aim and questions

The overall aim of this research study was to investigate the ways in which participating in a Dapha/Bhajan ensemble affected the social capital of Newari women. This was looked at particularly in the context of two public performances in 2017, one at a Kathmandu music festival (Echoes in the Valley) and one at an international music education conference (Cultural Diversity in Music Education). These two performances are described in detail in the following section.

Two research questions guided the study. These were:

1. How have the meanings female Dapha/Bhajan participants' assign to participating in these two public events shaped their conceptualization of 'self'?
2. How do the female Dapha/Bhajan participants' feel that participating in these two public events has shaped their positions in broader society?

### 4.2 A Case Study of a female Dapha/Bhajan ensemble

This study is a case study involving "the close examination of people, topics, issues, or programs" (Hays, 2004, p. 218). The case investigated is a female dapha/bhajan ensemble, consisting of 17 women from the Manamaiju area and 17 from Gongabu area. All the females have been volunteering for the ensemble. This study focuses particularly on the women group from Manamaiju area. Among the 17 women, 12 of them from Manamaiju volunteered themselves for the interview. None of them have had received any prior formal vocal training. They are all housewives and farmers except 3 of them works in office as well as being a housewife. 1 is unmarried and undergoing her studies. Only 4 of them can read and write, while none of them have any kind of educational degree. The ensemble has been in existence for past 4 years.

The focus was on the women's participation in two major musical events held in Kathmandu in March of 2017: The Echoes In The Valley Music Festival, and the Cultural Diversity in Music Education Conference.

#### 4.2.1 Echoes in the Valley

The Echoes in the Valley Festival, organized in Ason on 25th of March, celebrated local music traditions. The festival strived to uncover, revive and make relevant Kathmandu's intangible

heritages and disappearing sounds by showcasing local music, art, and performances of everyday rituals. It aimed to transform small neighbourhoods into grand stages for musical conversations between international and local artists. The festival also offered an array of interactive educational initiatives like creative workshops, guided neighbourhood walks, and an open museum of communal art and artifacts. Organized by the social initiative 'Musicians for Musicians' in collaboration with local community organizations, the festival aimed towards being an inclusive event, regardless of age, gender and ethnicity. The vision was also to revive the centuries old *dabus* which were built as stages for any kind of performing arts. Without outside sponsorship, the festival was community-based, incorporating performances and workshops on the centuries old dying rituals, children music making, women participation in workshops and in music like dapa/bhajan, ethno pop and slam poetry.

This event was unusual in many respects. Usually festivals - in Nepali meaning of the word - are the celebration of different deities in particular times of the year. The Echoes In The Valley provided stage settings which are more familiar to the festivals celebrating e.g. pop or rock - thus, the Western meaning of the word. At Echoes in the Valley traditional music was also played in new ways, meaning new instrumentations, and arrangements of the traditional music. The all women Dapha/Bhajan Ensemble was one of the good examples of how the traditional barriers were broken paving a way towards more inclusiveness.

#### 4.2.2 CDIME

Cultural Diversity In Music Education (CDIME) is a bi-annual conference that was held in Nepal for the first time in 2016. The conference has a participation of music professors, doctorates and scholars. For the all women Dapha/Bhajan Ensemble, it was a very different setting to perform, than they were used to. They were only used to performing in their own village and in their evening practices, to be precise. Most of these women had never been in 5 star hotels or have ever performed or been present in the parties like these where there were Ambassador and other prestigious people.

#### 4.3 Data Collection

Data collection was done through group interviews, with each group consisting of 3-4 women. The interviews were conducted based on the idea of the interviewees that it would be comfortable for them to be interviewed together with their close friends from the same ensemble. This approach of group interviews was seen to allow for the participants to bounce their ideas and opinions back and forth, 'and be modified by the group, rather than being the definitive statement of a single respondent' (Morgan 1993, p. 24). In this way, I consider not just the voice and perspective of the participating women interview group, but also of their relevant and the interaction between themselves.

