

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Subaltern Consciousness in Devkota's Selected Poems from
The Lunatic and Other Poems

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Letter of Recommendation

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Abstract

The research establishes that Laxmi Prasad Devkota possesses subaltern consciousness that is evident in his selected poems from *The Lunatic and Other Poems*. While some of the poems speak for the subaltern subjects, the others celebrate the work-worship of subaltern peoples. Gayatri Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" fails to answer the inherent question of the essay positively but generalises 'sati' as a subaltern subject and. At the backdrop of this, this research attempts to outline the evolution of Subaltern Studies and to contextualize this in Devkota's writing. As a writer, Devkota possesses the knowledge and awareness of the situation of the subaltern subjects of his time. Therefore, he lends the voice to them and tries to establish that a sensitive writer can render objectively the knowledge and understanding. However, some of the poems from *The Lunatic and Other Poems* are more relevant and contextual in the research as they serve to meet the objective of the research: to find out the subaltern consciousness in Devkota and his appeal for a progressive change. Divided in four major chapters, the research establishes how the Subaltern Studies is growing as one of the major domains in literary and other fields of enquiries. The second chapter brings the Subaltern Studies at home and contextualizes it in relation to the time when Devkota lived and wrote. The penultimate chapter quickly scans the selected poems from *The Lunatic and Other Poems* and skims about how the subaltern subjects and issues are treated. The last chapter decodes all the information in a summarized form. In a nutshell, the research has become successful to explore Devkota's subaltern consciousness in his selected poems from *The Lunatic and Other Poems*.

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Chapter I

Subaltern Consciousness in Devkota

1.1 Introduction: Subaltern Consciousness in Devkota

This thesis endeavors to establish that poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota possesses subaltern consciousness which is evident in some of the poems in *The Lunatic and Other Poems*. His poems create a panorama of the contemporary society which consists of sharp racial, class, and religious division. In spite of the fact that he belongs to a Brahmin lineage, his empathetic portrayal and humanitarian reverence towards the people from supposedly lower level exhibits his elevated aspect of humanitarian values. The voice that he lends to subalterns is, for one reason, to speak for them since they lack literary voices, and for another reason, is to unite them so that they can resist the hegemonic elites.

Devkota, like any other poets having a revered sensibility for humanity, does not rely on any statistics on the housing or fooding so as to reflect subalterns' terribly bitter situation. He treats them with a poetic sensibility and consciousness that helps him in sincere rendition of their situation. He scans the faces of the subaltern to demonstrate their state of abject poverty and their inhuman sufferings, thus advocate for the change in their conditions. In some of the poems, the fact that the subaltern subjects are themselves the poetic personas justifies a more objective and closer rendition of subaltern experience. Basically, the subaltern consciousness in Devkota has been analysed in this research on the basis of two questions: first, how Devkota portrays the subalterns and what sensibilities that he possesses for them; and second, what effect of the subaltern consciousness in Devkota brings in totality. The first perspective tries to answer the question whether the subaltern consciousness in Devkota is just a mere attempt to gather the attention of subaltern subjects. The second perspective tries to seek the answer whether the consciousness with which he treats the subaltern subjects tries to bring change in their situation.

Since it is a crucial task to venture into all the works of a writer and find out the consciousness of the writer to objectively justify whether he/she has the consciousness of something, attempts are taken to objectively analyse a few of the poems from Devkota's *The Lunatic and Other Poems* to deal with the issues of consciousness.

1.2 Devkota's Time

Devkota's life spanned a crucial literary and political period of Nepal. With him, Nepali literature widened its territory, received diverse forms of literary works, unshackled its conventional chains of orthodoxy by freely incorporating the Romantic ideology, and finally emerged as an independent and competent body of writings. Writing about the literary period of Devkota, Michael Hutt in his book *Devkota's Muna Madan* states, "With a few exceptions, the Nepali poetry that appeared in print remained Sanskritised, strictly metrical, and the exclusive preserve of the educated Brahmin male" (1). This would not allow an easy accessibility of works to the common people, other than the highly literate elites. Devkota was speculative in the need of modernity in Nepali literature. He widened the reading circle of Nepali literature by unshackling it from the patronage of Ranas and by bringing it closer to the commoners. Giving an answer to why Devkota earned the title of Mahakavi, and how he widened the reading circle of Nepali literature, Michael Hutt explains:

It would be misleading to suggest that Devkota's work was directed consistently towards the objective of 'modernising' Nepali literature, because he was by no means averse to embracing classical forms. Nor was he the only Nepali outside the miniscule circle of elites. A part of Devkota's importance derives from the fact that he lived and wrote the concept of literary modernity (*adhunikta*) was being articulated in Nepal for the first time, and because his philosophy strongly influenced the way in which this

concept was incorporated in Nepali literature. For this reason he earned the title of 'Mahakavi', 'Great Poet'. (1-2)

This tradition somehow matches with the European romantic one, in which the romanticists brought the verse to the ordinary people writing an accessible meter; using common phrases and words, and setting an ordinary context that the common people were living in.

In his time, Nepali literature was freely upholding Sanskritised form and content. Dharanidhar Koirala, Somnath Sigdya, Lekhnath Paudyal, Balkrishna Sama were the leading Nepali writers in his time. These writers were writing in the Sanskrit tradition. Since the larger mass of Nepali population was deprived of education, literacy among the commoners was considerably very low. It was a great challenge to write for those people. Sanskrit tradition in Nepali literature did not give a way to flourish the inherently Nepali literary tradition. Furthermore, it had also limited the circle of readers. Nepali literature was striving to own a piece of literature that would be inherently Nepali in form and content. In relation to this need, Michael Hutt further points out, "Devkota was the first Nepali poet to invest his poetry, quite deliberately, with a flavour that was quintessentially Nepalese, and *Muna Madan* marked the first stage of this crucial development" (13). *Muna Madan* satisfied the quest as it was original in its form and content. This way Devkota created a work whose essence was Nepali and brought it to the tongue of common Nepalese. *Muna Madan* employs simple language that ordinary people understand, uses jhyaure meter that is common among them and picks up a plot that happens around them.

Devkota's reverence to folk genres, as exemplified in *Muna Madan*, marks a change in the history of Nepali literature. This piece of literature could directly touch the sensibilities of the subaltern. Folk genres have always been sources for the subaltern experiences. This also signals Devkota's awakened sensibilities to give more emphasis on the content that brings social changes and urges people to stand together to fight the evils of society using the

folk traditions. Narendraraj Prasain in his book *Devkotako Jeevansaili* quotes Ghanashyam Nepal who gives his opinion about Devkota:

Devkota is not a member of a particular caste or community, rather a common name of all the Nepali speakers; a name of a real and ideal person of all the oppressed, deprived, Dalits; a name of humanitarian appeal and ideology of democracy against the feudal and autocratic systems. (my translation 317)

Nepal does not limit Devkota's humanitarian ideology not only to a particular caste or a social group rather calls him a representative of all Nepalese.

Devkota initiated a romantic rebellion against the existing Nepali literary tradition. His reading of European Romantic writers like William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, P.B. Shelly, and John Keats imparted in him a more extensive and deeper understanding of the English Romanticism and thus influenced him. He inherited some of the basic speculations of English Romanticism and used them in Nepali literature.

Devkota neither left any genre of literature untouched and nor any literary tradition unpracticed. With him, Nepali literature owned a wide range of verse from short poems to epics and extensive body of prose from essays to plays. About the diversity of Devkota's creativity Ammaraj Joshi in his essay "The Economy of Nature in Devkota" points out, "He possesses diversity as a poet, and as a folklorist. He sings of nature, of man and of society using a commoner's language and rhythm quite often, but time and again he indulges in elitist eclecticism thereby making his writing staggeringly esoteric for common readers (9). Devkota's versatile literary works reflect his poetic sensibility, cosmic awareness, and philosophical quest in major walks of life. Wrought in hardship of his own life, he envisioned a world that is full of humanitarian values.

Devkota's birth and a longer span of his literary life were circumscribed by Rana oligarchy. He had to face several hurdles in this time. At the age of twenty one, he met a

tragic blow in 1930, when he along with some other literary figures made an abortive attempt to open a library. The team had to suffer for this noble cause because Ranas thought that opening a library would provide people a sense of awareness to resist and revolt against them. In the later period of his literary life, Nepal was in a politically transitional stage between Rana regime and establishment of democracy. This political transition was in fact important to everyone because the Nepalese thought that it would end all forms of social ills, feudal social structure, racial segregations, gender inequalities and illiteracy.

His time witnessed a historic revolution of Nepal, a revolution that would ensure democratic rights to every Nepalese; that would blur the gap between the sharp societal division between elites and subalterns and that would guarantee all the Nepalese some of the fundamental human rights. As a humanitarian writer, Devkota was optimistic that the revolution would give all the Nepalese a nation free of all forms of oppression and discrimination. The changes were taking place within and outside the country. He also witnessed both the World Wars and saw closely the political changes that were taking place at the immediate neighbours of Nepal. From local to global level, Devkota reacted to the frequently changing world with changing systems of mores. In this sense, he had both kinds of sensibilities; to react to the current affairs and to be optimistic for the future. Reacting to the contemporary time, he realized how the poor were suffering, how the feudalistic society brought injustice to the subalterns, and how the whole system kept the subalterns off the mainstream development. He was conscious of the movements that were waged in neighbouring countries. In the south, Mahatma Gandhi was leading a movement against British Empire to free the nation from British colonization, whereas in the North the Chinese people had waged a revolution to establish Communism.

