

Tejaji Ballad – The story sung in the Ballad

This story is a translated version of the interview with 70 year old Ramnarain Mali (singer) who lives in the village of Dugari, near Bundi. At the beginning it illustrates the myth relating to the birth of Tejaji to a Rajput family. There are many variations in the stories relating to his birth. Some say that he was not born but miraculously appeared on earth with the blessing of Bhole Nath (Shiva) after twelve years of devotion by his mother. The initial part of the story relating to the birth of Tejaji is not sung. The ballad generally starts when Tejaji has reached his adolescence and is asked by his mother to go and plough the fields. In this Dugari version, Ramnarain has pronounced Tejaji as Tejeo, which is generally used while singing the ballad. Therefore, Tejeo has been used here instead of Tejaji.

The ballad is sung in stanzas in the present tense. For the devotees and believers of Tejaji, he is always present around them. He can be called upon anytime at their wish in the form of a spirit possessed by the Bhopa. Therefore the narration is always set in the present. This story was narrated by Ramnarain Mali for the most part in prose. He himself being a singer, usually uses its poetic form so he can more easily memorize the sequence of the story.

*File Location: /Users/madanmeena/WOLP/WOLP/Tejaji Ballad/Audio Recordings/Dugari/file0498.wav to file0508.wav
Recorded on 2nd September 2010.*

The very start of the story draws from another popular folk epic called 'Bagrawaton-ke-Katha' (also sung in the Hadoti region, mostly by the Gujjar community) in which Tejaji is the eldest of 24 brothers in his previous life. All his 23 brothers are killed in Bagrawaton-ke-Katha but he somehow escapes the wrath of the goddess who comes to earth to put an end to the devastation created by the brothers. He flees from the battleground where all his brothers and two sons are killed. Seeing him escape, Tejaji is cursed by his wife to be bitten by the black snake. That curse is fulfilled in Tejaji's next life where he is bitten by the serpent. Below the story follows as narrated by Ramnarain Mali:

Queen Roopade (a Rajput woman) is a religious lady and goes to attend Jagarans (singing sessions of devotional songs) in the company of sants (ascetics). King Maldeo is unhappy with her devotion towards the saints. Queen Roopade is unaware that she is pregnant and that an infant is growing in her womb.

An invitation meant for only one person comes to her from her guru (master ascetic) to attend a Jagaran. On receiving the invitation she is under the impression that she is a single person but when she becomes aware that she is bearing another life inside her womb she is concerned as to how to attend the prayer meeting. Being a principled lady who keeps her word, she finds herself in misery. She cannot go and talk to her guru who is busy with the preparations.

Finally she resorts to slitting her womb and exhuming the infant which turns out to be a boy. Miraculously, the womb heals immediately leaving no trace of child birth. She puts the child on the boundary of a field which belongs to the Jat (agriculturist) community half in and half out of some water so that he is not burned by the sun. She then leaves, leaving the child behind.

The child remains quiet for half an hour but as he feels hungry, he starts to cry. The Jat woman working in the field nearby hears the sound and is alerted. She calls her husband who is drawing water from the well. She asks her husband to listen carefully

to the child's crying. They together go in the direction of the sound and find a male child lying on the boundary of the field. She immediately lifts the child in her arms and accepts him as a gift from god for being childless. Being happy and excited the Jat asks his wife to breast-feed the child. Milk flows into her breasts for the first time and she nurses it.

The couple decide to go on a pilgrimage to Pushkar. The child is named Tejeo. At the same time, another couple of the same community come to Pushkar, and they meet on the stairs of the Brahma temple. They greet each other and introduce themselves and ask about each other's children. Both the families are carrying a boy and a girl;-on one side Tejeo and his cousin and on the other a boy and a girl of similar age. They decide to arrange a matrimonial alliance of the children and so Tejeo and his sister Radha are married as infants.

(There are variations in the names used for Tejeo's sister. The names of Rajal and Bangal Bai also appear in ballads sung at other places.)

After the marriage the two families return back to their respective villages. Tejeo grows up and starts to graze the family cows. Since childhood Tejeo has been religiously inclined and one day he calls upon his fellow shepherds and asks them to take care of his cattle while he goes for his regular prayers. They ask him to return back early since his cows and buffaloes are fighting, but he shows them how to control the cattle and goes off.

Tejeo first goes to the pond to wash himself and to put on fresh clothes. He fills his vessel with water and prepares for the observance of Saligramji (*form of Vishnu who was turned to stone by a curse*). He lays out his articles on the steps of the pond where the women come to fill their pots. He opens his purse and takes out the idol of Saligramji and sprinkles water over it. While he is in prayer, his bhojai (*sister-in-law*) comes with her companions and asks him to give way and move aside. In response he asks her to shift to other steps and let him continue his puja. The bhojai refuses to move, since the other steps are covered with slippery moss and she might fall and break her earthen pots. A quarrel breaks out. She taunts Tejeo,

'Since when have you become a pundit? (*priest*)

Since when have you been washing your yellow dhoties?' (*loin cloth worn by priests*)

Tejeo replies, 'I have been a pundit since I was born, since I gained my senses, since then I have been washing my yellow dhoti.'

She retaliates, 'You are telling a lie, your wife is still residing with her parents in their village. She flies black crows¹ in your expectation everyday, and you say that you are an unmarried saint What do you know?' She adds, 'You were married very early along with your sister.' Tejeo contradicts her and says, 'Don't tell so many lies, you are a liar. I am a bachelor.'

She challenges Tejeo to go home and ask his mother and only then argue. Tejeo immediately finishes his prayers, collects his articles and reaches home. His friend meets him on the way and ask the reason for him being in such a hurry. He tells him that he has to go to his in-laws to bring his wife. The friend asks if he can accompany him on his journey.

There are variations in the story regarding the place where the quarrel takes place between Tejeo and his bhojai. According to another version Tejeo goes to the field after the first monsoon rain to plough land on the insistence of his mother. His bhojai is late in bringing him the lunch. Being hungry and tired after working since early morning he is irritated with his bhojai and criticizes her. In retaliation his bhojai asks him why he doesn't go and bring his wife instead of being angry with her.

Tejeo reaches home and asks his mother whether he is married. His mother asks, 'Who has roused you? Which colleague has provoked you? For a son I had sacrificed every thing, then I got you. Who has misled you?' Tejeo replies, 'No, no don't lie to me!' She can't hide the truth in the face of the facts and asks him to go and asks his bhojai. But the bhojai has already told him the secret. To know more he finally goes to her and she further reveals, 'Your wife lives in Paner. Go and bring her. It's twelve years since you were married.' Listening to her Tejeo asks for her blessing to go and bring his wife. But the bhojai stops him saying, 'Bring your sister first who has been away for twelve long years with her in-laws and has got a child. She daily asks the Brahmin and dreams of when her brother will come to take her. So, first bring her back, and then you can go for your wife.'

