

Cultural Representation of Dalits in Nepali Literary Writings

A Dissertation

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By

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LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the dissertation entitled **Cultural Representation of Dalits in Nepali Literary Writings** submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.) in English to the Dean's Office of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu Nepal by Shyam Lal Magarati has been approved by the supervisor and co-supervisor.

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APPROVAL LETTER

This dissertation entitled **Cultural Representation of Dalits in Nepali Literary Writings** was submitted by **Mr. Shyam Lal Magarati** for final examination to the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** in **English**. I, hereby, certify that the Research Committee of the Faculty has found this dissertation satisfactory in scope and quality and has therefore accepted for the degree.

Prof. Kushum Shakya, PhD
Dean and Chairperson
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Date: *Sep 5, 2021*

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Ph.D. dissertation entitled **Cultural Representation of Dalits in Nepali Literary Writings** submitted to the office of the Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, is my original research work prepared under the supervision of my supervisor and co-supervisor. I have made the due acknowledgements to all ideas and information borrowed from different sources in the course of writing this dissertation. The findings and results of this dissertation have not been presented or submitted anywhere else for the award of any degree or for any purpose. No part of the contents have ever been published in any form before. I shall be solely responsible for any evidence found against my declaration.

Shyam Lal Magarati

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August, 2021

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The issues related to poor, marginalized and Dalits had always fascinated me even before I started reading the theoretical interventions of essentialist, constructivist and cultural scholars. Being of the same social group and victim of cultural trauma under the caste system and practice of untouchability, I had come to realize that most of my topics were one way or other related to contemporary caste issues. For these reasons, I chose this area of research for my Ph. D dissertation because the representation of the Dalits, their identity formation and their marginalization in the contexts of Nepal had concerned me greatly.

This dissertation would not have taken the present shape without the guidance, help and support of many people. I want to mention some special people without whose support I could not have finalized this dissertation and each one of them deserves special acknowledgement at the outset. First of all, I must thank my supervisor Prof. Krishna Chandra Sharma for his continuous support, encouragement, inspiration and valuable guidance. His time, valuable comments and creative suggestions have enriched this research. Similarly, I would like to thank my co-supervisor Prof. Dhruva Bahadur Karki for his academic guidance, support, creative suggestions, inspiration and theoretical base. I am also grateful to Prof. Ama Raj Joshi for his valuable suggestions. My sincere acknowledgement obviously goes to Prof. Anirudra Thapa and Prof. Jib Lal Sapkota, the Head of Central Department of English who often induced me with co-operation to complete this research in time.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the socio-cultural representation of Dalits in poems, stories and novels from the Nepali literary writings. To analyze the Dalit issues in Nepali literature, the researcher has selected twenty-nine poems from four anthologies of poems: Bishnu Kumari Waiba's poems "Euti Swāsni Mānchheko Antarbārtā" and "Juthi Daminiko Abhibyakti" from *Parijatka Sankalit Rachanāharu* (2054), Rambabu Subedi's "Kamini Āmā" from *Kamini Āmā* (2067), Bishowbhakta Dulal's (Aahuti) two poems "Gahugoro Africa" and "Tuchha Jiwanko Mahān Gāthā" from *Gahugoro Africa* (2071) and *Āphar-Unmukta Pustā* (2073) edited by Kebal Binami, Prakash Guragain and Madhav Ghimire 'Atal' which contain thirty-three poems but twenty-four poems are analyzed. Similarly, the researcher has selected thirty-six stories from four anthologies of stories: "Naikāpe Sarkini" written by Bishnu Kumari Waiba from *Parijatka Sankalit Rachanāharu* (2054), Ranendra Barali's five stories from *Dalitko Dailo* (2068), Krishna Murari Bhandari's fifteen stories among twenty-eight from *Kinārākā Mānchhe* (2069), and fifteen among twenty-two stories from *Nepali Kathāmā Dalit* (2074) which are edited by Tejbilas Adhikari and Purushottam Rijal are analysed. Furthermore, four novels: *Ko Achut?* (2011) by Muktinath Timsena, *Nayā Ghar* (2059) by Bishowbhakta Dulal (Aahuti), *Itihāsko Ek Paikā* (2066) by Ranendra Barali and *Likhe* (2073) by Sarad Paudel are critically analysed.