In his time, the illiterate Nepalese from the supposedly lower stratum of social structure could neither raise voice for their welfare nor wage a war against the discrimination

heaped upon them. In reality, they were in need of someone's voice to speak for them, to materialize their sensibilities, to bring forth their bitter experience, and finally call for a change. Thus, Devkota became a common voice to them. He lent them the voice so that they could be heard and their sufferings could be brought forth. This passive resistance would inculcate in the subalterns the knowledge of their own present state of affairs and would equally call for their unification to fight against the hegemonic elites.

His deliberate expatriation to Banaras, India in 1947 aimed to materialize his contribution to fight against Rana regime. He edited *Yugvani*, a mouthpiece of Nepali National Congress. Though it seems that he was involved in politics, his political views were limited to the level of establishment of democracy in Nepal, and as a writer his role was to lead it by writing for democracy, justice and humanity. During this time he contributed a lot through writing for the causes of establishing democracy in Nepal. Apart from his primary contribution in editing *Yugvani*, he also edited newspaper and wrote poems and essays at the cost of his severely deteriorating health.

Reading Devkota's biography gives an impression that he not only possessed subaltern consciousness but also manifested it in his practical life. After he saw a rich lord being carried to Pashupatinath by a poor man on his shoulder, he severely criticized this practice of pilgrimage in his famous poem "Yatri." About this sensibility in Devkota's "Yatri," Chunamani Bandhu writes, ". . . it has a reactionary feeling against the superstition and religion" (66). His behaviours were evident of his rational thought and his writings posited the human values on the top irrespective of one's class, caste, and ethnicity. In his monumental work *Muna Madan* he gives a line to Madan who speaks, "A man must be judged by the size of his heart,/not from his name or his caste" (Hutt 33). Devkota gives greater value to a person's humanitarian aspects than to his caste.

Devkota's opinion about subalterns is evident in some of his own essays. In his critical essay "Two Stars in the Sky of Nepali Literature," Devkota points out how Bhawani Viskhu in his poem 'Gaaine' pays homage to the folk singers, Gaaines. Devkota points out, "The poet has reflected the importance of folk singers of our country in 'Gaaine'. My heart leaps up when I hear them singing" (Subedi 41). Apart from Devkota's respect to humanity, his use of ordinary language and verse in poetry corresponds with William Wordsworth's similar attempt in the practice of English poetry. His "Preface to Lyrical Ballad" defends the choice of ordinary subject matter, preference to poet's feeling over reasons, and the use of vernacular against the standard diction in poetry. Devkota in his monumental essay "Nepali Jhyaurebare" discusses about 'jhyaure', a term that refers to folk meter. In the essay he defends the folk meter stating it as product of Nepali tongue. Devkota claims that the use of 'jhyaure' in his poems was an experiment, the experiment to represent a greater mass of the country but the people did not claim it good. He states, "Hearts of Pandits and scholars would feel a sense of rural way of life, lower level of taste, farthest from or having some qualities of hilliness in jhyaure (53). He holds the opinion that 'jhyaure' is inherently a Nepali meter, and is loved by many Nepalese including the illiterate ones.

In his historical Tashkent speech Devkota speaks of the history of Nepali literature particularly about how Nepali translation of the Ramayan by Bhanubakta Acharya paralleled the translation of the Bible into English. He holds that such translation gave an opportunity to ordinary people an easy access to the Ramanayan, a sacred book of Hindus. Towards the end of the same speech, he states how literature helped in the process of democratization of Nepal, and how it helped to fight against the feudal social structure of Nepal. He points out the role of Nepali literary figures like Siddhi Charan Shrestha, Bhawani Viskshu, Bhim Nidhi Tiwari in later part of their literary career reacted against the Ranarchy and how they helped to bring democracy in Nepal. In "Tashkent Speech" he points out the need of revolution:

But these very writers in the later part of their literary career begin to respond to the call of the times and show intellectual, rebellious, and revolutionary voices and attitudes. The spirit of rebellion against feudalism and the spirit of revolution against the one hundred and four year old Rana regime, so necessary to the times, are stimulated and find voices in their later poetic utterances. (Devkota 7)

Thus, he points out that the literary revolution, which was initiated in the same time, would help Nepali literature to stand out as an autonomous body of writing. It sought to dismantle the Sanskritised metrical tradition, and restraint on the choice of subject matter and diction. He further states:

In the poetic field the rebellion goes up against the old Sanskrit letter meter rather against all metrical restraints. We find experimentations, prosaic forms, intellectualities, interrogatory qualities in the new poetic crop. The voice of poet goes up against struggle is now heard in the field. Now poetry takes rapid stride from idealism to realism, and assumes more or less prosaic forms and attitude in harmony with the new spirit. (7)

This new spirit was to uphold the voices of common people. It would be possible only if the literature came to the field of common life and spoke for them.

In conclusion, Devkota's subaltern consciousness was a result of his micro-scrutiny of the society where he was brought up and his own life experiences and his humanitarian attitude towards human beings. He raised voice for the subaltern, wrote their verse, and lent them the voice.

Chapter II

Contextualising Subaltern Studies

Subaltern refers to a person or a group from supposedly lower level of social strata. The person or the group is inferior to elites, its counterpart, in terms of its class, race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or religion. The term 'subaltern' has undergone a series of modification in terms of its meaning from medieval age to the present. In medieval age the term was used for vassals and peasants, the working class of people. Its register in the military field to denote the lower ranks of militants came in the eighteenth century. Antonio Gramsci first used the term in a political sense to denote the people who are subjected to exploitation by the elites. This group would include the marginalized peoples of the society who were not the part of mainstream development, and thus accepted the hegemony of elites. Gramsci's use of the term 'subaltern' primarily denoted peasant, workers, and other such marginalized groups who were neglected by the Germanic power. Gramsci also discusses of how the ruling state creates hegemony. In this connection Marcus Green notes:

Ruling groups that control political society, according to Gramsci, must also exercise a degree of hegemony in civil society in order for subaltern groups to consent to their own sub-ordinate position and to the authority of the ruling groups. Civil society, in this regard, is the sphere of the integral state where ruling or dominant social groups manufacture, organize, and maintain consent by promoting their hegemony—that is, their ideology, philosophy, ways of life, and so forth. (7)

Gramsci identifies how the dominant social groups create a setting which makes the subaltern groups accept their sub-ordinate position and thus remains silence.

When Subaltern Studies began as an autonomous body of knowledge in 1982, it primarily focused on the peasants of India. In one way, it tried to penetrate the history from

bottom-up approach, and in another way it brought forward the issues of long subdued people. Ranjit Guha led the mission of the history writing from the subaltern perspective that would reject the canonical approach of history writing. Subaltern Studies as a project has a revisionary approach as it assumes that colonial history writing had some problem. Thus it is also a part of postcolonial project.

Subaltern Studies emerged in a crucial time of world history. Postmodernism and post-structuralism had strong hold on the academic atmosphere. Both theoretical perspectives would nurture Subaltern Studies because they would interrogate any systematic body of knowledge, whereas both would pose a difficulty that Subaltern Studies itself would be questioned. Yet, Ranjit Guha's project of Subaltern Studies brought a tremendous effect in the intellectual environment in India.

Subaltern Studies penetrated into the major sociological, historical and literary enquiries and criticism. It questioned the canonical history of India on the basis of knowledge; and social identities created and authorized by colonialism and Western domination. Subaltern Studies was basically rooted in the Marxist and nationalistic mode of interpretation. Despite this ground of Subaltern Studies, Gyan Prakash points out the weaknesses of both Marxist and nationalistic criticism of history and concludes, "Of course, colonialism and its legacies have faced challenges before. One has only to think of nationalistic rebellions against imperialistic domination and Marxism's unrelenting critiques of capitalism and colonialism" (1475). Marxist interpretation of history could not transcend sharp criticism of capitalism, and thus kept it aloof from spotlighting the diverse social undercurrents of the societies of India where societal stratification was shaped by various religious, gender, and caste system more than by the economic forces. For this reason, Indian history history needed a separate and own apparatus to re-read and interpret the history.

