

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Gender Representation in Nepalese Folktales

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by

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Tanka Bahadur Rai has completed his thesis entitled “Gender Representation in Nepalese Folktales” under my supervision. He carried out his research from 21st July 2008 A.D. to December 31. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis titled "Gender Representation in Nepalese Folktales," submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Tanka Bahadur Rai has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

Folktales, the most popular form of Nepalese folklore in Nepal, are replete with the characters that perform their traditional gender roles on the basis of socio-cultural structure of Nepalese society that is shaped by the ideology of patriarchy. They are one of the key sites for gender construction in Nepalese society for they are backed up by the cultural gender constructions of women as essentially inactive, lacking in volition and action, and always seeking to gain favour of the males as a strategy for survival. They are expected to be beautiful, submissive and tender, sacrificing their personal desires for the good of their husband, family and society. They have to comply with the rules and principles of modesty and myth of femininity. Moreover, they are the victims of ambivalent representation as divine manifestation as well as an incarnation of an evil. However, despite being victims of socio-cultural ideology at times they challenge this socio-cultural construction of gender veering towards trickster role which is a strategy for survival as well as a justifiable response to oppression. For survival in unusual situation, they devise different strategies which ultimately subvert their culturally-assigned gender roles, limitations and expectations. As a discourse of subversion in folktales, trickster role dramatizes the possibility of refashioning the truth about construction of gender in Nepalese society conferring upon them the position of agency, courage, protectiveness and power for violence.

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