Intrigued, Tejeo asks his bhojai, 'In what style was I married?' She tells him, 'You were married with the loud sound of drum beatings. Dressed in gold and sitting on the elephant you hit the Toran (*wooden emblem hung above the marriage gate to be touched by bridegroom's sword*). All your uncles and relatives had gone to your marriage party. And your grandfather held your rama-kothadi (*ceremonial purse*). Satisfied, he agrees to go and bring his sister first. But he questions his bhojai about how he should travel as he doesn't have any personal vehicle.

'Go and borrow bullocks from your mamaji (*maternal uncle*) and a tanga (*cart*) from Poran Patel.' Taking his companion along he goes to his mama and asks for the Bullocks. His mama refuses to give him them. Then he goes to Poran Patel for the cart who also says no, giving as the reason, 'It was left in the open during the monsoon. It has got rusted and damaged, Its wheels are gone.'

Dejectedly, he returns back to his mother and asks her to take out the hidden treasure to commission a cart and to purchase a pair of bullocks from the fair. Receiving the money from her he goes to the carpenter, gives him an advance payment and orders the cart. He also informs the carpenter that he will gift him gold earrings and a beautiful chunri (*veil*) for his wife.

To get wood for the cart he goes with the carpenter to cut the bamboo. (*acacia*). Seeing the tree the carpenter cautions him that Bhaironjee (*primordial god*) resides in it. But Tejeo tells him that he will lure Bhaironjee by offering him liquor and food for his sixty-four Joogania (*female companions*). Bhaironjee is appeased by Tejeo and allows the carpenter to cut down the tree. He takes it to his house to make the cart. Then Tejeo goes to the fair on his mare and purchases the bullocks. Meanwhile the cart is finished and so he brings the bullock-cart to his house and prepares to go to his sister. He puts his servant into the cart and asks him to set off ahead of his mare. While passing through the Peeleo-Khal (*ravine inhabited by dacoits*), they encounter three hundred and fifty Meena dacoits. They surround them from all sides and demand the mare and bullock-cart. Tejeo requests them to let him go and promises to leave his mare and bullock-cart on his return. They do not believe him at first, but finally he persuades them and they ask for his word as assurance. It was a truthful era. He makes a promise to them and is allowed to continue on his journey.

After receiving his promise, the Meenas tell him to go quickly and return early as they are waiting for him.' He reaches his sister's village and arrives at the steps of the pond to drink water. He asks the women to serve him. They ask him about his identity and the purpose of his journey. 'My sister has been married here in this village. I have come to take her home', replies Tejeo. Listening to him the women realise that the brother of Radha has come after a long time. For many years she has been flying crows in anticipation. Tejeo drinks water and follows the women with pots on their heads who show him the way to his sister's house. Reaching there the women call to

his sister that her brother has come. Seeing him from the rooftop, she runs down the steps, hugs her brother and starts shedding profuse tears.

‘O my brother, for the last twelve years I have been waiting each day for you,’ grieves Radha. He consoles her and asks her to be patient. Then he meets with her parents- in-law and exchanges greetings and salutations.

He asks his jija (*brother-in-law*) for permission to allow him to take his sister with him. The jija says, ‘She has been waiting for twelve years and flies crows in your name. Take her with you for a few days, perhaps 8-10 days, till she is satisfied.’ Tejeo bids farewell to the in-laws and takes his sister along with him.

On their way back home they reach Peeleo-Khal. Hearing the sound of the bullock-cart, the Meenas waiting for him are alerted, and stand up. They see that the bullock-cart is coming. They surround him from all sides. Tejeo asks the Meenas to keep calm, as he himself will give away his belongings to them. Tejeo plays a trick. He plants his spear in the ground and challenges the Meenas to pull it out or otherwise to let him pass. All the Meenas get together to tug out the spear, but no one can move it an inch. Seeing the Meenas unsuccessful Tejeo tells them to get away from his spear. He asks his sister to go and tug it out. She steps forward and with her single left hand within a moment she pulls it out and gives it to Tejeo. Realizing the power of his sister and estimating Tejeo’s overall strength, the Meenas decide to run away. They move away from the path. Tejeo makes Radha sit in the cart again. Asking the servant to move off ahead of him, he rides home on his mare behind the cart.

Tejeo reaches his home. He calls to his mother, ‘Come down from the palace and greet your daughter. She has come.’ The mother and daughter hug each other and meet.

Tejeo now asks his mother to let him go and bring his wife. Mother replies, ‘Let me call the Joshi (*Brahmin*) and find an auspicious date for you to leave.’ Tejeo argues with his mother and says, ‘What can the Joshi do? Kindly let me go.’ Tejeo is desperate to leave. He decides to go to his bhojai to get permission. He hurriedly climbs the stairs to her Moti Mahal(*Reception Room*) and reaching the entrance of her room he calls to her,

‘My sleeping bhojai, kindly get up. Your beloved devar (*brother-in-law*) is standing outside.’ Opening the door and knowing his wish, she says,

‘I had a bad dream in which on the border of the state your body was being burnt. Your wife cradled you in her arms and immolated herself to become *Sati*.² I have had such a bad nightmare.’ Tejeo doesn’t listen to her and gets angry.

‘Revert your dream, O my bhojai Revert your dream. Not me, Your brothers will die and their wives will become *Sati*.’ The bhojai stops him speaking such words.

‘Why curse my brothers? If they die, who will gift me clothes and bangles when I go to my maternal house?’

Thus an argument takes place between them.

Dissatisfied with both the women, Tejeo neither asks the Joshi Brahmin nor his bhojai. He asks his servant to get ready and prepare his mare to leave. He comes out of the palace into the courtyard where his mare is all set to go. Tejeo salutes the sun, puts his foot into the stirrup and mounts his horse. He leaves the palace, rides down the main street of the village, and finally departs.

On his journey unpropitious things happen.³At one place a farmer is ploughing his fields with a pair of black bullocks. This is a bad omen. To amend it, he replaces the black ones with his white bullocks and ploughs the field himself. Having corrected the bad omen he continues on his journey.