Within a decade the influence of the Subaltern Studies grew in social criticism in such a way that most of the disciplines in social sciences drew on the basic assumptions that the Subaltern Studies laid on. In his essay "A Brief History of Subalternity," David Ludden states:

By 1990 the historian Burton Stein could cite the growing interest in Subaltern Studies as one sign that the 1980s were 'a decade of efflorescence' in South Asian studies. In the 1990s Subaltern Studies became a hot topic in academic circles on several continents; a weapon, magnet, target, lightning rod, hitching post, icon, gold mine, and fortress for scholars ranging across disciplines from history to political science, anthropology, sociology, literary criticism, and cultural studies. (2)

This analysis of the evolution of Subaltern Studies brings the need that was felt in social sciences to address collectively, unlike the Marxist analysis, the social structure and phenomenon in a new perspective. Though the evolution of Subaltern Studies emerged from a need to create a radical departure of the canonical history writing, the perspective stretched its influences in many other genres of social sciences. Subaltern Studies was successful in its project to revision the canonical history of the colonial period because it threw spotlight into the small scale movements at regional level and foregrounded them. Ludden further elaborates the effect and expansion of Subaltern Studies as, "When approaching the intellectual history of subalternity, it will not do to imagine that *Subaltern Studies* dropped a weighty stone into a quiet pond, or trace the influence of teachers and students, or to speculate that cutting-edge ideas have dispersed globally like news on the internet" (2). The effect was far reaching because it generated waves of reactions at a time. Information on internet flooded and eventually it emerged as a strong postcolonial perspective to analyse history and other fields of social sciences.

The readership of Subaltern Studies is growing globally. Though it appeared as a South Asian project for the reassessment of the Indian history, it successfully built up its readership elsewhere in the globe. Ludden describes the readership "Subaltern Studies occupies a subject position inside India, but is written for readers everywhere" (4). He further elaborates reading circle of Subaltern Studies in the United States citing Peter Gran who argues, "... that in India, Subaltern Studies is read against liberalism, Marxism, and 'religious fascism', whereas in the US, its 'principal novelty' is its ability to represent Indian by being read into ideologies of difference and otherness" (4).

The differences are always growing in number and in essence. This situation calls for an address to these differences. Subaltern Studies ventured into blurring this difference in the writing and interpretation of history by denouncing the canonical history which has been more in favour of elites. The history writing needed some rectification. In this context, Ludden elaborates, "Guha also opened Subaltern Studies by declaring a clean break with most Indian historians, announcing the project's ambition to rectify the elitist bias in a field dominated by elitism – colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism" (15).

Subaltern Studies picked up some peasant movements and small scale nationalist movements at regional level, which would be otherwise neglected by the canonical history writers, studied them closely from subaltern perspective. This was an approach to look at the history 'from below'. History witnesses that the canonical history writing was questioned in Europe in 1960s and this marked the evolution of diverse forms of perspectives to look at the history. Feminism emerged as a counterpart to the male hegemony in different branches of knowledge. New historicism emerged to counterpart the canonical history bringing forth the objectiveness of truth that has been circulating through the discourses. In non-Western world Edward Said's *Orientalism* posed many questions that the non-Orientalist would find difficult to answer. The quench to devise and analyse the history of people from the lower level of

social strata was not satisfied by Marxism which would divide the society into only two halves and remain deaf to other social divisions based on religious, economic, political merits. This pushed the Indian scholars to initiate Subaltern Studies.

Gramsci's first use of the term 'subaltern' underwent manifold changes over past few decades. Though the term was used to signify proletariats, the signification broadened to incorporate the larger mass. He used the terms to establish the dialectical relationship that the history witnesses. Until Gramsci's elaboration of Marxism, it was more an economic interpretation of the society. Gramsci gave a cultural interpretation of Marxism and therefore supplements the Marxist interpretation of society on economic basis. In the relation to the use of the term Gyan Prakash in his introductory critical essay states, "The term 'subaltern', draws Antonio Gramsci's writings, refers to subordination in terms of class, caste, gender, race, language, and culture and was used to signify the centrality of dominant/dominated relationships in history" (1477). Guha elaborates the term Subaltern to incorporate the larger mass without leaving the groups whom Gramsci primarily signified by the term and equally calls for a rectification in the bias characteristics of elitists in writing the history.

New trends to define and analyse the history reached its culmination in the 1960s. New trends of interpretation emerged in different branches of knowledge. Postmodernism posed a need to review the history, culture and literature. It sought to challenge the truth that these writings inherited. In terms of writing history, more than the narration of the events in a chronological order, context became prominent. This global intellectual current waved Indian writers, who also sought a context to define or redefine their history. The result was the publication of the first volume of *Subaltern Studies* in 1982. The publication of the book satiated those who were in need of an autonomous body of writing from where they could understand their history, stirred those who had hitherto borrowed the foreign perspectives and terminologies to read their own history.

Like other theoretical perspectives, Subaltern Studies does not own the critical tools as such; rather it incorporates the researches made by Rajit Guha and his team in viewing the Indian history from minorities. Since the publication of the first volume of *Subaltern Studies*, it has undergone radical changes. In its three decades of history, more than limiting itself to only revisiting history, it penetrated into other areas of human knowledge and endeavors. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's seminal essay "Subaltern Studies: Deconstruction Historiography" in *Subaltern Studies IV* enriched Subaltern Studies by incorporating in it a cultural and linguistic issues. Ludden writes about the *Subaltern Studies IV*:

Then, in 1985, *Subaltern Studies IV* introduced the cultural perspective of two prominent, US-based scholars, Bernard S. Cohn and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who explored the language and textuality of discursive power, which Partha Chatterjee and Ranjit Guha, in particular, but also Dipesh Chakravorty and some others had discussed in earlier volumes. (17)

Subaltern Studies IV gave a turning point in Subaltern Studies by incorporating the ideas of Gayatri Spivak in relation to culture and stretching the boundary of Subaltern Studies.

Though the term 'Subaltern' has a disputed use in its philosophical and critical usage, it is primarily used in postcolonial theory. Gayatri Spivak uses the term to refer to the group of people who have limited or no access to the cultural imperialism. Such a use of the term in postcolonial perspective discards the inappropriate use of the term while talking of 'minorities' in any cultural phenomena. It excludes the minority of college students, social clubs, or any other such social and cultural groups.

In postcolonial theory, Edward Said's work *Orientalism* renders the idea of subaltern in the sense of the imaginary east produced by the West by laying the foundation and justifying the reasons for the dominance of the orient. Having created an imagined geography and predefined images of the Orient, the West pushed away the orient as savage, raw, and

monstrous. The media also guaranteed and perpetuated this signification, thus created two worlds: the civilized West and the savage Orient. The sources of history and culture of the East, according to Said, roots out not from the perspective of the people of this hemisphere, rather it was mediated and appropriated as per the need of the west to put a dominance. Subaltern Studies points out the similar kind of tendency in writing the history of Indian peasants.

Mainstream development discourses borrow knowledge from colonialism and Orientalism, and focuses on the modernization theory, which in turn aims to dominate the underdeveloped countries by loading them with free trade, open market, capitalist systems. The subaltern, though reserves the right to be an indispensable part of this mainstream development, remains far off from it. Modernization calls for applying the universal policies at national and local level. Such policies always create a gap: they consider the subaltern as subordinate group that lacks knowledge. These policies never let the subalterns to speak rather they speak for the subalterns silencing them.

The study of subalternity is unlike the Marxism study in the sense that the former picked up some small level resistances and movements by the peasant, women, marginalized people, Dalits and other suppressed people, while the latter dealt these resistances and movements as part of the Marxist Revolution. These small scale movements and resistances enticed the Subaltern Studies group to enter into the undercurrents of the society. This is the fundamental difference between Subaltern Studies and Marxism. Abhi Subedi in his essay "Subaltern, Itihans ra Boli" in Dr. Taralal Shrestha's book *Shakti, Shrasta ra Subaltern* elaborates the difference as:

It is interesting to note the difference between Subaltern Studies and Marxism as the former holds the notion to pick up oppressed, latent and scattered

history of Subalterns in the fragmented forms, whereas the latter holds notion to study all these fragments under a single umbrella. (xix)

The difference has become more prominent as the Subaltern Studies picks up the small scale historical events like the peasant movements, Dalit movements while the Marxism analyses all forms of movement under the class struggles between the haves and the have-nots.

Shrestha further explains that since the oral traditions are more prominent among the Dalit communities and other marginalized people, folk traditions expresses a lot about them.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" poses a great difficulty in rendering subaltern voices by the Western writers in a cultural text. She argues that subalterns consist of heterogeneous admixture of subjects, and it is almost difficult to make them speak in a text in a totality. She argues, "Certain varieties of the Indian elite are at best native informants for first world intellectuals interested in the voice of the Other. But one must nevertheless insist that little colonized subaltern *subject* is irretrievably heterogeneous" (284). The Western intellectual circle tries to funnel this heterogeneity into a flat single signification. In relation to this, Spivak signals the appropriated intellectuality of West and elaborates how the western white men take it as their holy mission of saving the subaltern women from the brown men. She concludes the project of Western intellectuality as "White men are saving brown women from brown men" (296). She picks up the context of self immolation of *Sati*, the act of which is never heard from the person sati who performs this rite. Instead, other 'subjects' have been rendering of a *Sati's* experience and her voice from the Western world. With this she makes a doubt whether subalterns speak. She takes recourse of Derridian deconstruction to question the authority of the writer who speaks for the subalterns.