The dissertation includes six chapters. The first chapter covers introductory part of overall study. It is divided into two parts: introduction and review of literatures. The first part examines the selected literary texts for the representation of Dalits. It also includes summary of the selected poems, stories and novels with critical view of the researcher. In the same way, Marxist and neo-Marxist perspective, Stuart

Hall and Antonio Gramsci's insights of representation as analyzing tools are included. The study attempts to seek the answers to the following research questions: What types of socio-cultural representation of Dalits are found in selected Nepali literary texts written by both Dalit and non-Dalit writers? Why do they differ representing Dalits in case of issues, characters, class and culture? How do they relate untouchability, cultural trauma and resistance? Similarly, the objectives of this study are: Main objective; to find out the representation of Dalits in selected literary writings written by both Dalit and non-Dalit writers. Specific objectives; to identify socio-cultural representation of Dalits in Nepali literary writings, to examine the similarities and differences between Dalit and non-Dalit writers in case of issues, characters, class and culture and to analyze the relation of untouchability, trauma and resistance. Moreover, the second part deals with the literature review.

Likewise, the second chapter includes methodological part. To depict the representation of Dalits in culture, caste and politics, the primary idea of Stuart Hall's Semiotic and Discursive Approach and Antonio Gramsci's Hegemony and Ideology are used as basic theoretical parameters. Likewise, how society constructs the identity of a group of people is the meaning construction under representation. To support such notion of Hall, the theoretical idea of cultural critics like Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Raymond Williams, Michael Foucault, Pramod K Nayar, Roland Barthes, Mikhail Bakhtin, Sigmund Freud, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Edward Said and Jacques Derrida have been discussed. Moreover, for the bad effect of caste and religious discrimination, Babasaheb Ambedkar and G.S. Ghurey have been cited.

In the same way, the third chapter deals with the first objective of the research. This examines the representation of Dalits in culture, caste and politics in poems, stories and novels. The fourth chapter analyzes the similarities and difference between

Dalit and non-Dalit writers in terms of issues, Dalit characters, class and culture. Furthermore, the fifth chapter analyses the relation of untouchability, cultural trauma and resistance as the third objective. As a concluding chapter, the sixth chapter synthesizes that analysis of previous chapters by revisiting and reconnecting of all research questions and objectives.

The overall study concludes that both Dalit and non-Dalit writers have been representing Dalits in their writings. They have some similarities and some differences in Dalit representation. Dalit writers are more serious in cultural aspects than other whereas non-Dalit writers emphasize more on caste and class. There should be promotion of positive aspects of Dalits' art, skill and culture and transformation of evil culture which has bad impact in Dalits' life. Moreover, Dalits are also the citizen of this nation so that they should be encouraged, supported and respected by the nation. It is also emphasized that the transformation in general and cultural transformation in particular. The policy implementation against caste discrimination and practice of untouchability is necessary. Furthermore, for the emancipation and liberation of Dalits, co-operation, co-ordination of non-Dalits, unity of Dalits and support of the nation is also mentioned simultaneously. At the end, the researcher acknowledges that this research would have been richer if he could have managed to include the personal talk of some writers, Dalit activists and well-wishers concerning the Dalit representation, identity, trauma and resistance of Dalits. But because of time and materials constraints I could not do so.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AD -	Anno Domini
AS -	Āyeārjan Samiti
BS -	Bikram Samvat
BCCCS -	Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies
CA -	Constitutions Assembly
CARE -	Co-operative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CC -	Civil Code
FEDO -	Feminist Dalit Organization
HMG -	His Majesty of Government
IC -	Indian Currency
ICERD -	International Conventions on the Elimination of All Forms Racial Discrimination
IDSN -	International Dalit Solidarity Network
INGOs -	International Non-Government Organizations
INSEC -	Informal Service Sector Centre
MA –	Master of Arts
MA -	Muluki Ain (Civil Code)
MP -	Member of Parliament
NGOs -	Non-Governmental Organizations
NHRC -	National Human Rights Commission
SP -	Sāmājik Pariwār
VDC -	Village Development Committee

SYMBOLS FOR TRANSLITERATION

The following phonological symbols are used for the transliteration of Nepali words in English:

a/अ ā/आ i/इ ई u/उ ऊ e/ए ei/ऐ o/ओ au/औ

k/क kh/ख g/ग gh/घ N/ङ c/च ch/छ j/ज jh/झ ñ/ञ ṭa/ट ṭha/ठ ḍa/ड ḍha/ढ ṇa/ण t/त th/थ

d/द dha/ध n/न p/प ph/फ b/ब bh/भ m/म y/य r/र l/ल va/व śa/श ṣa/ष sa/स h/ह ksh/क्ष tr/त्र

jña/ज्ञ

Note: I have relied on Nepali pronunciation for Roman transliteration. These symbols are adopted from Turner (1931) and the International Phonetic Association (2018, <https://www.internationalphoneticassociation.org/content/ipa-chart>). I have used single symbols /i/ for both short इ and long ई and /u/ for both short उ and long ऊ. The length in these letters is marked only orthographically, not phonologically.

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