After passing some distance he suddenly hears the hooting of the owl on his left. This again is an inauspicious sign. Tejeo appeals to the bird to fly round onto his right by tempting her with decorations for her wings. In reply the owl demands, 'Why just ornament my wings? Why not gold plate my beak also?' The bird further warns Tejeo, 'What your bhojai has said is going to come true. Things are turning out in accordance with her words. Her prediction cannot be altered now.' Angrily, Tejeo warns the bird, 'Come to the right, otherwise I will beat you with my spear.' The bird exclaims, 'Why beat me with your spear? If your end is destined and marked by god, no one can change it.'

Leaving the issue unresolved, Tejeo continues on his journey.

Further on he encounters a tree of Paras-Peepli (Banyan tree) on his left. The tree appeals to him, 'Come and sit in my cool shade for a while and rest.' Tejeo responds, 'Let me go on this time but when I return back with my wife we both will sit together in your shade.'

The tree then prophesies, 'I do not see any chance of you returning back to me. The words of your bhojai can not be revoked.' Tejeo again gets into a fight with the tree, 'I will peel off your bark with my spear, and thrash your leaves to the ground.' The Tree responds, 'Do, whatever you wish but what your bhojai has said is true.' Feeling irritated with the tree Tejeo moves on.

Tejeo begins his journey again, heads his mare in the right direction and all alone passes through the dense jungle. A point comes when the road divides into three. The mare asks him, 'Which way should we go? In which direction is your wife's home?' Tejeo answers her, 'Leave the left and the right and take the middle one. O, the mare of Jat, we will go straight through the Jungle.' The mare cautions him that there is a forest fire ahead on the middle path and suggests that he chooses the right or left. But Tejeo insists on going straight. The mare again advises him that his body will be burned black due to the fire.

Seeing the fodder of the livestock burning before him, Tejeo explains, 'Being a Hindu, it's my duty to save the fodder of the cows from burning. If it all finishes what then will the cows eat? Don't diminish my call of duty, walk straight.' So they walk on into the fire.

Quickly, he ties the mare under a burning tree, climbs up the hill and calls the shepherds to come and help. Hearing him, the shepherds come running. Tejeo asks them, 'Who has lit a fire in the jungle? Who has burned all the fodder of the livestock?' The Shepherds answer, 'The buffaloes fought together fiercely and due to the friction of their horns and bodies the sparks lit the grass and it caught fire. Tejeo tells them, 'Pluck green branches from the trees and try to put-out the fire.' Tejeo jumps into the fire in an effort to extinguish it. While putting it out he sees a snake in the blaze. He immediately lifts it with his spear and takes it out. The skin has burned to some extent, but he cools the snake with his stole, treating him as a deity of the earth. The comforting south-west monsoon breeze flows and the snake is healed.⁴ Regaining consciousness the snake shows his anger to Tejeo, 'You did very wrong O traveller, my companion has already lost her life in the fire. How will I live my life without her now? You should have let me die. You made a great mistake by taking me out of the fire. Now I will bite you, I will not let you go.'

Tejeo requests the snake to let him go, as he has to reach his wife's village. But the snake doesn't let him go easily. Tejeo promises to return to him with his wife on his journey back home. Then he will offer himself before the snake to be bitten. The snake asks Tejeo to give his word. But Tejeo asks the snake, 'Who will be witness to the words of my promise?' The snake replies, 'The sun, moon and the earth will be

your witnesses.’ Then Tejeo asks him, ‘On my return how will I find your abode? Where shall I locate you?’ The snake gives him a clue, ‘Where you find a Chura(*tropical plant with large leaves*) tree with one leaf, under its root, in a brown hole, will be my home.’ The snake further insists that having achieved his objective Tejeo must first return to him.

After making a promise to the snake, Tejeo moves on. The mare is angry with his humility and says, ‘You did very wrong, my lord. You have made a mistake. You gave your word to the black snake of the earth for your death.’ Tejeo responds to the mare, ‘You yourself are a goddess who can foresee my destiny. I noticed that I tied you to a burning tree and when I returned the fire had vanished and the tree turned green.’ Tejeo salutes the sun and once again carries on his journey, talking to his mare. The mare requests him to go straight to his wife. But Tejeo, being a spiritual man, first decides to go to Badrinath (*famous Hindu pilgrimage centre in the Himalayas*). Moving on they encounter a heavy downpour with thunder. The mare trembles with the sound of the lightning. There is water everywhere on earth. As they move ahead they come across a river which is in spate. Perceiving the situation the mare questions, ‘How we will cross the river?’ Tejeo asks her to be patient and he calls a fisherman. The fisherman comes over to Tejeo who requests him, ‘Kindly help me traverse the river. I have to go across the Kali-Sindh.’ An old fisher-woman comes out of the hut and says, ‘In this river my son died. We can’t assist you.’ Tejeo quarrels with the woman and warns her, ‘I will skin you with my spear if you do not take me across the river.’ The old lady pleads her inability, ‘My married son died in this river last year. The river is very violent. In this high river we can’t launch our boat. No one will survive, neither you nor us.’

The beauty of the ballad lies in its references to the local regional elements of the place where it is sung. In the process of its mutation and transit from one generation to another it imbibes the local subjects. This is how the ballad always lives in the present context in the local aura. Here the reference of Kali-Sindh river has come in the narration. Geographically this river flows from Madhya Pradesh into southeastern Rajasthan where the ballad is sung. Factually it is very far from the Himalayas.

Seeing no possibility, Tejeo asks his mare to turn back. But the mare takes over the responsibility and says, ‘To turn back will be shameful on my part and it will also cast shame on your mother’s milk.’ Realizing that his self-image is at stake, Tejeo pauses and questions the mare, ‘From what will you make the boat to cross the river?’ The mare advises Tejeo to be patient and she suggests a solution, ‘I will make a boat out my body, and oars with my four legs. You sit on me and hold me tightly. Let me dive into the river. You hit me with the whip on my left side so that I get angry and cross the river instantly.’ Tejeo gets onto the mare and she enters the river.

Entering the water Tejeo complains, ‘My coat and shoes are getting wet.’ The mare advises him, ‘Raise your coat and hang your shoes over your two ears.’ Slowly the mare starts swimming through the water like a fish.

To enhance the entertainment element of the ballad funny references are introduced, like here the mare advises Tejeo to hang his shoes on his ears which is impractical but an amusing suggestion. This keeps the audience amused and alert in the course of the singing.

On reaching the centre of the river, the mare loses her-balance due to the whirl of the water and starts drowning with only her ears being visible. Tejeo complains, ‘You have made a terrible mistake by bringing me into the water.’ The mare reveals another incapacitating disaster, ‘Now don’t rely upon me, my legs have been seized by the

crocodiles.’ She requests, ‘Take out your knife from your waist, use the spear in your hand and free me from the crocodiles.’ Tejeo attacks them and sets her free. Seeing them seemingly drowning in the river, many people gather across the river to watch.

