

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Devkota's Disapproval of his Contemporary Society:

A Study of his Representative Poems

**A thesis submitted to the Central Department of English
in partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in English.**

By

Paras Acharya

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

September, 2006

Tribhuvan University

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

This thesis titled "Devkota's Disapproval of his Contemporary Society: A Study of his Representative Poems" by Paras Acharya has been submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, and been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Head
Central Department of English

Date:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to the thesis committee of Central Department of English for providing me an opportunity to work on the thesis titled "Devkota's Disapproval of his Contemporary Society: A study of his Representative Poems." My thanks begin with those who made this thesis possible. Among many respected teachers, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to my guide and mentor, Prof. Dr Abhi Narayan Subedi, Central Department of English, Kirtipur without whose sincere support and encouragement, I wouldn't have been able to complete and bring this thesis in this shape. I am deeply indebted to him.

I am extremely thankful to my family members who provided every possible support from their side and without whose continuous support and inspiration, my dream to get a Masters degree in English would have remained futile. I would like to remember all of my teachers at the Central Department of English, and Birendranagar Multiple Campus, Surkhet. Similarly, I want to thank my friend com brother Mr Rameshwor Acharya, Mr Ajaya Chetri, Srijon Chhetri, and Mr Madhusudhan Giri for their encouragement and assistance while preparing this thesis.

Last but not the least, I would like to express my words of thanks to all writers, compilers and editors of the source materials from which I have cited.

Paras Acharya

Date: September 2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Approval Letter | |
| Acknowledgements | |
| Table of Contents | |
| CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION | 1-9 |
| 1.1 Preview | 1 |
| 1.2 Devkota in Literature | 2 |
| CHAPTER II: SOCIETY AND LITERATURE | 10-17 |
| 2.1 Concept and Background | 10 |
| 2.2 Roaring Voices from Nepali Literature | 15 |
| CHAPTER III: DEVKOTA AND HIS CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY | 18-26 |
| 3.1 Intellectual Emergence and Growing Disillusionment | 19 |
| 3.2 Uprising Political Consciousness | 24 |
| CHAPTER IV: DEVKOTA'S REBELLION | 27-42 |
| 4.1 Criticism of Society | 27 |
| 4.2 Devkota's Utopia | 38 |
| CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION | 43-46 |
| Work Cited | 47-50 |

I. INTRODUCTION

Preview

My attempt in this thesis has been to study the poems by the great Nepali poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota and throw light on his disapproval of and dissatisfaction with the contemporary Nepalese society, how the poetic spirit rebels against the constraints of tradition and habit, and how he seeks to reshape the world in a new image. The thesis approaches Devkota from the perspective of his being a revolutionary poet who has shown his dissatisfaction with the traditional beliefs and unhealthy practices of the society under the tyranny of Ranarchy and even after the achievement of the long awaited democracy in 1951.

In this attempt, my study has been mainly focused on the poems translated and transcreated into English either by the poet himself or by others. In the course of the study, I have selected his poems that have been published in the bilingual issue of *Indreni* (Issues II and VII), *Laxmi Prasad Devkota: Selected Poems* by M M Thakur, and *Modern Nepali Poems* published by the Royal Nepal Academy. I have also included the poems from other sources like *My Reminiscences of the Great Poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota* by C B Shrestha.

While studying Devkota's poetry, special consideration has been given to the contemporary Nepali society under the Rule of the Ranas and the post-revolution period of Nepal (1950s). Thus, the political movement and social scenario have been studied and linked to the poems of Laxmi Prasad Devkota. I have employed the materials from various source books, thesis, magazines, newspaper and different web-sites available and relevant.

As opined by ML Bajracharya in *Mahakavi Laxmi Prasad Devkota* by Paras Mani Pradhan, to write on Great poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota is like “handling a multi-

faced jewel”, however, I have tried to analyze his poems that have revolutionary spirit and thus do not include all sorts of his literary creation. I have basically focused my study of his short poems, thus have not included his long poems in the textual analysis.

This study will be helpful to those who want to study the poetry of Laxmi Prasad Devkota in relation to the society in which Devkota lived. It will be a guide in understanding the poet's relation to the people (both common people and the people in authority). Along with this fact, the greatness of the writer can be understood very clearly and it will be of a great help to those who want to study on the great poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota and do not have an easy access to Nepali language.