In conclusion, Subaltern Studies emerged as a project to review the colonial history of India, grew larger incorporating the cultural aspects of the society and introduced in literature

to study it from postcolonial perspective. Its relevancy and use in postcolonial studies has been steadily growing.

Chapter III

Textual Analysis

Laxmi Prasad Devkota comes from an ordinary family. His understanding and experience of life as a whole is reflected in most of his literary works. In some of the cases his awareness transcends from the material world to the cosmic one. Devkota's seminal literary works *Muna Madan* (1936) and *Pahadi Pukar* (1948) bear the witness that how sensitive and serious Devkota was in the rendering of the subaltern issues ahead. His poems offer the readers with social economic metaphor of the time. More than just giving voices to subaltern characters, his repeated call for the unity among the subalterns for the change speculates his progressive and revolutionary attitude.

Despite the fact that *Muna Madan* and *Pahadi Pukar* are good pieces of literary works for studying his subaltern consciousness, this research limits its study to a few of the poems from the bilingual collection of *The Lunatic and Other Poems* as the book offers a lot of poems written during/after the democratic movement against the Rana regime. So this book captures a transitional era of Nepal. The poems in this book are more progressive in tone and appeal for a change. The poems that are taken for the study include "To a Beautiful Prostitute," "The Lunatic," "Bullets are These!," "To a Beautiful Chyamini," "Rice, Pulse and Mustard Green," "A Call," and "The Bearer Heaved the Burden." These selected poems reflect the milieu of Devkota and his subaltern consciousness. Each poem is analysed and discussed below from the subalternity perspective. Komal Prasad Phuyal's essay "Subaltern Consciousness in Devkota" captures how Devkota treats the subaltern subjects. He states, "Devkota presents the subaltern people to show their inherent qualities that include honesty, blissful life, and harmony. Moreover, he exposes the poetic, emotional, and hardworking nature of such peoples" (52). This is one of the reasons why Devkota picks up ethnic and marginalized characters in his creative works.

A close study of literary biography of Devkota written by prominent Nepali writers like Chudamani Bandhu, Kumar Bahadur Joshi and Narendraraj Prasain has discovered many facets of Devkota's life. Chudamani Bandhu and Kumar Bahadur Joshi agree that the very first poem that Devkota wrote in his early teenage was about the woes of a woman who suffers a lot in her new home after she is married. Devkota depicts the hard lives of the women in their new homes and thus gains the praise of his family members, particularly his sister-in-law. Therefore, the orientation of his literary career can be said to have begun from his close observation of the society itself. He saw Nepal and the Nepalese society from such a vantage point that he witnessed the changes taking place in his motherland and her neighbours. This gave him an opportunity to relate the domestic issues with the globally changing world.

In his late teenage, Devkota was very empathetic towards women, their tolerance at their new homes. Joshi draws the conclusion of the initial literary orientation of Devkota and writes:

The subject matter of Devkota's songs contained his consciousness of the social reality, notion of progressiveness, dissatisfaction towards the traditional social ill-practices and superstitions, sympathy to the poor and suppressed, a satirical reaction to the mimicry of foreign practices, and affinity to natural beauty and youth aspirations, which all are reflected in his poems. (my translation 11)

During his youth, particularly in his twenties, Devkota turned towards the celebration of nature as he saw that the society was corrupt and needed some changes. His poems during his twenties reflect his romantic celebration of the nature while being critical to the social practices. Joshi summarizes the literary orientation of Devkota during the 1930s:

Devkota's poems express his desire to live a live with a beautiful girl far away

from the walls of urban civilization, his far-sightedness and loneliness, his orientation towards dreamlike ecstasy, love for motherland, belief towards gods, moralistic and idealistic consciousness, sympathetic towards the people who are oppressed and are suffering from injustice. (29)

As pointed out by Joshi, Devkota was more conscious of his society. His keen understanding of the society generated in him an awareness of the social problems and their reasons. For this reason, Devkota often picks up the poetic theme from the society.

Devkota's understanding and internalizing of the subaltern consciousness does not come from the reading of texts, rather it is the result of his close observation of the society that he lived in. After he returned from India in 1931, he faced the abject poverty and worked eighteen hours a day to meet his basic needs. He knew what it is to be a poor and wrote a poem "Garib," which Joshi considers a great creation. The poetic persona of the poem "Garib" suffers a lot like Devkota himself despite working hard. Another poem by Devkota "Bhikhari" appeals the world to render sympathetic treatment towards the beggars whom Devkota considers some forms of god's manifestation in ordinary lives. The society rather considers them as the second class citizens and treats them humiliatingly. In "Yatri," Devkota denounces the pilgrims that the people make to offer the gods. Their long voyage becomes ironical in the sense that the goal that they set to achieve is already on their way. They load the poor's back heavily with the logistics, yet they are blindfolded to the common understanding that caring and feeding those poor itself is the pilgrimage.

Devkota wanted to upgrade the economic status of his family. He found that the only way to fight the poverty was to earn by teaching English. Inspired by his brother Lekhanath, Devkota was determined to teach and raise the economic standard of the family. Narendraraj Prasain in his *Devkotako Jeevansaili* writes, "Devkota in his childhood held the confident that

he would upgrade his poor economic status of the family by studying higher" (my translation 66).

He studied higher and as determined, became an English teacher. He was fully committed to provide economic support to the family by teaching long hours. But, he could not meet all his expectation. Despite his own financial difficulties and crises, Devkota continued to write. He used the experiences that he gained in his writing and appealed readers. Therefore, he had a firsthand experience of how other subalterns would live who were considered untouchables; who were involved laborious physical works but could not earn for the family. He also knew of the people from the same society who would load the poor's back and would set out for pilgrimage.

Devkota's subaltern consciousness and his lending of voices to subaltern form a different context as compared to Gayatri Spivak who criticizes that speaking for subalterns is like "White men are saving brown women from brown men" (296). Devkota neither belongs to "white men" nor is saving "brown women" from "brown men". However, he can be a 'brown man' speaking for other 'brown men'. Beside the portrayal of the subaltern subjects in his poems, Devkota goes a step ahead to call for a change which is a way out to the existing problems. He expresses for them because they were either denied to speak or could not speak. Pranay SJB Rana in his article "Rise of the Subaltern" published in *The Kathmandu Post* discusses about rights of the expression of the subalterns. He writes:

It is not just that they have been discriminated against, marginalised and neglected, but that they have been forcefully and categorically denied a right to expression. This expression can take the form of representation in politics, in art, in culture or in voice, it doesn't matter. (7)

Devkota lent the subaltern the voice and spoke for them. His way was to accommodate the subaltern subjects in his literary works.

The democratic movement had generated expectations on the commoners but the system failed to meet them. Devkota was also disillusioned with the promises of democratic movement of Nepal and knew that there needed a greater change in the social structures. He had realized that the movement only changed the government. The poems discussed below represent the era of the democratic movement and the period after the democratic movement of Nepal in 1950. These poems depict the predicament of the subaltern people in Nepal and also hint for a change to bring justice and equality to all the subaltern people.

3.1 "The Lunatic"

In his epochal poem "The Lunatic," Devkota disapproves the contemporary thoughts and practices. He stands out in many of the traditional and stereotypical understanding of a sane man and questions the fundamental parameters of justifying a person sane.

In "The Lunatic," Devkota becomes a revolutionary poet and seeks a complete change in the society. His sharp criticism of the society, unmasking of the sophisticated and appropriated world's ugly aspects, and call for a complete change are worth mentioning. Though this poem reflects the poet's own situation of the time, this is more a criticism of the society than his autobiography.

The poem has a special appeal in the Nepali literary panorama. Some of the critics even hold the opinion that Devkota is reborn in this poem. This is to mark Devkota's literary maturity, sensitivity and his appeal through the poem. Though this poem also reflects Devkota's own situation, its tone and call for a new set of social structure are more significant. Devkota questions most of the fundamental regularities of life to subvert the usual order and rituals. He touches all aspects of the social life and asks for a complete revision. He begins from some sensory functions of a human and asserts himself as an insane person just to justify the things that the parameters that judge a person's sanity are themselves

malfunctioning and the poet's senses are much sharper and acuter than those who are the juries.

The poet confesses to be an insane person in the very first stanza. Right from the first stanza, where he asserts himself an insane person, he goes on to uphold the second of the binaries which juxtapose two human qualities of which one is the quality of a sane person and another is of an insane. His disapproval of the current milieu becomes evident as he explains why he is an insane. The second stanza tries to justify why his sensual perception and his understanding of the world are different. These differences in understanding the world mark a clear distinction between him and the rest of the rest of the world. Devkota states in the second stanza:

I visualize sound.
I hear the visible
And fragrance I taste.
And the ethereal is palpable to me.
Those things I touch,
Whose existence the world denies,
Of whose shape the world is unaware. (Devkota 47)

In this way, Devkota continues to differentiate himself with the world.