The mare finally manages to swim across and before reaching the shore asks Tejeo, ‘On which ghat (*steps*) should I land?’ Tejeo tells her to go straight and land on dhobis’ ghat as it is clean. Tejeo gets off and ties his mare to the branch of a tree. He takes off his wet clothes to change them with fresh ones. He wraps his yellow dhoti around himself, fills his vessel with water and sits in observance on the steps of dhobi ghat. He sprinkles water around and takes out his idol of Baba Saligramji from his purse. He rubs sandalwood on the stone, puts a tilak mark on the idol and turns the prayer beads on his rosary. After observing his prayer he collects his articles and readies to go. He unties his mare from the tree branch and sets-off for his further journey.

Before leaving he comes across a woman on the ghat who has come to fetch water with her pots. She asks him his identity and the destination of his journey. He replies, ‘I live in Roopnagar, and am going to the village of Madno. There my wife lives.’ Then the woman asks, ‘What relation do you have with Madno Jat?’ He answers, ‘He is my father-in-law. I had hit the toran at his house to get married to his daughter.’ Suddenly the woman recognizes him and says, ‘You are my jijaji (*brother-in-law*), please come to my palace.’ Listening to her Tejeo asks, ‘With what authority do you call me jija?’ To which she explains, ‘The woman married to you is my cousin, daughter of my uncle.’ Declining her invitation to come to her palace Tejeo requests her to let him continue and that when he returns back with his wife, he will stay in her palace. The woman is adamant and doesn’t let him go without having food. Tejeo riding on his mare follows her to her house. He asks the woman, ‘O my nanad (*sister-in-law*), where should I rest my mare, and what should I feed her? The woman shows him the place to stable the mare and gives him fodder. Tejeo takes-off the saddle from the mare and makes her comfortable.

The woman then spreads a soft bed for him . She starts cooking food quickly and prepares rice for him. She lays out a plate of gold and on that she puts the white rice and serves it to Tejeo. Then she orders the servant to bring the vessel of water and then requests Tejeo to eat. She adds sugar with her own hands and pours ghee of brown buffalo (*type of a breed of buffalo considered to be superior*) over the rice. Tejeo eats his food until his hunger is completely satisfied.

At some places the name of Madno, Tejeo’s father-in-law is also referred to as Badno, particularly in the Marwar region of western Rajasthan.

Now he asks the woman to let him continue on his journey. The woman bids him farewell, and warns him to go carefully. Tejeo leaves the palace by the front steps, unties his mare, fastens the saddle round her and sets off again on his journey.

While travelling he again comes to a point where the road divides into three . The mare questions him, ‘Which road to take now?’ Tejeo answers her, ‘We have to go to Badrinath, leave the side ones and take the middle road.’ Tejeo moves on, the terrain changes and they see the hills and valleys of Badrinath. They notice the famous Badrinath shrine from a distance. He rides on and reaches the temple. He dismounts the mare and ties her to a pillar of the chatri.

In the courtyard of the temple Tejeo plants his spear with a thrust. He takes off his shoes, and fills his vessel with water to perform his puja at the temple. He climbs the steps of the Badrinath temple and reaches inside. He calls on the pujari of the temple

to open the doors to the inner sanctum. The pujari unlocks the door and opens the temple for him. He enters and murmurs within before the idol of Badrinath, 'After a long time I have come to have a glimpse of you Baba Badrinath.' He sprinkles water on the ground, spreads out his articles, takes out the idol of Saligramji from his purse, rubs sandalwood and puts its mark on the idols in the temple and performs his prayer. He takes the string of beads in his hand and starts turning them. Badrinath is pleased with his devotion and says, 'After a long time you have come to me. I am happy with you.' In response Tejeo tells him his problems, 'I have gone through many troubles to reach here, the snake of the earth has taken a promise from me and now my death is certain.' Lord Badrinath shows him the solution, 'Carry fifty-two Bhaironjee and sixty-four Jogania along with you.' Tejeo asks, 'How will I carry fifty-two Bhaironjee and sixty-four Jogania?' Lord Badrinath answers, 'Put the Bhaironjee on the saddle of the horse and Jogania on your spear. On half of the saddle you will sit and on the other half, Bhaironjee will find his place.' Tejeo asks out of curiosity, 'What will the fifty-two Bhaironjee and sixty-four Jogania do?' Then Badrinath explains, 'The chakra (*revolving circular disk*) of Bhaironjee will cut your enemies into pieces and the sixty-four Jogania will eat them up.'

Tejeo inserts his hand into his pocket and takes out a rupee coin to offer to the deity. Badrinath is happy with his service and blesses him to continue on his journey to see his wife. He descends from the temple and reaching his mare, uproots the spear from the ground. He puts on his shoes and rides on to his destination. Whipping up the mare and shortening the reins, Tejeo rides on alone passing through the jungle. He asks the mare to ride faster. The mare instantly picks up speed, the clouds become yellow with the dust kicked up by her legs as they hit the ground. He reaches the outskirts of his wife's village and finds a garden in which to rest. He orders the Malan (*female gardener*), 'Open the doors of the garden. We will rest here during the day.' The woman responds, 'The gates are locked and she (Bodal, i.e. his wife, owner of the garden) has taken away the keys along with her into the palace.' Tejeo tells the woman, 'O, thou daughter of a gardener, burn incense sticks in the name of Tejeo and the locks will open themselves.' She questions him, 'What power do you have that the locked door will open by itself?' Tejeo replies, 'I have fifty-two Bahironjee and sixty-four Jogania which will cut through your locks in seconds.' The woman warns him, 'Turn round and go back. Some two hundred and fifty people like you come everyday.' Tejeo reproves her, 'Don't speak like this with me'.

At some places the name of Tejaji's wife has been given as Pernal. The metamorphosis of words has taken place over the years particularly in the case of names of the characters. Thus they vary from region to region.

The mare advises Tejeo to turn round and go back. In response to which Tejeo bursts out, 'I served you containers full of milk when you were young and always fed you so well, how could you speak like this in return?' Further he adds, 'By going back it will be shameful for me. It will be an insult to the milk of my mother. If you speak like this I will thrash you on your back and give you away to the *Bhat* (family genealogist).'

The mare responds, 'Why give me away? Don't kill me with your words, they hurt me very badly.' She then instructs Tejeo, 'Get onto me, hold me tight and let me climb the wall of the garden. What can locks do to prevent me?.'

The mare moves around and in a flash she climbs the wall and enters into the garden. Tejeo gets down and ties her to a branch of a mango tree. He removes the saddle and makes the mare comfortable. He himself takes off his shoes and loosens his clothes.