Devkota in Literature

Laxmi Prasad Devkota (1909-1959) is an unrivaled Nepali writer who dedicated his whole life for Nepali literature. Devkota, who was entitled as the great poet, grew up and received education in a feudal and orthodox society under the tyrannical Rana oligarchy. Voracious reader and swift writer Devkota enriched Nepali literature with more than forty books that include almost all the genres of literature: plays, stories, essays, translations from world literature, novel and long and short poetry. And through his excellent creation, he led a movement and set a trend in the movement of Nepali literature and influenced the literature to be created in the future.

Born as the third son to his parents Tilamadhav Devkota and Amar Rajyalaxmi, Devkota was lucky to get educated even in the period of the autocratic Rana reign where getting education was a matter of privilege. He received his graduate degree but was, however, obliged to give up his studies for the MA Examination on account of his financial difficulties. Devkota struggled to support his family usually by teaching,

though he briefly held governmental posts. On the great poet Devkota and his creative life Michael Hutt writes:

His life was a series of financial problems, and personal sorrows but through them all share a personality of humor, warmth, and deep humanity. These personal ups and downs never retarded the growth of his genius, in fact, some of his best humorous poetry was written in the most tragic circumstances. Certain events in Devkota's life, such as his pilgrimage to the mountain lakes north of Kathmandu in the 1930s, the time he spent in a mental hospital, his employment as a writer and translator from 1943 to 1946, and his subsequent political exile in Banaras can be identified as definite influences on his work (40-41).

Devkota started writing poetry at the age of ten under the influence of his father Tila Madhav Devkota who used to recite Puran in private houses as well as in public ceremonies (Pradhan 1). Devkota continued writing poetry and was entitled a "Budding Poet" while at Darbar High school, where he started his formal education, and later developed as an electric poet and the great poet (Pradhan 24).

Death of his family members (parents, daughter and son) the economic crisis, his volunteer exile in Banaras, all brought out many ups and downs in the life of the chain smoker, and voracious eater Devkota who was never in good health. Though we can hardly see any development in economic aspect of his life, Devkota made his excellent progress in his literary career.

Devkota who made his start of the literary career with the poems that celebrate the fundamental goodness of humble people and nature under the influence of his father Tilamadhav Devkota, poet Lekhnath Poudyal and English Romantic Poets, matured himself to depict the reality of the contemporary Nepalese society that was

engulfed in by acute economic problem, compulsion to leave the country, and the hardship of life in the feudal society as Devkota depicts in *Muna Madan* (1936), *Sakuntala* (1945) and *Sulochana* (1946). In his later phase, Devkota becomes more revolutionary in the sense that he was able to evoke revolution within the old system and the feudal values. He made his search for new values that marked the important stage in his development and maturity. On Devkota's different stages of creative life, David Rubin writes:

Devkota's creative life can be roughly divided into three major periods. The first, extending through the thirties includes the sentimental genre poems, of *Bhikhari* (The Begger, published as a collection for the first time in 1953), the verse drama *Savitri Satyavan* (1940), and *Muna Madan* (1936), the first of many narrative poems. The second period the mid forties, saw the great flowing of Devkota's inspiration in the series of extended narrative poems, among them such works as *Nepali Sakuntala* (1945), *Sulochana* (1946), and *Ravan-Jatayu-Yudha* (the Battle of Ravan and Jatayu, 1946). The final period begins with the revolutionary poems written in exile in Banaras, reaches its height with the epic *Prometheus* (ca 1950-1951), and includes a vast number of short lyrics, children's poems, and long poems such as "*Pagal*" (Crazy, 1953), "*Ek Sundari Vesya prati*" (To a Beautiful Prostitute, 1956), and the various deathbed poems - the poems from inside the cage (27).

Devkota received English education in spite of his father's wish to get him educated in Sanskrit. This English language was of a great help for him to earn his expenses through tutoring students in English. In his short span of life he served as a professor of English at Tri-Chandra College, as writer and translator in Bhasa Anubad

Parisad (The Translation Board) of the government of Nepal. In his lifetime, he became a cabinet minister, represented Nepali writers at the First Asian Writer's Conference in Delhi in 2013 BS, and Afro - Asian Writer's conference in Tashkent. And he contributed in many literary magazines including "*Pragati*" and "*Indreni*".