A semi-structured interview approach was selected for this study because it is an appropriate means to address the research questions but also to include any issues or points not conceived by the researcher beforehand. Longhurst (2016) has defined semi-structured interviews as unfolding “in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important....” (Longhurst 2016, p. 143). In this way, the women being interviewed were given the opportunity to guide the conversation, with “the detailed structure... left to be worked out during the interview, and the person being interviewed has a fair degree of freedom in what to talk about, how much to say, and how to express it” (Drever 1995, p. 150).

Interviews were held in a room next to their practice room, meaning that the women were met in a space that they were familiar with and comfortable in. While I have interview with one group we could hear remaining women singing in their practice room. Three group interviews were held in July 2017, of approximately one hour with each group for two times. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Interviews covered the meanings participants ascribed to being in the ensembles in general, any changes playing in the ensemble had made in their lives, as well as focusing on each performance in more detail.

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

The focus of this research concerns a much deeper meaning towards the interviewee’s personal consciousness about themselves, and the meanings they assign to playing in the dapha ensemble as a group, how they see themselves as an active member of the society, family and traditional music culture. I chose to use the thematic analysis, also taking into consideration the theoretical framework of the study (Braun & Clarke 2006).

#### 4.5 Researcher position

I myself come from the Newar community. While growing up I was exposed to the idea of gender equality in my education since my childhood. However, I hardly experienced this equality in my community. It was not a male’s duty to do any kind of household works like cooking, cleaning, washing dishes and clothes, but it was a duty for any other females in the family. It was always females who were supposed to only take care of household works and independent women working for living besides working in fields is still a new phenomenon here. All the financial and other important decisions are taken by the oldest male.

As being a musician and a music teacher, I have been working at Kathmandu University, department of music as an ensemble teacher since 2010 and at Nepal Music Center (NMC), a



Kathmandu based music school as bass guitar and ensemble teacher since 2008. At NMC I found out that my colleague and senior professor, Mr. Nhuchhe Bahadur Dangol was working on building a women dapha group. He had a vision of starting music education amongst women. He started by teaching the devotional songs to his wife and her female cousins. They slowly got other women interested in joining the dapa “housewives choir” group. Since the majority of newar women do not have a role in household and communal decision making such as financial decisions, they also lack in active decision making concerning on their own lives.

In this way, acknowledging these activities to the Women Dapha group interview participants can also be seen as “giving voice”. This one aspect is an important characteristic of case studies, that they give a voice to the powerless and voiceless. (Winston M. Tellis 1997, introduction), (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991).

## 4.6 Ethical considerations

The interview was recorded with the consent from the participants, which will be recorded as well (as all the participants do not know how to read and write). All the participants are referred to by pseudonyms.

## Chapter 5: Findings

The findings of the data analysis are here reported in three themes. The first (5.1) is the research participants' descriptions of participating in CDIME and Echoes in the valley, focusing particularly on self-confidence (5.1.1) and their social and musical horizons (5.1.2). The second focuses on the support that the women felt was necessary in order to participate in the musical ensemble (5.2). The final theme outlines how the women felt that singing in the ensemble was related to their political and social participation (5.3).

### 5.1 Participation in CDIME and Echoes in the Valley

#### 5.1.1 Self Confidence

Participating and exposing ourselves to different musical scenario builds the confidence in our own musical capability. I have noticed several women mentioning this in the interview process. For example, one participant explained:

Group A- "I gained confidence in playing and singing after participating in EITV and CDIME"

Group Ka- "Yes, I have more confidence after performing at these two festivals". (42:00 mins)

Group A- "As a daughter in laws, I should have the courage to talk and convince the mother in laws positively that these kind of activities (bhaja/dapha) are very good and should be allowed to attend. I wouldn't have had the courage or even the thoughts like these before my involvement in the bhajan/dapha group". (8:30 min)