He then spreads his cloth under the shade of the mango trees and covering himself with his shawl goes to sleep.

The duty of the *Malan* is to guard the orchard and frighten away the parrots that eat the mangoes. When she comes inside, she notices that Tejeo has gone to sleep and his mare has eaten up the valuable *kevda* (*flowering fragrant plants*) and destroyed the garden. For her, this is very serious. She starts abusing Tejeo, 'The black snake will bite you and your mare on her left ear.' She pulls off a branch of a tree and starts thrashing the mare on her back, criss-cross whelms are impressed on her body. The mare runs to save herself and comes to Tejeo and awakes him by calling, 'O my master, why are you sleeping covered with a shawl?' The *Malan* has whipped me and made marks all over my body.' Hearing the mare, Tejeo stands up and stretches.

Meanwhile the *Malan* comes to Tejeo and curses him, 'The black snake will bite you. When my master (Tejeo's wife) will notice the devastation, she will rebuke me for shirking my duty. She will not pay my salary.' Listening to her threatening words, Tejeo gets angry and retaliates, 'Don't speak abusively, I will thrash you with the whip of my mare.' The woman replies, 'You have done huge damage to the garden and its *kevda* plants.' Tejeo cannot restrain himself any more and starts thrashing the woman with the whip. He makes similar criss-cross marks on her back. The lady starts yelling, and rushes to the gate of the garden to leave. Following her, Tejeo shouts after her, 'Now where will you go and to whom will you plea? O the daughter of the gardener, At whose feet will you lay your veil?' The lady sobs, 'I will go to Madno, there I will appeal. At the feet of his queens I will put down my veil.'

The *Malan* rushes from the garden with tears veiling her eyes as if the clouds have fallen down from the sky. Tejeo questions her further, 'O the daughter of the gardener, who has set up this garden? Who constructed the step-wells in it? She answers, 'Madno has set up the garden and his queens made the step-wells.' The *Malan* rushes through the streets and finally reaches the door of her master. She climbs the steps of the palace and enters the Moti Mahal of Bodal. She calls, 'O my master, get up from your siesta, I, the daughter of the gardener am standing outside.' Bodal comes to the door and enquires, 'For what reason have you come to me? Why have you left the garden abandoned?' The woman responds, 'You take the keys and lock your garden. I have been assaulted badly, My back is full of marks.' Bodal again enquires, 'Which such warrior has invaded the garden? Let me see the marks on your shoulder and back.'

The woman replies, 'He is a dark skinned man, his mare is of a blueish hue and he carries a shining spear in his hand.' Bodal realises who it must be. She says, 'He must be your *jijaji*, go and return back to your garden immediately. Take back your words and apologise to him, place your veil before him to beg pardon. Make a garland of *mogra* (*jasmine*) to offer him. Also make *gajra* (*small garland rings*) for his mare.' So the woman returns to the garden.

Bodal calls for the family *Nai* (*barber*). The *Nai* comes running to her service. She tells him, 'Go back to the village, walk through all the streets of the old quarter and call the *Panihari* (*women with water pots*) to come.' All the *Panihari* gather at her Moti Mahal and ask the reason for having been called. She replies, 'O *Panihari*, your *jijai* has come, empty your pots, we will go to the garden to fetch fresh water from the well. To fetch water we will go to the garden.' The *Panihari* question her, 'With what should we make the ropes and cushion rings to carry water?' Bodal replies, 'Make the ropes with silk, and decorate the cushion rings with stitched beads. Take the keys and pull out expensive clothes from my boxes, adorn yourselves with ornaments, put ankle bells on your feet and get ready.' She further tells them, 'Take out my marriage

dress also, my beautifully embroidered skirt and my nose-ring of gold. Apply kohl to my eyes and bedeck me with the ornaments.’ Bodal gets ready and looks radiant. She happily distributes sweets of milk and coconut to everyone for the arrival of Tejeo. , ‘After many years your jijaji has come. For years I have flown numerous crows in his anticipation.’

The women proceed to the garden. They put down their pots and cushioned head rings on the ground. Bodal asks the Panihari to call for the Mali (*gardener*). The gardener comes running to her service and asks for her orders. Bodal tells him, ‘The festive season has come and we want to put up swings on the trees. O, Mali put swings for us from the branches of the mango tree.’ The gardener climbs the black mango tree and fixes a swing from it. The women start to swing, taking turns. They are in a jolly mood and play games; whoever comes to swing, is tapped with the stick until they reveal the name of their sweetheart.

Bodal also runs to the swing and climbs on to it. The girls come to strike her with the stick to reveal the name of her partner. Meanwhile Tejeo gets up from his siesta, fastens the saddle on his mare and moves to water her. As he moves into the garden with the mare, the Malan comes across and garlands him. She also ties anklets of flowers to his mare. In return Tejeo gifts the woman a necklace for the garland and coins for the anklets of the mare. The Malan is very pleased after receiving the gift and requests Tejeo to visit her often. Tejeo reaches the step-well in the garden and asks the Panihari to water his mare as she is thirsty. The Panihari enquire of Tejeo, ‘Where do you live? To meet which king are you going with your servant?’ Tejeo answers, ‘I live in Roopnagar and am going to Madno Baba, to enjoy his hospitality.’ The women further query him, ‘What relation do you have with Madno?’ Tejeo answers, ‘He is my father-in-law At the entrance of his house I touched the Toran.’ All the Panihari bow down before him and greet him, ‘O, our Jijaji you have come after a long time, we are nanads to you.’ After the acknowledgement, Tejeo asks the Panihari to water his mare so that he can reach his in-laws. The women fill the tank with water and request Tejeo to , ‘Lower your mare’s neck to drink fresh water from our hands.’ Meanwhile the Panihari also fill their pots and ask Tejeo to help them raise the pots onto their heads. But Tejeo refuses. ‘I can’t place the pots on your heads, you are the wives of someone else. This is against the custom.’ Hiding herself shyly behind Tejeo’s mare, Bodal says, ‘You have come after a long time. I kept asking the Brahmin and flew crows in your expectation. I will taunt you for the pain you have given me for so many years.’

After filling water, the women leave the garden with their pots on their heads and return towards their homes. Tejeo rides his mare behind them. The women instruct Tejeo, ‘Keep your mare at a distance. Our sister-in-law (Bodal) is very shy of you. She might stumble and break her pot.’ Tejeo says to his mare, ‘O thou mare of Jat, keep patience, maintain distance from these women. Due to you I have to bear taunts of these women in a distant land.’