Chudamani Bandhu elaborates that "The Lunatic" outlines some of the life experiences that Devkota underwent. Bandhu informs that during the time when Devkota created this poem, he was involved in politics and was undergoing the abject poverty. Bandhu elaborates:

Though Devkota had some mental troubles, the time when Devkota was writing "The Lunatic" he was playing significant role in the politics wrought by physical tortures and mental agony along with the abject poverty. In this way,

the experiences of what Devkota saw, heard, and endured have worked in the creation of "The Lunatic." The fourth stanza of Lunatic signals some of the events of his life. These all things affected in creation of "The Lunatic." In "The Lunatic," it is seen that more than a poet Devkota, a revolutionary Devkota is speaking. There are better poems than this but in this poem Devkota's revolutionary philosophy has been displayed more significantly.
(my translation 281)

"The Lunatic" draws on both Devkota's biography and the social setting of his time. This poem is more significant for its revolutionary appeal.

The third stanza of the poem brings two personalities, I (himself) and you (the society), into conflict. Under the similar set of stimuli, the third stanza explains how his and the society's reactions are different so as to confirm that the reaction of the former are abnormal, while of the latter are normal, measured under the parameters set by the latter. Thus, this difference is a resistance against the stereotypic the then society that would hardly uphold changes. In his essay, "Devkota's 'The Lunatic': Resistance to the Hegemony of Normalcy", Mahesh Paudel elaborates this resistance as:

The customary practice of the society was that it wanted all the inhabitants to conform to its authority no matter how impertinent its norms were to the individuals and it expected them to take these norms for granted and act accordingly. If any person contradicted their norms and despised their hegemonic control, then the men in authority would simply charge that individual if being insane. (43)

Devkota denounces the elite practices and customs, resists the hegemony of the elites in authority and finally and tries to establish the subaltern's ways of practices and customs.

Devkota is well aware of the appropriated activities of the political and social leaders who

offer the illusions of people's rights and humanity to the rural folks. Devkota also justifies the oppression that the subaltern people are exposed to and shows his utter loath for such acts. The leadership is questioned in the seventh stanza where he openly calls the leadership as "Look at the strumpet-tongues a-dancing of shameless leadership!/ At the breaking of the backbones of the people's rights! (53)

And, now he shows his irritation against the ill-practices of the society upon the village folk as:

When the unsophisticated folk quaff off black poison with their
ears
Taking it for ambrosia,
And that before my eyes, my friend,
Then every hair rises on end,
Like the serpent-tresses of the Gorgons,
Every one so irritated! (53)

The fury of Devkota intensifies and his revolutionary reaction grows further. He shows his resistance in the last stanza. He explains how his body-parts react while he sees the "inhuman human world," the world that is "disordered and disturbed" because of the malfunctioning of the social agents. The poet reacts:

I look at this inhuman human world
Like a tongue of fire,
The machine parts of my frame jump out of their places,
Disordered and disturbed! (55)

The reaction is normal for the poet as he has the consciousness that the human world should be just for all the humans and the equality must be ensured.

The poem "The Lunatic" archives the account of the reactions of a poet who has a human heart for all the creatures of the world and who believes in the just treatment of every individual. Devkota struggles with the sane world, as it demands some ordinary and scheduled set of practices. This world is the world of the ruling class, where the subalterns are subordinates and they cannot recreate it, neither can they raise their dissatisfaction. His dissatisfaction becomes stronger in the stanza five where he denounces so the higher rulers and kings of the past. He calls "Nawab's wine" "all blood," "the king" "a pauper," and also denounces "Alexander the Great" (51). This kind of disrespect is a sign of his revolutionary attitude, as his time reflects how these "high-souled ones" create injustice upon their subordinates and create themselves sane and superior.

"The Lunatic" brings into interrogation the existing reasoning of who a sane person is. In "The Lunatic," Devkota puts a different version of a definition of a sane person. He questions most of the social structures, beliefs, and customs and urges for their rectification. The motive behind this is to question the existing elite society and its parameters of judgment. During the Rana regime, when this poem was written, the society was under the control of the elite Ranas and their rules would be the final and decisive. Devkota knew that the subalterns had no way except to uphold those false reasoning them and live in utter poverty. Therefore, Devkota symbolically resists the existing social, cultural and moral patterns.

3.2 "To a Beautiful Prostitute"

Devkota dedicates this poem to a prostitute, who comes from the supposedly lowly social life, and lives a life of hatred and humiliation. The poem, composed in fifty two stanzas, celebrates the beauty and work-worship of a prostitute whom the society considers a lowly creature, and condemns her and her work.

Devkota begins the poem celebrating a season, thus creating a mood that is romantic to set an environment. In first twelve stanzas Devkota praises the splendor beauty of a prostitute, her fragrance, her lustful call and finally elevates her beauty to a great height to compare her with the nymphs. He simultaneously calls Ambika, Menaka, and Urvasi, the mythical nymphs, to compare their beauty with the prostitute.

By the time the poet becomes overwhelmingly moved by the celestial beauty of the prostitute, his mind moves as he understands "a touch of death" that she carries with her, that circumscribes her and that keeps everyone away from her. At this juncture, the poet is hinting at the social norms and values that do not consider a prostitute a wholesome human being. The two opposite powerful forces: beauty and death are in play in the fifteenth stanza.

And here a touch of death?
 Dark death should never be seen so close
 By your bright side! Smile not to make it light!
 A tale of death is audible to me somewhere!
 Should death be by your side, I'll fight with death!
 Send me to battle, Beauty, him to knock. (27)

In the last line of this stanza, the poet assures the prostitute that he is ready to fight the death. In the successive stanzas, the poet continues to persuade the prostitute for a unification and mutuality of both sexes in order to fight the "death." He values the subaltern women and their power to transform the society and perpetuate the transformation. He calls for mutuality:

The quintessence of god's creation thou
 Imaged as woman! Thou and I are halves
 Of this world's heart and when together placed
 We bring a beat of life. For you and I
 Must palpitate together for the world

To move along! For you and I compose
 A single flower! Oh, recall the past!
 O daughter of snows! Recall Himal! (29)

The poet understands that for a continuation of life and human existence on the earth it is necessary that both men and women should come together. The mutual co-existence of men and women makes a "heart" and their interactions "bring a beat of life."

The poet is also aware of the reason why the prostitute had to live such a wretched life. He understands that it is the society that threw the beautiful woman into a miserable condition. Devkota calls the ill forces the "tyrant bull" that rules the society. He concludes that when the society is run by "flesh" it results in "lakes" of tear. This is the "grand satire" that 'bazaar society' has produced and thus discloses:

I see as grand satire you here abide
 In this bazaar society has produced!
 Are you a mockery of its face today?
 Where the tyrant bull of self supremely resigns
 And the brute snout browses on fairest bloom
 Where flesh rules all, where tears make lakes profound. (33)

The poet further diagnoses the society to find inequality a major factor for the pitiful condition of women. Interwoven in a society that only "speaks" of the "time's essence," the essence to practise inequality keeping aside the voice of women who is full of "hunger," but who is also the "mother of man." Devkota evaluates the position of a woman in a society that places her at the bottom neglecting her lead role in creating the world and begetting her offspring. Devkota writes, "For here equality is a lifeless thing!/And here the loudspeaker speaks the time's essence!" (33)

Similarly, in the thirty-second stanza, the poet points out the accusation that the society bestows upon the prostitute. Since the poet sees the ultimate beauty in the prostitute, he considers it a great satire that the society places the prostitute at the low level. He continues to blame the society, the creator, the Nature's law. He announces:

This is a hard, smart kick upon the world's Creator!

This is disdain towards his grand creation.

This is fraud practised on Nature's law.

This is cremating flame on this day's face.

It is all grand and sharp satire, satire

Flung at society's face, society's face. (33)

The poet then praises the prostitute who has an appealing gesture even to call the demons like Sumbha, Nishumbha, Chanda and Munda, all mythical antagonistic figures. The power of the prostitute to lure these mythical protagonists suggests the power of the prostitute in defeating the evil forces of the society. Devkota elevates the prostitute to the position of Goddess like Ambika who can eradicate the evil forces of the world.

The poet asks the prostitute to be a leader of the social reform and becomes very sad hearing that the prostitute does not want to change. He calls for a social revolution in unison but he feels that the prostitute does not listen to his appeal. He knows that the prostitute can also be a driving force since she is empowered also with celestial beauty.

In the successive stanzas, the poet shows other aspects of the life of the prostitute who conceals her strength but calls for a lustful engagement. The poet shows his dislikes to these aspects of her life. He concludes that if the prostitute does not initiate a change, she will have to endure this hellish life forever. She must reveal her strength and stand to fight against the social ills that forced her to live such a life. In forty-second stanza, the poet recognizes the

"female power" and announces, "You female power, O daughter of the earth!/ Do you not take a fancy from the blue sea of upper air," (39).