Group A- "Before I was even afraid to ask my mother in law for any excuse even to go out. Now it has changed." (43:50mins)

#### 5.1.2 Musical and social horizons

Many of the other women confirmed the idea, that performing at these two festivals improved their self-confidence levels. The dapha/bhajan group also seems to use the opportunities to go out and play music for broadening their musical and social horizon. The women claimed that participation in these ensembles enriched their lives both musically and socially. As two groups of women stated,

Group Ka- “I found out that there is nothing a woman can’t and shouldn’t do. I found out this by going to places to playing music like at CDIME and Echoes in the Valley” (35 mins)

Group Aa- “Through bhajan/dapha we get to go to different places and learn about different cultures. These two festivals have given us such opportunities” (25:00 min)

Group Ka- “Now I am changed in a lot of ways like fashion and others..... I’m changed within me, others don’t even have to tell me.....” (39:00 mins)

Group Aa- “From my visits to other villages, I think we need to built a meeting hall near the temple, so that we can keep guest from other villages there for any kind of meetings and gatherings.” (29:00 min)

## 5.2 Support

One of the themes identified in the data was support. Supporting one another was seen by the dapha ensemble members as essential in order to be able to attend the practice sessions and the musical events that they participated at. For example, one participant said,

Group Ka- “The help in the household works by the family members has increased since I started coming for bhajan/dapha.” (26 mins)

Even the husbands who were not very positive about their wives attending the singing group starts supporting them. As one participant said,

Group Ka- “First my husband didn’t agree on letting me go for dapha/bhajan, but later my friends came and asked my husband to let me come telling him who else was there. There all the far family members and friends. This made him not stop me from going anymore..... (9:00 mins)..... Now my husband even helps me when I don’t finish the household works to get the time to go for the practice sessions and when I were participating for the different music events”. (23:00 min)

Group Ka- “Now my husband helps me when I don’t finish the household works.” (24:00 min)

Yet another one said,

Group A- “I got help from my spouse on household works through Dapha/Bhajan”. (19mins)”

The ability to provide each other with this kind of support was not necessarily automatic, but seen as something that required confidence, and developed over time. For example, one participant explained,

Group A- "I wasn't even allowed to have talks or gatherings with friends or even to take rest from the household works before, now it's not like that anymore". (41 mins)"

Group A- "Before I was even afraid to ask my mother in law for any excuse even to go out. Now it has changed". (43:50mins)".

Another participant explains in the following way, which also seems to have developed over time with confidence.

Group Aa- "It is the moms who used to not allow daughters to go out in the evenings. Now since the moms are coming for this bhajan/dapha practices in the evenings, they have acknowledged that these kinds of activities are important and now the girls have a freedom to go out in the evenings to learn different things including music. (16:00 min)".

Group A- "If my daughter in law wants to go and join such groups and if my son disapproves then I will tell my son that I will take care of her household works. She should be allowed to join the groups..... I don't think I will be able to say the same thing to my son 8-10 years back when this bhajan/dapha group didn't exist. I have gathered the courage through this bhajan" (14:00 min).

Group Aa- "Girls weren't allowed to touch even the musical instruments, that's the way males worked in a way to dominate the women. But it's not like that anymore." (23mins and 54mins)

Group A- "I wasn't even allowed to have talks or gatherings with friends or even to take rest from the household works before, now it's not like that anymore." (41 mins)

Group Ka- "15 years back, we weren't even allowed to wear anything besides sari, but it has changed now." (28:00 min)

Group ka- "There used to be lots of people who used to hurt my feelings by saying why are you out so late you should be home..... which made me feel awkward to come for the practice. But now the no of those kind of people has decreased a lot."

### 5.3 Building self-confidence for political and social participation

In this section I report how the participation in the women dapha/bhajan group seemed to give the women a lot of confidence within themselves which encouraged them to be more socially active. They claim that through dapha/bhajan participation they got to see different places and people. Being in different places and meeting different people lead them to realise more about themselves and their own surroundings. This process seems to have encouraged them to be more involved in decision making process either in their personal life or in the communal sense. This could be noticed from the following points that the women made in the interview.