The women go to their respective homes and Tejeo enters the streets of the village and comes to its central market where he asks the mare to show off her dancing abilities. Seeing the mare dancing, the whole village gathers. Tejeo pinches the mare, ‘Seeing you dance the witches will eat you up.’ The mare confides in him, ‘The fifty-two Bhaironjee reside on my saddle and sixty-four Joganiya on your spear. How could anyone dare to touch me?’

On his way to his in-laws Tejeo encounters his father-in-law who is herding the cattle through the village street. He says, ‘O my Kanvar (*son-in-law*) you have come after a long time.’ Tejeo replies, ‘O my father-in-law, accept my greetings and also that of my

companion.’ After exchanging salutations, Tejeo moves on towards the house of his in-laws. Then he chances upon his brother-in-law playing chopad-pasa (*type of a chess*) and exchanges greetings with him also. He presses on to reach his destination. Finally Tejeo arrives at the door of his saas (*mother-in-law*). He gets down from the mare and ties her reins to the trunk of a Paras-Peepali planted at the entrance. He requests his mother-in-law to accept greetings from him and his mother. She is in her house clothes and is unveiled. Seeing him, she stumbles and promptly calls upon the girls of the house and complains that her son-in-law has seen her unveiled. The mother-in-law displays her anger to Bodal complaining that he didn’t knock at the entrance and cough to alert her. Tejeo asks the mother-in-law, ‘Where can I put my mare and her saddle?’ Enraged, she replies, ‘Go and put her into the abandoned outhouse and keep the saddle there too.’ She asks the girls to go up into the palace and prepare a bed for him to rest and to light the chulha to cook food for him. Tejeo goes to rest in the Palace. The mother-in-law asks the girls to go to the market and exchange the costly purchased wheat with inexpensive kurtya-bakhda(*soaked gram seeds fed to the cattle*). Bodal takes the wheat and goes to the market. She reaches the shop of the baniya (*grocer*) and calls to him, ‘O, baniya, get up from your siesta. I am standing at the door of your shop.’ The baniya gets up and asks her, ‘O Queen Bodal, what is the urgency? Why are you standing before my shop?’ She replies, ‘Please exchange this wheat and give me kurtya-bakhda.’ He questions her, ‘What will you do with the kurtya? Why you are taking kurtya-bakhda?’ She answers, ‘My husband has come, I want to cook food for him. My mother has ordered it.’ The baniya cautions her, ‘Your husband has come after twelve long years. What blunder are you making by serving him kurtya-bakhda?’ Bodal replies, ‘It is not me or you who should decide. It is my mother’s decision She has ordered me to bring kurtya-bakhda.’ Unhappy, finally the baniya barter and gives kurtya-bakhda to Bodal. Taking the ration, Bodal walks through the street and reaches the palace. She empties her bag of kurtya-bakhda into the plate before her mother. Now the mother-in-law asks the girl to bring a container of brown buffalo ghee and take out some ghee from it. Then she orders Bodal, ‘Go and exchange this expensive ghee for cheap linseed oil.’ She again goes into the market and reaches the house of the teli (*oil-miller*). The teli rushes to her call, and asks, ‘For what reason have you come to my door?’ She answers, ‘Please exchange linseed oil for this ghee.’ The teli is astonished, ‘What will you do with the oil? Why are you taking oil in exchange for ghee?’ Similar to the baniya, the teli also cautions her, ‘Your husband has come after twelve long years. What blunder are you are making by serving him the oil?’ Again, Bodal replies that it is not in her control, her mother holds authority in the house. Mother asks the girls to light the chulha in the palace and to cook the Kurtya-Bakhda. Then she orders them to call their jijaji into the Moti Mahal for the food. The girls prepare a meal for Tejeo from the Kurtya-Bakhda. The mother-in-law comes to add a handful of salt over it and pour linseed oil into it (*to take revenge on Tejeo she adds salt in place of sugar and pours linseed oil instead of ghee*). Once the food is ready to be served, she orders the girls to give a vessel of water to Tejeo for him to wash his hands and she spreads a tattered mattress for him to sit on. Now the brother-in-law invites Tejeo to have his meal. Tejeo takes a first bite and before he can take the second one he furiously kicks the plate with his foot. The plate flies away like a disk making a thunderous sound and the Kurtya-Bakhda scatters all over the floor. His mother-in-law curses him, ‘The black snake will bite you. You wasted the food. At least my children would have eaten it.’

Filled with anger, Tejeo strides to his mare, saddles her and prepares to ride away from the palace.

In the story there are many episodes where arguments, questioning, challenges, anger and retaliation occur. This dramatizes the ballad maintaining interest in it. The introduction of such episodes and words is supplemented through raised pitch and rhythm of singing. Slowly it grows in its momentum, finally leading to inciting the Bhopa into a trance.

Seeing her husband leaving her alone, Bodal protests to her mother, 'You made a great mistake in dishonouring the guest who has come to our house.' She then runs to Tejeo along with her sister-in-law and requests him not to go leaving her alone. Tejeo says, 'Your mother has insulted me, she served me with Kurtya-Bakhda., I cannot stay here for a second. Go back to your home. Go back to your mother. I will not take you along.' But Tejeo's mare's rein is held tightly by Bodal, not letting him go. Tejeo is already boiling inside with anger. He warns, 'Release the rein O my wife, and free my feet O my sister-in-law, otherwise I will thrash you both with the whip.'

Being unsuccessful in her attempt, Bodal requests her sister-in-law to find a solution to stop Tejeo from leaving and to engage him in conversation till she returns back.

Bodal hurries to the house of her Gujar friend, (woman of Gujar-shepherd community) named Mana. Reaching her door she calls out for her. Hearing her, the Gujar comes downstairs from her palace and asks the reason for her visit. Bodal explains, 'I am in agony, my husband is returning back without having eaten food.' The Gujar asks for the reason, 'Who has angered him causing him to return? Bodal, tell me the truth.' Bodal then replies, 'My mother has served him with Kurtya-Bakhda. He took a first bite but before the second he kicked the plate. Hearing her story the Gujar consoles her, 'Be patient. I will go and bring your husband back in the blink of an eye.' The Gujar then sets-off to get her friend's husband back as if he is her own guest. She reaches Tejeo and tries to please him, 'You have come after a long time. Your wife, Bodal, has been waiting for you for twelve years. O my jija, come along with me to my Moti Mahal, to my house. I will not go away from here unless you accept my hospitality.' Tejeo turns down her invitation and asks her to go away. The Gujar then compels him in the name of the Sun. Under the pressure of words, Tejeo is forced to accept her hospitality.

