

Tribhuvan University

Pre-colonial Text as Colonial Discourse: A Postcolonial Reading

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University,
for the Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of Master in
Philosophy in English**

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Letter of Recommendation

Toya Nath Upadhyay has completed his thesis entitled “Pre-colonial Text as Colonial Discourse: A Postcolonial Reading” under my supervision. I hereby recommend his thesis to be submitted for the *Viva voce*.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Pre-colonial Text as Colonial Discourse: A Postcolonial Reading” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Toya Nath Upadhyay has been approved by the undersigned members of Research Committee:

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Abstract

This study attempts to contextualize the pre-colonial text, *The Journal of Christopher Columbus*, within the paradigm of colonial discourse. For that purpose, it uses the concepts of postcolonial thinkers such as Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi K Bhaba etc, and analyzes how the text creates a discourse of otherness and misrepresents the Native American people by various stereotypes like savages, cannibals, good people to be servants, timid, deficient of intelligence etc.

The study finds *The Journal* implicated with four motives of Europe—glory, god, gold and govern—of the time which lead to the formation of the binary oppositions between the Europeans and the Native Americans. In this sense, it claims this text to be an originary colonial discourse that subsequently leads to the Spanish imperialism in the Americas. Hence, it also urges for the incorporation of pre-colonial texts like this in the corpus of postcolonial studies. For this purpose, it also borrows insights from the critics such as Robert Stam, Ella Shohat, Enrique Dussel, Asselin Charles, Peter Hulme etc who have criticized the postcolonial theory for its negligence to the texts written around 1492.

The thesis has been divided into five chapters. The first introduces *The Journal* as a colonial discourse, the postcolonial theory and the crux of the study. The second situates colonial discourse in the postcolonial theory. The third presents the historical contexts and motives of the exploration. The fourth reads *The Journal* through the postcolonial perspective and analyses how it is a colonial discourse. The last concludes that *The Journal* misrepresents the Native Americans and hence initiates the Spanish imperialism in the Americas. It also argues for the extension of the postcolonial theory to the pre-colonial contact period to include the texts of the period into its corpus of study.

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