Laxmi Prasad Devkota was a poet of an extraordinary merit and a very swift writer who wrote an epic in three months (*Shakuntala*) and a smaller even in ten days (*Sulochana*). In spite of his poor financial situation, family and health problem he served Nepali literature till he lay in death bed.

Devkota came in the Tradition of Nepali literature that have been initiated by Bhanu Bhakta Acharya (1814-1868), who translated the *Ramayan*, a story from Sanskrit into Nepali, and popularized Nepali language in the multilingual society of Nepal. In this tradition, some of Devkota's important predecessors were Moti Ram Bhatta (1866-1897), Lekhnath Paudyal (1884-1965), Som Nath Sigdhyaal (1884-1972), Dharani Dhar Koirala (1829-1979) and Bal Krishna Sama (1902-1981).

Nepali literature produced by these authors was highly influenced by Sanskrit literature in terms of form, content and message. Devkota followed the tradition but he also broke away from it in the process of his development as a writer. Devkota was revolutionary in his experimentation with form also; he instilled an entirely new tone and spirit to Nepali poetry. Early in his career he took the revolutionary step of using folk meters in the long narrative poems that are now among the most popular works of Nepali literature. Indra Vilas Adhikari compares and contrasts Devkota with his immediate predecessors as:

The immediate predecessors of Devkota, particularly those who belonged to the school popularly known as the "Lekhnath School" were the poets of city. In fact, most of them were patronized by the ruling

Ranas, and they wrote to praise them. Their themes were restricted to the city life, in particular to the life of the palace, and their techniques displayed the distinct characteristics of neo-classicism, imitation, clarity, objectivity, nationalism, etc. They used nature in their poetry as a tool to achieve their objectives. No doubt, they wrote about nature, but did not give any free existence to her. But Devkota was the first poet who broke with the tradition, and allowed the life to nature. He also gave an expression to the feelings of the poor and suppressed people, the country folks, in his poetry (147).

Devkota also initiated writing in English at a time when English was limited to the elites who didn't use it for literature. And while attending international conferences, he familiarized Nepali literature to other parts of the world. His entire life was a dedication to Nepal's identity through literature, but he always remained in poverty. In his book *Nepali visions Nepali Dreams (1980)* David Rubin quotes Devkota saying:

... You know that I was in financial trouble at the time. Everywhere the awareness of my insignificance struck me. I considered my self the smallest creature in the word. I saw others as mountains for financial reasons I found it impossible to satisfy any of my wishes. Nobody understood my mental anguish at this time. I would sit for the whole day engaged in such thoughts. Because of this, the idiots, not understanding what was wrong thinking me crazy, hauled me off to Ranchi. But I was suffering from economic diseases (10).

Like every avant-garde writer, the great poet Devkota defied the contemporary ways of literary trends and social practices. He revolted against the contents and forms

used by the neo-classicists and the prevailing religious practices. Moreover, he wrote against the tyranny of the ruler. So, the poet breaths fire against the Rana autocracy and the social injustice when he edited the revolutionary magazine *Yugbani* after his voluntary exile to India. About the poet's creation during and slightly prior to his exile, Adhikari writes:

Devkota's works published during the forties contained satiric remarks against the unreasonable practices in the society. Some of his essays such as *Man-Magic, Who is Wiser, the Teacher or the Donkey? The Sickly Mule of the Aurvedic Doctor*, published in *Laxmi Collectin of Essays* are notable. An undercurrent of the poet's dissatisfaction on the misconduct of the social behavior lows in them. His epic poems written during this period are also marked with similar emotions. The characters in *Nepalese Shakuntala Epic* and *Sulochana* for instance, criticized the existing immoral practices, to some extent, even though they were written and published under strict censorship of the Rana ruler. Moreover, his poems like "*The Uncastrated Bull*", "*Why Does Tiger Eat its Cub?*", "*O God Make Me a Sheep!*" etc are the political and social satires which were written when he taught at the Tri- Chandra College. Regarding these satires, it should be noted that the poet expressed his heart felt and sharp reaction to the shooting of the martyrs in 1940s by the Rana autocracy (72).