At many places the name of Mana Gujar is referred to as Heera Gujar. Both the names exist in the region, which fluctuates from village to village. But the name Heera is found more often in traditional versions of the story.

Guiding him to her palace that is on the periphery of the village, the Gujar leads the mare, and Tejeo reaching her palace, dismounts. She guides him to settle his mare in the stable. Tejeo unfastens the saddle and places it safely. The Gujar lays green grass for the mare to feed upon. She then lights the chulha to cook delicious food for Tejeo. She makes white rice. For him to rest, she prepares a beautiful soft bed. Meanwhile the food is ready. The vessel of water is served for him to wash his hands. Then she brings food on the kansa (*brass*) plate and requests him to eat. The Gujar adds handfuls of sugar and pours brown buffalo ghee into it. She requests Tejeo to enjoy his food and to have as much as he wants.

After the meal, the bed is made up upstairs and over it a beautiful mattress is spread for him to rest. The night falls slowly. Meanwhile his wife Bodal also arrives at the palace. She reaches his room and knocks on the door. Hearing the sound, Tejeo asks, 'Who is there?' Bodal responds, 'O my dear lord, you have come after a long time. It is me, your wife, who is married to you. I am standing at the door, please open it'.

Tejeo replies, 'Go back to your house, you and your mother have ill-treated me by serving Kurtya-Bakhda.' To make up for it, she keeps pleading and finally manages to win him over. At last, he lets her in and they go to sleep together in the palace. Tired, Mana Gujari also goes to sleep in her room. But, at midnight, when everyone is fast asleep thieves come and take away Mana Gujari's cows. When the Gujari gets up in the morning and goes to the cattle-shed, she comes to know about it. She runs to Tejeo and expresses her despair at losing her cows. She cries in anguish, 'A disaster has happened. My cows have been taken away by the Meena thieves. They have taken all my cows. They have left behind only the young calves which are crying in the cattle-shed. They are hungry without their mothers.' Listening to her, Tejeo suggests, 'Go and call the head-man of your village. He will bring back your cows.' Hopelessly she replies, 'I do not have faith in my village master. O my jijaji, I do not have faith in him.'

Taking advice from Tejeo, Mana Gujari leaves her palace and goes to the Rawla (*fortress*) of the village Thakur (head-man of Rajput community). She asks the woman of the house for an appointment with the Thakur. She cries, 'A misfortune has happened with me.' The woman replies, 'O Gujari Mana, Thakurji is not at home, he has gone to another village. In the house, only the women are here. What can we do for you?' Mana Gujari turns and goes back to Tejeo and says, 'The village Thakur is not supporting me. I have made a mistake by settling in this village with my cattle.'

Tejeo then advises her, 'Go and call on the village Dholi (*drum beater who does the job of messenger in the village*). He will beat his drum to incite the warriors to help you.' Mana Gujari again makes an attempt and goes to the door of the village Dholi and calls, 'O dear Dholi, get up from your sleep. I am in misery, all my cows has been taken away. Their calves are now crying in the cattle-shed.' The Dholi gets up and shows his helplessness, 'My drum has been damaged by the dogs. My drum-stick has been taken by the children to play with.' Mana Gujari says, 'I will get a new drum made for you of Bija (*tropical tree*) wood. I will go and bring a new drum-stick of bamboo.'

Mana Gujari gets a new drum made of Bija wood and buys a drum-stick of bamboo and gives it to the Dholi. Then she asks him to come along with her. She leads and the Dholi follows her to the palace. Reaching there, Mana Gujari says, 'Beat your drum loudly, strike the drum-sticks vigorously so that the sleeping warriors will get up. Climb the steps on my palace, so that the sound is heard far away. Beat the drum loudly to alert the warriors.'

Taking his drum, the Dholi climbs the stairs, reaches the rooftop and beats his drum loudly to send a message to the warriors to prepare for a raging war. But no one comes to help her.

The reference of characters like Mali, Dholi, Dhobi, Charan, Nai often comes in the ballad. These are professional people who are related with the village communities and each have specific roles. They still have important relevance in every ceremonial and social function in the villages.

Realizing the situation, Tejeo prepares himself and saddling his mare, he says, 'Now we have go to war. I have great faith in you, O thou mare of a Jat. We have to go alone to wage the war.' The mare confides in him, 'O, thou son of a King, keep patience in your heart. I will smash the heads of the Meenas with my feet.'

Tejeo sets out on his journey to rescue the cows. Reaching the Meenas he challenges them, 'Where will you go now? Your end has come. You committed a crime by stealing all the cows, O thou Meena thieves.' The Meenas advise him, 'Do not disturb

us. Go on your way. We have not brought your cows. These are the cows of Mana Gujari.'

Tejeo is irked and answers, 'These cows are not Mana Gujari's. You know nothing. These cows belong to me.' In a flash, he strikes one of the Meena fighters and knocks him to the ground. Seeing his power the Meenas surrender and allow him to take away all the cows, except one calf which he must leave behind for them. Tejeo forgives them and leaves the calf as it doesn't matter much to him. So the Kanya-Kevda (*the calf with one damaged eye*) is left behind. He collects all the cows and starts returning back to Mana Gujari.

Tejeo herds the cows in front and follows behind riding on his mare. On his way, to water the cows and his mare he guides them to the pond. While the cows are quenching their thirst, Tejeo urges them, 'Hurry up, the calves are crying in the cattle-shed being hungry and away from you.' Again they start along the road and hurry to reach the village. The women of the village climb onto the roofs after hearing the surging noise of hooves and seeing the cloud of dust. They run down to Mana Gujari and inform her that the cows are returning back and have reached the edge of the village. Finally the cows arrive at the door of Mana Gujari's palace. Tejeo calls to her, 'Take your cows to the cattle-shed and count them.' Mana Gujari comes down the stairs of her palace and goes into the cattle-shed and counts them one by one. She releases the calves to meet their mothers and to drink milk from them.

After finishing counting her cows, Mana Gujari complains, 'All the cows have come, but you have left behind my beloved calf. His sole value equals that of all the cows. You left behind my Kanya-Kevda.' Tejeo criticises her, 'You are a scheming woman, valuing one calf against all the cows.' The Gujari answers, 'Don't blame me, I do not know anything. My Kanya-Kevda is precious to me. Without him your effort is of no value to me.' Tejeo makes excuses and says, 'Go back into the cattle-shed and search for him once again. He must be among them.' But the Gujari won't change her tune and is adamant, 'I have searched around for him everywhere, but he is not here. My heart yearns for him. You would not understand. Don't mislead me, instead solve my problem.'