Group Ka- “Now I can and even had put out my word, like in the last election I said I will not vote if the leaders only promise and not do their duty. I said that to the election candidates themselves..... Which I wouldn't have been able to do if it was before this bhajan group started. Through this group I had the chance to go to different place, see and learn different things. This has given me the power to say things that I think is correct”.  
(14 min)

Group Aa- “Since I work in the health sector, I can bring different groups like the free medical that is offered from time to time. It feels good that I have the support from this bhajan/dapha group to help me in these works in the future..” (54:00 min)

Group Ka- “..... 3 years back we started the social women group called swatantra kendriya samuha .... We women brought in the water line because we decided not to depend on men. We had the women meeting and we sent the application to the concerned government authority and water lines and water tanks were constructed”.

Group A- “There is an another group housewives that has started to practice as well. They are asking me to teach them. They will practice on their own and they will join us later.”

## Chapter 6: Discussion

### 6.1 social capital and equality

The support that the women started to get from their in-laws and spouse or family in general after their continuous involvement in the dapha/bhajan group seems to have earned them some kind of recognition and a social respect. This new found recognition and respect has have lead the women to participate more in their music practices, which in-turn made them more confident musically. As they started to take on challenges of participating in the events held outside of their practice room and their village, the more confidence they gathered. The women claimed to have gained a lot of confidence and also broadened their musical and social horizon by participating in the events outside their village, such as CDIME and E.I.T.V Music festival.

The rise in self-confidence of the women can be seen as gains in social capital, allowing them to act towards a bigger participation in music and also in their general social life. In this way, all of these things relate to social capital through music participation. Social capital can be understood as both individual and collective property that benefits the societies and individuals to enrich participatory engagements.

### 6.2 Tradition, Change and Social mobility

The “theoretical concept of social capital is useful when examining issues relating to community cohesion, social inclusion and broadening participation in the arts.” (Wilks 2011, p. 289). Social capital can be understood as both individual and collective property that benefits the societies and individuals to enrich participatory engagements. As Franke (2005) writes, “Social capital is *neither an individual nor a collective property*, but rather a property arising from the interdependence between individuals and between groups in a community” (2; italics added). In this way, social capital is both something that benefits each individual woman in the dapha ensemble, but also helps towards building a society of people respecting each other’s differences. The findings are here discussed in terms of individual change, and also interpersonal.

#### Individual:

The change within individuals can be spotted distinctively in the interviews. As per the discussion and findings, the women were not even allowed to touch the musical instruments or sing devotional songs some years before they started to get involved in the dapha/bhajan group. The group started approximately 5 years back. The ability to provide each other with this kind of support was not necessarily automatic, but seen as something that required confidence, and developed over time. The process of building individual self confidence was triggered by two

main factors. Firstly, the women started to get the support from within their dhapa/bhajan group and also from the community outside of it. This brought in the confidence to the women in believing in the music practice that they were involved in.

Secondly, confidence was also gained through the experience of performing in various events like EITV and CDIME which took place outside of their regular music making place gave them public exposure. They also seemed to have gained exposure in the public sphere in terms of experiencing different music and social cultures from such participations. This new experience slowly gave the evolution to the thoughts like “there is nothing a woman can’t and shouldn’t do” They even admitted that they found out this by going to places to play music. They started to experience and compare these different cultures. This gave birth to the feelings like “I think we need to built a meeting hall near the temple, so that we can keep guest from other villages there for any kind of meetings and gatherings.” These kind of self confidence and the social interest wouldn’t have been possible without the support that they gathered through their participation in the dapha/bhajan group.