The poet appeals the prostitute to come ahead for a change that will pull them off the current situation. The change lifts the women from the current state of affairs and will ensure a more respectful life. The poet calls her to be his bride and become a spouse. He understands that the only way out the subalterns is change that brings betterment in their life. He requests the prostitute:

Can this appeal not move you?
 O be moved!
 Cannot my tears wash you?
 O be washed!
 O take this urge and with the flash
 Open your wings. (41)

The poet makes humble requests for a change in the stanzas that follow. He becomes tired of doing so and finally, the poet, knowing that the prostitute is not moved by his words, shows his anger for the stillness of the prostitute and shows his anger:

Don't you accept this offer then?
 Step down to me! Are you not prepared?
 Let it be so, all right
 Dart me no angry glance!
 Hunger as hunger live and die,
 O thirst, remain a thirst for ever (45).

The repeated requests go in vain and the poet is convinced that it is impossible to persuade the prostitute for a life beyond this. He knows without a change her life will ruin and rot.

Thus the poet walks away and leaves the prostitute in her own condition. Even in the last lines of the last stanza, the poet shows the power that the prostitute possesses as, "You could have washed a world!/ Muddle it, go/ And rot you, so!" (45). The poet signals the power that the prostitute possesses to cleanse the world. But he knows that this is not used.

In the last line of this stanza, the poetic persona states that he does not fear the society as the latter will point that he belongs to a different caste. In Hindu caste system, people are graded in the line of the work that they do and the prostitute is regarded as a lowly job, not suitable for a caste which is placed in the upper position in the caste-based social hierarchy. In this connection, Joshi concludes the message of the poem:

In conclusion, the poem presents the poet's adherence to the ultimate truth and religion, his arrogance against the prostitute's conviction to remain as a sex-machine through his romantic celebration of beauty, satire of social ills and call for a social reform. (my translation 350)

In this way, the poet foregrounds the qualities of the prostitute and signals the power that she possesses. At the same time, he also satirises the social malpractices.

3.3 "Bullets are These!"

In the poem "Bullets are These!," Devkota speaks of the power of the bullets for the transformation of the society. In this sense, he becomes highly revolutionary in the poem and calls for a change. He portrays the pitiful nature of Nepalese and show the need of the change. Despite the battles that the Nepalese fought, the conditions of the Nepalese have not been positively changed. That Devkota seeks for the aid of bullets for the change reflects his keen understanding of the social ills that need immediate change. Bandhu thus concludes the theme of the poem:

In the poem "Bullets are These!," the poet worries for the current time. Written in a satirical style, this poem expresses his beliefs of global brotherhood and

he displays the pathetic situation of Nepalese at the current time. Though Nepalese fought and died for others, the problem of the fundamental needs are still prevalent. (332)

In the first stanza, Devkota makes it clear that bullets are for making the future for the long struggling Nepalese.

The consciousness in Devkota for making a just society and ensuring the rights for everyone is reflected. Devkota then sings the praise of bullets as they are the weapons for making a brighter future. He announces:

These are bullets, bullets there!
 They sing about our ears,
 For they are the voice of battle!
 They are the calls of this clay, brother!
 The makings of tomorrow! (57)

Devkota points out bullets possess the power to transform and they inherit change in them. They are the need of the time and tools for tomorrow. He then elaborates how bullets engage in interlocution with each other:

The bullet is to bullet calling,
 "What's there tomorrow?"
 For this is the music of coming ages,
 Where the bloodred holi song,
 Fiercely blazes! (57)

The battle fought with bullets will be 'bloodred'; and this battle is the 'music' of the future. The poet speculates the possibility of a fierce war that the subalterns will wage in the future. The poem invites "you," whom the poet means the subalterns in a poetic conversation and reminds "you" of the need for change and the role of "bullets."

In the fourth stanza, the poet warns the subalterns and shows the dangers that the war that they will wage will bring. Those who cannot stand in the frontier of wars are dragged to the death. The poet recalls of the deeds of martyrs and heroes who bravely fought for the change. He reminds:

They shrank who feared the shadow,
 They flinched for their illusion.
 For Death must drag the destined goat
 And death shall drag the destined goat
 At day-end to his station. (59)

Therefore, the poet persuades the subalterns not to fear as death is inevitable. If used for a noble cause of change, the fighters will be either martyr or the brave hero. The poet's encouragement for the fight continues as he sees a 'heaven' after the victory. He writes, "Like a mission of mankind/ To heaven borne!" (59)

In the seventh stanza, poet make makes it clear that despite the hard labour and sincerity in the works, the conditions of Nepalese have not changed. This signifies the corrupt society that has built up the system such that the people from the lower status cannot have their conditions changed unless they get united for a revolution. Devkota shows the hardship of the people who are struggling for just "bread" and "butter." He also pictures the conditions of "naked Nepali's back," which symbolizes how the subalterns work hard but are deprived of basic needs. Devkota elaborates:

Rice and dal! Bread and butter,
 A morsel, and a roof
 And a patch of cotton on the naked Nepali's back,
 Human rights and human hopes! (61)

In the following lines, Devkota gives a solution through the unification of the people that brings equality, delivers justice and ensures human rights:

For the trumpet of our breathpipe speaks
 "Dispersion of the mist! Dispersion of the mist!
 And the New Light on the Peaks!"
 This is the volcano voice of pain!
 It is the tongue of Justice once again! (61)

Though the poet shows the problems of the poor and subaltern Nepalese, he keeps the hope for future. Every stanza foregrounds a need for change, an act of change and a hope for future. They toughen the heart, awaken the mind and set a scene to wage a war for a change.

The words act like the 'bullets' that have come from a gun, pushing the readers to immediately act. The following stanza prepares a scene as if the actors are now in ready position and waiting for a command for a march-pass, as the stanza runs:

'Tis not in vain! Advance! Advance!
 Wave after wave! Flood after flood!
 One day the blue over Nepal shall clear
 And the Age shall change her habit old!
 Every step a revolution,
 Every step, storm! (63)

These lines hint at a golden future of Nepal that will be free of old habits. Every step of the advance will turn into a revolution, bring a storm but the result is, "Peace to nation!/ Peace to nation/ For that are we born! (63)

The last stanza of the poem concludes with a note that the "bullets", which are also the collective voice of the subaltern Nepalese, are welcomed as they are singing for the change. The stanza also clarifies why the Nepalese "shout" for "democracy" if they find their voice.

The voices will be as powerful as the 'bullets' against the other agents who will try to suppress the voices but their attempts will, "Die like the showering hailstones/Dissolving into rain" (69). The poet leaves an optimistic note when he concludes, "Yet ours shall sing for ages to come/ The vernal song of victory/ The Holi song! (69)

3.4 "To a Beautiful Chyamini"

Chyame is a caste basically involved in cleaning the streets and toilets in Kathmandu. The community is regarded as untouchable because of their lowly profession. The poem is dedicated to a beautiful Chyamini, a female cleaner. The adjective "beautiful" before Chyamini has turned upside down the stereotypical understanding of a Chyamini in Nepalese community. Chyamini is so-called an untouchable in Hindu caste system and the Chyame community is placed at the bottom of the social hierarchical structure. The poet has dedicated the poem to a beautiful Chyamini.

The very stanza itself idolizes Chyamini praising her physical structure and elevating her beauty to the fullest possible. The poet delivers his felicitations for her beautifully moulded built-up. In the second stanza, the poet further elaborates why he has a revered attitude towards the subaltern people like Chyame. He accepts female bravery and regards so despite her lowly position in the society.

The third stanza better scans the society that has created divisions among people. Though the Chyaminis often play with the garbage and this results in their hands and body parts stink, the poet believes that human beings never stink and the effect is not seen in afterlife. He justifies that this understanding in human beings have come after a long trial. He states:

Garbage stink doesn't reach the heavens,

Man is not decomposed,

This is now proved in you.

The human rays have found the track

Crossing the long limits of darkness. (75)

While the poet informs that human rays have found a right track after a long journey through darkness, he sees that the barriers are still active in the society and these barriers have jeopardized the faith that the people hold, the faith on religion. In the fifth stanza, the poet compares the hard rock with a conservative society that restricts the growth of subaltern people. The way a flower breaks the hard rock to bloom, subalterns have also laboured to break the orthodoxies of the society to release its clutch so that the beautiful Chyamini like subalterns can bloom in the society.

The poet describes the profession of Chyaminis who have been washing not only the streets and toilets but also the social discrimination. The poet considers this act more significant as it signals the "Cleaning the age itself." (75). Bandhu acknowledges this act of cleaning the social injustice and malpractices. He writes, "In this poem, the poet while addressing the Chyamini calls for cleaning the evil practices and thoughts of the society to cleanse it" (312). This attempt tries to make the society free of social discrimination.

In the seventh stanza, the poet satirizes the priests who have actually perpetuated the practice of untouchability. He signals that the untouchable subalterns have torn the "stone idols." The poet sees a great irony in it. He sees a war in the society that creates divisions based on caste. He calls this war "a war of human soul" (77). With this reference, he sees this war futile and without any solid reasons. Since human soul is indivisible, so is the human society.

In the last stanza, the poet encourages the Chyamini to continue cleaning the streets as this is also a way of cleaning the society. Since the caste based discrimination is still prevalent, Chyamini should clean not only the street but the 'age' itself.