Listening to her plight, Tejeo decides to go again. He mounts his mare and proceeds a second time for the war. Reaching the Meenas he demands the calf. The Meenas warn him, 'Last time we let you free, but this time you will be killed. You are alone and we are three hundred and fifty in strength. This time you won't be able to beat us.' But Tejeo sticks to his guns, 'Whatever may happen, I may lose my life, but I will not return without the Kanya-Kevda, my decision is final.'

The Meenas are evasive and say, 'We have bartered the calf today with the distiller for our daily dose of liquor, now from where shall we bring him?' Tejeo answers angrily, 'I do not know but you have to bring the calf back to me.'

Finally a fierce battle takes place with the Meenas. His mare rears up and starts striking their heads with her hooves. But Tejeo was also badly wounded by the spear heads of his enemies. He finally kills all the Meenas, making their women widows who start wailing, 'All our men are dead. Take away your calf from here.' Tejeo answers, 'The feud would have not happened if you had returned the calf earlier. A mound of heads (dead bodies) would not have resulted.' The women bring the calf and leave him before the mare.

Tejeo leaves the battleground. The calf moves ahead finding his own way back. Tejeo is very badly injured. Lying along the mare he says, 'Now my faith is only in you. My life is in your hands. Carry me back home.' He reaches the palace of the Gujari and calls her to come down the stairs. He says, 'Take your calf back which is equal to the

value of all your cows. 'Receiving her calf, Mana Gujari tells Tejeo, 'I will get your wounds treated. I will call all the doctors of the country to medicate you.' Displeased with her, Tejeo says, 'Get away from me. Keep your distance, otherwise my wounds ache more. Send your servant and get the pot filled with milk.'

Mana Gujari gives him a pot of milk. Taking it he proceeds to the snake hole remembering the promise given to the snake. Reaching the jungle he searches for the Chura tree bearing a single leaf. He looks everywhere and finally locates it. Finding the snake hole he calls out, 'Accept my greetings, those of my mare and also of my friend.' The snake (Basak Baba) comes out of his hole. He orders Tejeo, 'Get down from your horse.' Ailing Tejeo shows his inability to move, as the wounds have weakened him. He requests the snake, 'Come over to me on the mare, and fulfill your wish and the promise given by me.' The snake crawls round the mare's leg, climbs up, and perches on the saddle. He notices Teja's condition and states, 'Your body is full of spear wounds. On which place should I bite you?' Tejeo replies by showing the palms of his hands and his tongue, which are still intact. The snake instructs him, 'Put your tongue out of your mouth. I have come to bite you.' Tejeo puts out his tongue. The black snake, BasakBaba bites him on his tongue and also bites the mare on her left ear.

Completing his mission, the snake slithers down from the mare. Losing consciousness, the mare and Tejeo fall to the ground. Then Tejeo calls upon his servant who has accompanied him all the way on his journey, 'Take my turban and go to my wife. She will be waiting in anticipation.' The Charan (*his servant of Charan community*) takes the turban in his hand and leaves to follow the instructions of his master. Tejeo's wife is standing on the outskirts of the village waiting for her husband. Reaching her he puts the turban in her jholi(*outstretched veil*). The servant informs her, 'Your husband is lying at the snake hole, bitten by the Basak Baba.' Hearing this Bodal shrieks, 'What miserable news have you brought?. God has done very wrong by me. In my childhood I have become a widow. By receiving the turban from you in my jholi, my body is overwhelmed.' She then calls to her father, 'O my father listen to me, listen to my words. My husband has gone, his life has been taken away by the black snake.' Aware of tradition, she tells her father, 'Collect nine munn (*one munn equals to forty kilogram*) of sandalwood and ten munn of ghee. Prepare a pyre out of it, I will commit Sati with my husband. Her father tries to console her, 'Why do you cry? I will find a powerful man like Arjun-Bhim for you to re-marry. The mother who was unhappy with Tejeo also supports the father, 'Let him die if he has to. Listening to the shameful words of her mother and father about her beloved husband. The daughter curses them, 'Mother, may you become a jungle cow and father, may you become a camel with a long neck.'

Bodal leaves the village to meet her husband. She is crying on the way and her brother comes to help, and consoles her. 'Keep patience in your heart. I will arrange for whatever you demand.' Bodal again states, 'Get me nine munn of sandalwood and ten munn of ghee. Arrange it all at the black snake hole where Tejeo has been bitten. I will commit Sati with him.'

Now both leave for the hole. First a grave is dug to bury the mare. Then the brother makes a funeral pyre of the sandalwood near the snake hole where Tejeo is lying on the ground. Bodal sits on it holding the body of Tejeo in her lap. Finally the pyre is lit and Bodal becomes sati. Both the souls depart to heaven.

There is another deviation in the last part of the story where the snake climbs up the spear of Tejaji (instead of the leg of the mare). It is also heard that the snake does not bite the mare. After Tejaji's death the mare carries the message to his village to

inform his parents of his demise. Listening to her, his sister Rajal Bai who is grazing cattle in the fields sinks into the earth.

After being bitten by the snake, before he dies, Tejaji is blessed by an announcement from the sky, 'In future who ever will be bitten by a snake and ties a tati (*thread tied around hand, neck or feet*) in your name will survive . Your name will always be remembered throughout the world.'

The last part of the story is quite tragic where Bodal commits Sati with her husband.

It is symbolically understood by everyone, but never sung in the ballad. This is the sensitivity of the ballad;.the heroic deeds of Tejaji are sung and narrated with great reverence but not the saddest part of it. Instead the final part is narrated like this:

Tejeo's mother has a nightmare. She witnesses Tejeo laying down his life. She goes to Tejeo's father and tells him about her bad dream. She says, 'Tejeo appeared in my dream and he said that he is sacrificing his life in the struggle to protect the cows.'

This is how the story ends with Tejaji's death. The event may not be described but is understood.

END NOTES

1. In Indian myths the squawk of the crow in the house indicates a visit of a guest. If the crow flies away on being asked whether the guest will come, then it confirms that someone is going to visit soon. Flying crows also means whiling away the time. Tejeo's wife is whiling away the time waiting for her husband to come to her.
2. Sati signifies the virtuous woman who chooses to immolate herself on the husband's funeral pyre.
3. There are many myths relating to travel which feature inauspicious signs like the sound of birds, crossing of the path by animals and reptiles, encountering a woman with empty water pots, etc. These wrong omens indicate failure of work and a problem in the journey.
4. The monsoon brings back life to nature and agriculture also starts with it. Rajasthan being a dry state gives great importance to the monsoon. The ballad illustrates that reptiles like snakes become invigorated with the south-west monsoon.