

Bhai Tika - - Second Report From Nepal

By Peggy Wollaston
Chester County IFYE

Everyone loves a holiday, and the people of Nepal are no exception.

In fact, their celebrations often last for several days during which time government offices are closed, sacrifices to gods are made, and all join in the festive spirit.

One of the most important of these holidays is "Bhai Tika" (pronounced, By-Teeka) or brother worship. This four day festival is held the last of October and early November during which time each sister must visit the home of her brother

(which is almost always her family home) to pay her respects to him.

In many aspects this is a very colorful occasion. Women in their prettiest saris, carrying baskets of fruits and gifts, hurry along the roads. Candles shining brightly in windows and doorways of every home cast a festive glow in the evenings. Men and boys adorned with flower garlands made by their sisters add to the already gay spirit which prevails.

During "Bhai Tika," gambling, at other times prohibited in Nepal, is allowed and from early morning until far into the night, these games flourish. In the

small village where I was living, virtually all work in the fields was at a standstill and the men and boys participated in this "sport". Some of the women also tried their hand at winning money, but when I was asked, I politely refused. I was content to be a bystander! It seemed to me all must be winning as there were never any disagreements among the participants.

The actual "Brother worship" ceremony is conducted during the last two nights of the festival.

The first night the family sits on a braided mat on the floor. A circle of rice flour is sprinkled in front of each person. Inside this circle are nuts, fruit, and flowers. Each member of the family receives a "tike" (spot on the forehead) made of rice mixed in a red dye, and a

lei of flowers. Following this, each receives a hard-cooked egg, a small fish, a small onion, a pancake made of rice flour, and some "roxee" — the local liquor. These foods are all symbols of the worship festival. Then the evening meal of boiled rice, curds, a few morsels of goat or buffalo meat (earlier sacrificed) and vegetables is eaten.

The setting is similar the last evening except that only the brothers are seated on the grass mat. This night the ceremony is more elaborate, as is the feasting. The sisters present their brothers with flower leis, fruits, and nuts. Flower petals are sprinkled liberally on the head and shoulders of each brother, and then food like that of the previous night in addition a few candies, small cakes, and fruits — is served. At this time the



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brothers honor their sisters by presenting them with money and sometimes other small gifts. Then the entire family joins in the feasting. The gambling games are continued with great vigor as this is the culmination of the festival.

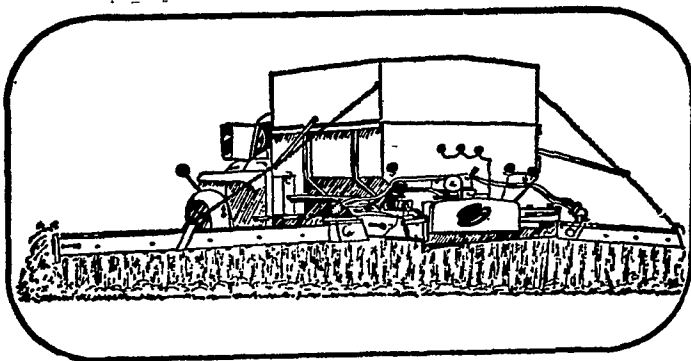
All is quiet the following morning as work is resumed. Families return to harvesting rice. Large grass mats are rolled out on the ground with drying rice upon them, and the gambling games are rolled up and put away for another year. A few flower garlands around the necks of the men and boys is the only reminder that another "Bhai Tika" has come to an end.

As I observed this festival, the mood reminded me of our holiday spirit at Christmas time with burning candles, gift giving, and happy people. The eggs eaten are reminiscent of Easter, and the time coincided with Hallowe'en. Also, small images (similar to Hallowe'en witches) are made of flour and water and steamed. These are used as offerings to the gods. Although we do not celebrate a like festival in America, "Bhai Tika" seems to combine three of our nationally observed celebrations.

In most Hindu homes, outsiders aren't permitted to eat with the family. I felt very fortunate to be able to participate in all these activities as a family member. I, too, "worshipped" my host brothers and enjoyed the festivities as a family member.

My greetings to you all from Nepal — a country of festivals.

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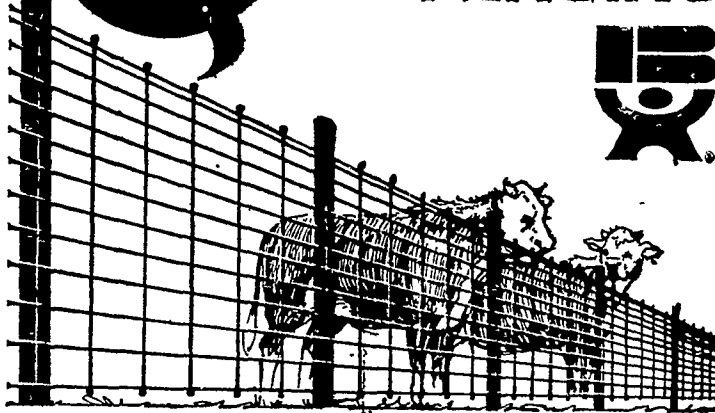
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4-H Scholarships Given

Ten 4-H members from Pennsylvania claimed \$5,700 in scholarships at the 49th National 4-H Congress in Chicago this week.

Each was named a national winner in programs arranged by the national 4-H Service Committee and supervised by the Cooperative Extension Service.

Selected on the basis of their 4-H experience in projects and activities, leadership development and growth in personal, community and civic responsibilities, national winners included:

Anita Slothour, 18, York Springs, a \$600 scholarship for health activities sponsored by Eli Lilly and Company; Harold Moyer, 18, Lebanon, recipient of a \$300 scholarship given by Alpha Gamma Rho Educational Foundation.