Stand with a broom on the road,

Freedom from germs!
 Where those without emotions live
 In false faith's glow,
 Sweep the age clean. (77)

In this way, the poet brings a subaltern subject in his poem to show the hypocrisies of the society. He establishes the dignity of Chyaminis and elevates the works that they have been doing because he believes that "A man must be judged by the size of his heart,/not from his name or his caste" (Hutt 33).

3.5 "Rice, Pulse and Mustard Green"

In the poem "Rice, Pulse and Mustard Green," Devkota points out the significance of the fundamental food items like rice, pulse, and mustard green. Though the context of rice, pulse and mustard green is more contextual in South Asian countries, the poet has made the message of the poem go globally. Food, one of the fundamental needs of human being, has made the activities of human beings purposeful and every individual is busy to ensure this necessity is fulfilled.

The poet structures the poem in such a way that it equates sound of a walk, with sounds of a heart-beat. Though the doctors make a humorous description of the heart-beat, poet identifies that it resounds like the sound of rice, pulse, and mustard green. Chudamani Bandhu thus describes the content of the poem , "The subject matter of 'Rice, Pulse and Mustard Green' is that the heartbeat of human beings ask for "Rice, Pulse and Mustard Green," "Rice Pulse and Mustard Green," description of a new idea" (my translation 318).

In the first two stanzas, the poet makes the heart-beat recognizable as the sound of rice, pulse and mustard green. Five stanzas from the third bring into discussion the Hindu mythology to exemplify the importance of rice, pulse, and mustard green. These food items are symbolic to the very basic food items for people specially from the lower level of social

structures. They are the food items considered for the subaltern community. Devkota understands the difficulty of the subaltern community for their hand to mouth problem.

Knowing the gravity of the issue, Devkota also warns of the possible conflicts that may arise if this problem is not addressed on time. Political leaders should understand this and need to promptly act to ensure that the people's basic needs are fulfilled. Even in the death bed, a dying person aspires for rice, pulse and mustard green. So they are as important as air for life. Rice, pulse and mustard are the basic food items for sustaining a life and symbolically they are food items that the subaltern people aspire for. Since Devkota was aware that subalterns of his time did not even get their basic food items, he contemplated on the importance of the basic food items for all. He came to a conclusion that every individual first wants to ensure that they have at least rice, pulse and mustard green to eat. The poem pictures the conditions of Nepalese subalterns who are deprived of fundamental necessity of meal. Most of the time their stomach are unfilled and for the same reason rice, pulse and mustard green have become the regular pulse of the subalterns.

The repetition of the last line "rice, pulse and mustard green" in every stanza in the poem signifies the importance and the repeated need of these items for human life. However, the first stanza has a different line, "Pit-a-pat, pat-a-pat". Devkota likes to equalize the sound of the gesture of a walk with the gesture for asking for rice, pulse, and mustard Green. He knows that fundamentals of human life are rice, pulse and mustard green. For subaltern people too, these requirements hold a prominent position. In deriving the conclusion of the poem, Joshi writes:

The first stanza of the poem sets a scene where the poet presents 'millions' of subaltern people struggling with the problem of rice, pulse and mustard green. Their mobility is for ensuring the basic needs. Therefore, the sound of the movement, pit a pat, sounds similar and thus echoes with rice, pulse and

mustard green, 'a common sound of destiny', the sound that the heartbeat of the subaltern people would generate. (my translation 262)

The second stanza presents a satire on the medical science that cannot diagnose the disease but give a romantic meaning of the heartbeat, and turn the misery of subaltern people into a matter of laughter. With this remark, the poet is hinting at the acts of elites of a society who twist the fact and still enjoy on the misery of subaltern. The poet denounces the medical science that fails to diagnose the disease resulted from the hunger but derives a meaning that the heartbeat is actually asking for 'rice, pulse, and mustard green':

I was forced to say the medical science was false!

False was this romantic meaning.

Why should I feel shame to speak in this age of reality?

Feeling the breast and calculating,

Arriving at a judicious decision,

I found a different bird speaking there,

'Rice, pulse and mustard green.' (141)

Since the heartbeat echoes the sound of 'rice, pulse and mustard green', the poet makes this a common destiny of everyone, thus universalize the problem. He comes to conclusion that the sound of the heartbeat is an 'authentic' note and without this, the world becomes immobile as "The mobile sound of the world's heart is/'Rice, pulse and mustard green.'" (141).

The fourth stanza further establishes the point that despite people try to hide their problem of 'rice, pulse and mustard green' he frankly admits, as a poet, that this is the life-element, without which neither the emotions nor the arts originate.

In the subsequent stanzas the poet tries to further establish the need of 'rice, pulse and mustard' is the most primary and takes mythical allusions too. He calls this need "the eternal voice" that is "loud and clear" and is repetitive like the human pulse. The poet navigates to

find out the source of the origin of rice, pulse and mustard green. He takes the mythical allusion to show a possibility of the origin of mustard green from the green stalk of "naval of Vishnu." Then he speculates that 'pulse' might be the power of "mustard green" that is transferred to kitchen. Rice is so common to everyone that their mobility has a sole purpose to collect "rice." Devkota narrates the evolution of rice, pulse and mustard green:

In the primal water, during the first blooming from the naval

of Vishnu,

Did this green vegetable stalk take birth!

The pulse is its power transformed in the kitchen,

And, putting on the household garb with philosophic words,

Rice is that for which the entire humanity

Moves along all roads, husking the rice,

Desiring or melting down. (143)

This stanza also signals that "rice, pulse, and mustard green" have always been of great importance and the entire humanity is associated with this. In the seventh stanza, the poet finds the similarity between the notes that comes from strikes of clock and the sound of "rice, pulse, and mustard green," to signify that even the second-hand of a clock echoes the sound of "rice, pulse and mustard green."

The poet warns that if the need of rice, pulse, and mustard green' is not addressed on time, this situation grows very terrible with the possibility of "revolution" with "destruction" and "annihilation." The poet writes, "Without it destruction may inflame, revolution may erupt,/annihilation may sweep" (145). Since the problem of "rice, pulse and mustard green" must be addressed politically and must be made a national issue, Devkota urges the political leaders to consider the issue with utmost seriousness. Since people work for this, they are also ready to die for it. If not addressed on time, fights may ensue and people come out for

bloody battle. The leaders should be aware of this and should know about the consequences. Since this is a long lasting problem, problem since ages, the leaders should be patient and solve the problems. For this, Devkota calls:

Those who can should know it, for it men fight, die and work.
 Its national colour is only a penance,
 The problem of aeons,
 The leaders ignorant of it are sheep,
 Can such sheep guide the nation's fleet? (145)

The question is still relevant to our country where the minimum needs of the subalterns are not yet addressed by the political leaders. Devkota believes that a leader is like a sheep who is ignorant about this necessity of the people.

The poem ends with a note that even in the deathbed the resonant of 'rice, pulse and mustard green' is audible and the dying person aspires 'rice, pulse and mustard green' in the another world, as he/she could not have them here on the earth: "We could not have this earth, we did not/ Labour for the other side being sure to find it in heaven" (145). The repetitive sounds and echoes of 'rice, pulse and mustard green' do not leave a subaltern until his/her deathbed.

3.6 "A Call"

"A Call" is another of Devkota's poems that calls for the participation of Nepalese for the social injustice and feudal practices in the society. The poem presents a history of Nepal taking references to the various wars that the Nepalese fought against the British and Mongols for creating a just society. He then goes on to show us the lowly status of Nepalese who stretch their hands like beggars and are like the most cowardly people of the world. He examines the whereabouts of the courage and pride of Nepalese. According to the poet, Nepalese have become very weak and fragile. He states that subalterns in the past had a

glorious time. Nepalese established the great cities, built the foundations of great cities and established them. Now, under the feudal systems, the same hands are chained, the high-held heads are now bowed. He writes:

We stand in attention, poor dogs,
Makers of Peking, conquerors of Sikkim,
Victors of Kangra, we the warring Nepalis now
Celebrate Victory
By attending the huge gates, trembling throughout the day,
Just for earning rice, pulse and a pair of clothes. (161)

Therefore Devkota calls for a fight against the feudal system for ensuring the social harmony and perpetuate the glorious history that the Nepalese built.

The first stanza of the poem pictures the conditions of Nepalese subalterns who have very limited aspirations. The poet is of the opinion that Nepalese subalterns have laboured hard from erecting cities to guarding the stores of feudal lords just to fill their stomach. The stanza also points out the hegemony of feudal lords who dominated and kept the Nepalese subaltern away from the art and literature, source of knowledge. The poet writes:

We who are sold for rice and lentil,
We the Nepalis at present,
We have guarded the feudal stores,
We are humiliated,
Blind to literature and the arts. (159)

The second stanza further elaborates the pathetic conditions of Nepalese subalterns who 'look at the table' with 'covetous eyes', who 'have learned principles from sinners', and who live fawning others. The poet also points at the vulnerable situations of Nepalese who are dependent for the fulfillment of their basic needs. Similarly, the third stanza satirizes the

society that does not value the inner personality that is moulded in philosophy, but the outer personality that 'sprouts in dress'. The poet points out, "Our philosophy is curled in our tail,/ Our personality sprouts in our dress" (159). The poet further justifies the hollowness of our society and also the lowly conditions of Nepalese who need to transform from the current states of affairs.