### Interpersonal:

A great deal of support is found not only within the dapha/bhajan group, which they succeeded to gather from their spouses, immediate family members and the community. The participants, who are housewives, the mothers and the grand mothers saw the importance and opportunity for themselves to experience the different cultures, musically and socially. Not forgetting that the majority of the group consisted of older women, i.e mothers and grand mothers, it was much easier to break the so called social stigmas that women shouldn’t go out in the evening on their own. Whereas, the idea of going out in evenings for any kind music practices would have been very hard for younger girls to persuade their parents for the “permission”. The self realisation of importance and necessity to be exposed to different cultures had such a big impact on dapha/bhajan participants that they encouraged and started “giving permission” to their daughters, daughters in law and grand daughters to get involved in various groups of Flute players, Dhime (ethnic newari drum) players etc. They claimed that before they joined the dapha/bhajan group years back, they did not have the same thoughts about allowing their childrens to go for evening music sessions.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

Coleman (1990) argued that social capital can benefit larger groups, especially if 'one should forgo self-interest to act in the interests of the collectivity... leads persons to work for the public good' (311). This resonates with social theorist Putnam's (2000) claim that social capital is related to democracy. In this study, the women's participation in CDIME and the Echoes in the Valley festival was seen to have encouraged the participants musically, bringing in the confidence in singing and making music. They also seemed to have gained exposure in the public sphere in terms of experiencing different music and social cultures from such participations. It is from these kind of experience and their involvement in the dapha/bhajan group that the women have felt the necessity to support and encourage the younger generations towards music learning. This is a result of the process of broadening musical and social horizon. The personal and interpersonal growth lead from the participation in dapha/bhajan group and the experience gathered from various events like CDIME and EITV has also helped them in building self-confidence for political and social participation.

However, this also raises new questions that could be researched in the future. For example, has the exposure of performing at different events like CDIME and EITV and their experience in expanding their social capital brought about transformative empowerment? If so, in what ways? If not, what did the women gain from such experiences? Furthermore, considering the importance of examining the process of women's participation through a gender lens it is also crucial analysing gender relations taking into account the men's perspective, which is beyond the scope of this paper.



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# Appendix A: Interview Guide

## 1. Personal identity and background

- Could you tell me a bit about yourself?
- How did you start singing in this ensemble?
- How would you describe this particular ensemble? (could also follow with what makes it unique? How is it different to the other two groups? What is special about it being all-women?)
- What meaning does singing in this ensemble have for you and for your family? (could also follow on with 'why' 'in what ways' etc. -- if they are stuck for words you can ask: why do you come to practice?)
- How does being in this ensemble fit in with the rest of your life? (does it make things more difficult? How? Does it make things easier? How?)
- Has being in this ensemble changed the way you feel about yourself? (could also follow on with 'why do you think that is? What is it about the group? Is it the music? Is it the people? Is it that it is all women? Is it just a new social arena?)
- Do you think that being in this ensemble has changed the way others feel about you? (could also ask: how do you know? Why do you think that is?)

## 2. Experience of Echoes in the Valley

- What did you understand the point of the Echoes in the Valley festival to be?
- Why did you want to perform there?
- How did you feel about your echoes in the valley performance? (could also follow on with why, in what ways? Could you describe it for me? Can you tell me more about that?)
- Did performing at that festival change the way you feel about yourself? (in what ways? As a person? As a performer? As a woman? As a Nepali person? As a member of any particular community?)
- Do you think that this performance changed anyone else's feelings about you? In what ways? How? Did anyone say anything? How do you feel about that?

## 3. Experience of CDIME

- What about the conference? What do you think that event was about?
- Why did you want to perform there?
- How did you feel about your performance at CDIME?

- Did performing at that conference change the way you feel about yourself? (in what ways? As a person? As a performer? As a woman? As a Nepali person? As a member of any particular community?)
- Do you think that this performance changed anyone else's feelings about you? In what ways? How? Did anyone say anything? How do you feel about that?

#### 4. Anything else

- Is there anything else you would like to add about your participating in this ensemble in general or either of these two performances?