

CONTEMPORARY NEPALI PAINTINGS: HYBRIDITY AND NEGOTIATION

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

ENGLISH

By

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September 2009

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

We certify that this dissertation entitled “**CONTEMPORARY NEPALI PAINTINGS: HYBRIDITY AND NEGOTIATION**” was prepared by **YAM PRASAD SHARMA** under our guidance. We hereby recommend this dissertation for final examination by 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**.

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Date: 17 September 2009

APPROVAL LETTER

This dissertation entitled "**CONTEMPORARY NEPALI PAINTINGS: HYBRIDITY AND NEGOTIATION**" was submitted by **YAM PRASAD SHARMA** for final evaluation 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 this faculty has found the dissertation satisfactory in scope and quality, and has accepted it for the degree.

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ABSTRACT

There are multiple religious to socio-political representations in contemporary Nepali paintings. By going through such subject matters and themes, the study concentrates on the post 1950s Nepali paintings to conceptualize the ideas of hybridity and negotiation as their significant features. Hence, the research work discourses the art works in the following terms. Contemporary Nepali paintings reconcile subject matters, contents, and forms from western art of the twentieth century while at the same time from the early Nepali art. Contemporary Nepali paintings thus share and reconcile western art and earlier Nepali artistic traditions. Such reconciliations create contemporary native varieties. These paintings create a complex and dynamic sets of visual texts.

Furthermore, the mergers create interart and intertext of paintings that include not only the traditions of west and early Nepali art but also include various artistic genres and disciplines. Such incorporations can be seen from photography, media, poetry, theatre, music, sculpture to objects and images of virtual texts. One can experience and comprehend an intense artistic intertextuality of time and space, genres and disciplines in Nepali paintings.

Keeping such propositions into consideration, the thesis aims at studying Nepali paintings of the recent times as a mixture of subject matters, contents and forms from various cultures, pasts, and presences and thus produces native creations. Since many such cross-currents interact to produce the texts of Nepali paintings, one can delve into the nature of tradition of painting as hybridity, negotiation and appropriation. Such plural nature, however, cannot be traced with definitional concreteness because of two reasons. Firstly, fleeting, continuous, ever-changing art influences in the time of globalization unsettle

representational modes, and secondly Nepali art in general, and painting in particular, is going through a phase that still needs critical theorizing about the nature and features of its creative representations. Such conditions do not limit a discourse on Nepali paintings but provide scopes to interpret Nepali art freely and fluidly to theorize its nature with interpretative terms of reference. The study also aims at mapping Nepali painters and their works in the light of interpretation and analysis keeping in the tradition of art criticism. The thesis thus discourses on three areas in particular: it studies intertextuality by looking at hybridization, negotiation, and appropriation, it critically maps Nepali paintings of the pre and post-50s kinds, and engages in the art criticism of the contemporary works.

To elaborate on the issues mentioned above, the thesis proposition can be presented with a functional claim that contemporary Nepali painting is both intertextual and intergeneric by blurring the boundaries between times and space and the genres like literature, theatre, music, sculpture and photography. Techniques are borrowed from the west, myths and traditions are incorporated from earlier traditions in terms with cross-cultural interflow, and in the visual textual levels, verbal texts are juxtaposed with visual images, photographs are pasted, and objects of reality are stuck on the canvas giving the painting three dimensional qualities. Furthermore, sometimes artists execute and exhibit paintings accompanied by poetry recitation, music and performance.

The art works depict heterogeneous elements being intertwined and criss-crossed. The artists neither fully assimilate the alien forms nor wholly reject but mediate them from ambivalent and inbetween spaces. Through negotiation and hybridization of heterogeneous images and forms, contemporary Nepali paintings not only express the feelings and emotions of the Nepali artists but also explore the socio-cultural and political issues of

contemporary Nepal. Because of the co-presence of heterogeneous images, symbols and forms, the art works speak of the cultural self and the cultural other. These heterogeneous and hybrid art forms are plural and open-ended, and their significance or meanings become contingent and multiple. The identities of these plural and hybrid art forms tell a story of artistic becoming in the present time. In this context one should also mention the fact that a theory of Nepali painting is academic requirement so as to develop terms of reference to identify Nepali art in its exclusiveness. The work aims to look at the potentialities to introduce and discuss such terms by the end of the thesis in way of the implication of the research work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION	ii
APPROVAL LETTER	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv-vi
ABSTRACT	vii-ix
I. Globalization, Intertextuality and Contemporary Art	1-44
II. Tracing Early Nepali Paintings	45-104
III. Sources of Influence: Western and Indian Arts	105-148
IV. Contemporary Painters, Works and the Tradition of Nepali Criticism	149-199
V. Contemporary Nepali Paintings: Analysis and Interpretation	200-305
VI. Conclusion: Implications and Significations	306-312
Works Cited	313-329
Appendix: Illustrations	330-390