Seventh stanza evidences the effect of a feudal society on the Nepalese subalterns. He calls 'hollow men' to those subalterns who do not respond to the injustice that is laden to them, who bow and stretch hands to salute the elites as "Lord." The standstill nature of Nepalese subalterns makes the poet to wonder and makes him to reiterate the glorious past that archives the great wars that the Nepalese fought and won. The poet glorifies the past and writes, "Our forebears defeated the whites, the Mongols,/ We pack all aspirations to ferment/ In the pits laid, we the ragged beings" (161).

The poet worries about the fading courage and loosening resistance of Nepalese. The ninth stanza further pictures the pitiful nature of Nepalese who are "the yes-men" and "poor dogs." He further narrates the stories of the Nepalese forefather who built Beijing, erected the mammoth buildings, conquered Sikkim and won the war of Kangra. However, this is ironic to see the Nepalese attending the gates of the same buildings in the same cities. Devkota points out the glorious history of which the stakeholders, the Nepalese, have now become tiny and lowly creatures.

In the thirteenth stanza the poet creates a setting for the reaction against status-quo of Nepalese and calls the subalterns to unite together. He calls: "Rudras of the age! Find out your own soul,/ Know it, poor ones! Blindness has made you poor." (161). s

The fourteenth stanza further encourages the Nepalese to fight for progress and prosperity. This is a call for a fight to end all the injustice and inhuman practices, a call for relive the prosperous and respectful life, and a call for putting an end to all the feudal

practices. Devkota, as always, makes the subalterns ambitious as 'to reach the moon' and to fetch the 'harvest in Mars'. He calls the great personalities of Nepalese history to remind them the victorious past and re-live it.

The poem ends with the characteristics of Nepalese people who are habituated to adapt in dangers, who aspire for a change, and even who have taken the burden of the world to enlighten it.

The Nepalis are those
 Who wade through dangers laughing
 Who heave the world's burden
 Arousing the entire world today! (163)

Therefore, the poet wanted that subalterns need to pool their energy collectively and unite for a better future. Pranay SJB Rana also points out the challenges that the subalterns are facing now because they are unable to pool their energy. He writes, "This is the challenge the subaltern faces, to not fragment while defining and to always recognise that we are parts of an assemblage, that nothing exists in a vacuum and we are always linked, one way or another, to everyone else" (7). As indicated by Rana, this is a growing need of collective effort.

3.7 "The Porter Heaved the Burden"

The poem "The Porter Heaved the Burden" details how a porter keeps himself busy throughout the day by lifting the heavy loads but do not earn his life. While the single-line-first-stanza states that the porter has heaved the burden. The second stanza sets a scene of a difficult topography and harsh climatic situation where a porter with degrading physical health is placed. The porter labours hard to take the load to the top of the mountain. The poet elaborates the condition of the porter who is "half naked, half-starved, always thirsty" but vows to climb the top of the mountain taking the "the burden of others' sins."

The fourth stanza leaves a philosophical note on how people burden their load on other and enjoy on the miseries of people who are from lower profile, specially the subaltern people. He denounces the people who make other people carry the load for them. The poet states, "We are piling burden upon burden/ On others in the world . . ." (179).

The next stanza details how the earning becomes insufficient to feed the porter himself. The payment is just enough to keep the mobility of his limbs. "He wants payment for his pains alone/ Only to keep his limbs moving" (179). The poet also brings into scrutiny the systems of religious hypocrisy that the society shows. The Vedas and Purans do not have meanings for the porter. His Vedas and Purans mean the service that he renders. Despite the difficulties and hurdles, the porter manages to complete his service and reaches the top. His only desire while he carries the load to take it to its destination. The poet vividly describes the moment that the porter reaches the top of the mountain:

When he reaches the deep cleft
 With sparkling pearls decked on his brows
 Sings the summit bird of the heart
 A warble sweet of a short duration
 Look! What agility he showed

The porter heaved the burden! (179)

Devkota reveals other aspects of a porter's life in the last stanza. The porter has no possibilities left for him to survive except to continue this same profession. He also does not receive the payment that his labour should be paid. People bargain and quarrel like beasts denouncing his profession. His eyes reflect sincerity and reserve the source of poetry. Though he sincerely does his work and becomes patient to all the tortures that are laid on him, he is called "a beast" by the people. People disregard his humane personality but consider him a lowly creature. Devkota ends the poem as he declares:

In his eyes are stored
All humanity's poetic flow,
Everybody calls this god a beast!
What divine method he displayed...

The porter heaved the burden! (181)

A porter by his profession is a subaltern. The work-worship of the porter generates an empathetic feeling. The poem vividly describes how a porter heaves the burden despite the difficult topography. The porter's miserable conditions are shown to generate the sensibilities to resist against this. The porter comes from a subaltern community. He endures all the hardship just get his basic needs fulfilled. Still, his labour is not enough to provide him with the basic necessity. The great poet with humanitarian sensibilities feels the difficulty in him.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

Devkota's subaltern consciousness stems from his own close observation of the society and his poetic reaction to it, his dissatisfaction of the unjust social structure and his desire for a change; and his understanding of the abject poverty and wretchedness of the subalterns. He witnessed the change in India and the revolution in China and participated in the democratic movement of Nepal to conclude that domestic changes were neither institutionalized nor perpetuated. He observed that the political changes that took place did not change the life of subaltern people like Dalits, farmers, women, and other marginalized community. Most of the selected poems from the bilingual edition of *The Lunatic and Other Poems* were written during the period of the time when Devkota was disillusioned with the changes that the democratic movement in Nepal offered the commoners. Therefore, most of these poems depict his dissatisfaction of the society and practices. Some of the poems also call for a revolutionary change so that a just society can be reestablished.

Devkota's heightened consciousness of the subaltern, awakened humanitarian sensibilities, and sincere treatment and rendition of these qualities have made him a great poet. His greatness reflects in his poems that accommodate the subalterns, lend them voice and speak for them. Though he comes from a Brahmin lineage, his humanitarian treatment of the other people from so-called lower ranks of social life reflects the fact that an individual is basically a human being and first deserves a human treatment.

The content of the poems that are selected for a research encompasses basically two ideas. First, these poems speak for the subalterns to render their state of affairs so that they become self-aware. Second, these poems inherit a call for a change. Though these poems depict the hardship of the subaltern subjects, they contain the seed for a revolutionary change.

Human history has witnessed the role of literature in the major changes that took place in the world. Even in Nepal, the history witnessed the strength of written words in a change. Nepali literary history saw 'Makai Parva', 'Library Parva', during the transitional stage of Nepal. Therefore, the words can be like "bullets" if used for a social change. As a seer of the time, Devkota envisions that unity in diversity is necessary for the prosperity of Nepal. He reckons the power of the subalterns and thus asks them to unite for a good cause. His call for the unity is national and he asks to unite under the umbrella name of Nepalese.

He knows how a beggar, a prostitute, a porter, a Chyamini earns their living. He privileges them in his poems and denounces the society that fragments it on the basis of works. He seeks the similar sensibilities and heartbeat, the similar attitude of work-worship and the same level of consciousness in all these communities. He advocates for them as he believes that newly developed political situation also has not addressed their needs. He sows in them the realization of their condition and asks for a change which upgrades from their current social and economic position. He knows that the changes takes place only at the level of political system, not in the social level.

"The Lunatic" wages a war against the reason-laden society that values only the material world that has rotted in corruption and has deprived people of their democratic rights. The poet criticizes the society, established social norms and values and comes to the conclusion that the society has gone crazy. Devkota elevates the beauty of a prostitute in "To a Beautiful Prostitute" and requests her to change herself to rid of the discrimination and hatred the society inject on her. In "Bullets are These!," the poet gives the solution of the existing social malpractices as he takes recourse of bullets for a change. "To a Beautiful Chyamini" draws a beautiful picture of a Chyamini whom the society places at the bottom. He heightens her beauty and her work, thus make her beauty a symbol of resistance. In "Rice, Pulse and Mustard Green" the poet universalizes the importance of rice, pulse and mustard

world and draws the conclusion that most of the human endeavours are for gathering these items. "A Call" calls for a unified struggle to ward off the social injustices and feudal practices to create a just society. Devkota narrates the glorious past of Nepalese and shows how the time has forced them to stretch their hands to the feudal lords. He calls for a unified fight to dismantle this. The last of the selected poems "The Porter Heaved the Burden" depicts a hardship of a porter who has been long involving in the profession but has been fighting for making his lives. His conditions have remained the same despite his work-worship. Devkota points out the difficult life of a porter and speaks his woes.

Lending voice to subalterns Devkota does not make them silence, rather he creates in them an unrest and dissatisfaction with awakened sensitivities, thus pushes them to bring a change that will ensure them equality and respectful life. He accommodates the ethnic diversity that is unique to Nepal and treats everyone impartially being a human with poetic sensibilities.

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