The great humanitarian poet Devkota always wanted to eradicate the social evils that were plaguing society. His aim was to distill the society and create a happy new world. In doing so he criticized the tyranny of the autocracy and the hypocrisy of the society. Promod Pal writes:

Devkota was not pretender to the throne of reformist content with mere theorizing. He practiced what he preached- often to his own discomfort. It was perhaps for this reason that Devkota was such a misfit amidst a hardened and materialistic society that neither knew of nor appreciated his lofty humanism, and therefore, exhibited near-bovine fidelity towards his ideas. The overwhelming rejection constitutes the single most potent reason for Devkota being shadowed throughout his life-time, by the stark spectra of poverty and betrayal- dismissed perfunctorily as made ascetic by the very society he sought to better (23).

In his article *Devkota's Address to Reader in Shakuntala* Shreedhar Gautam writes that being a poet, he was anticipating a great change and drastic departure in various walks of life after the overthrow of the Rana regime in 1950 AD. Gautam further writes:

Himself a victim of the power seeking government, he knew the pain and agony of a totalitarian regime. He had hoped that every aspect of national life would be revolutionized for the betterment of the people. He had dreamt of good days for creative persons like himself who had to undergo several torturous moments during the earlier rule. But the poet saw no sign of change in any field of life. Poor people were getting poorer, unemployment was rampant, corruption was at its peak, politicians were dishonest and, in some cases, turning treacherous. Likewise, intellectuals were just sycophants, hankering after petty interest.

Devkota uses his poetry to provoke and satirize upon the oppressors of the poor, the social vampires, and the hypocrites, and he always attempts to bring happiness into the lives of the humble, poor, forgotten, exploited, neglected people in the society. Devkota's poetry always aims at distilling the society and creates a happy new world. In doing so, Devkota criticizes the tyranny of the autocracy and the hypocrisy of the society. The undercurrent of the poet's dissatisfaction on the misconduct of the social behavior is very dominant in his poems in spite of being written and published under strict censorship of the Rana oligarchy. Devkota is revolutionary not only in his words, he is a practical revolutionary poet who took part in the war and fought for freedom, equity and humanity.

II. SOCIETY AND LITERATURE

2.1 Concept and Background

The relationship among the different genres of art like literature, painting, music and their relationship with the society is a complex phenomenon. Since society is the source of art and literature, both of them are greatly shaped by the contemporary culture, politics, and religion at large. In reality, each form defines the other. While defining literature W.H. Hudson writes:

Literature is a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, what they thought and felt about those aspects of it which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us (10).

Unlike the sociologists, literary writers have interpreted the society in term of the literary culture and also have made criticism of society. Matthew Arnold's interpretation of the society and culture is often cited for that purpose. Most of the great writers have been the spokespersons of the underprivileged and the weak and have presented the reality of the society. Most of the greatest writers and artists have been rebels and humanist singers who have shaken the thrones of the tyrants with their rebellious music and risen in defense of their martyred friends. Kenneth Rexorth in his article "The Function of Poetry and the Place of the Poets in Society" writes:

I have thought a great deal about the status of the poet in an exploitative society. About Greene, Nashe, Peele, and Marlowe and their friends — starving and roistering, writing plays and lyrics in which a new philosophy of man was emerging — dying obscurely and violently, while the new British ruling class grew fabulously rich. About Ben Jonson and Dryden, hungry in their old age. About Blake and Burns and Keats. About Baudelaire and Rimbaud, who rejected absolutely the

society in which they found themselves, and who were accordingly penalized with the maximum severity that society could muster.

We can also realize the relationship between society and literature if we focus on how the French Revolution influenced the French Romanticism that followed it in the Nineteenth- century. The French Revolution had a major impact on the timeline and progression of Romanticism. Either a revolt or a reaction, Romanticism was a revolutionary fulfillment. And the Romantic literature is the literature of revolution. People became obsessed by the idea of freedom, and the writers became rebels, perpetually in revolt against conservative society, yearning after a spiritual independence that the current age denied them. Alan Woods in his *British Poets and the French Revolution* part four writes:

Shelley was always an outcast. He was undoubtedly the most consistently revolutionary of all English writers. From his earlier years he defended the most advanced revolutionary-democratic views. Shelley hated injustice with a passion that never deserted him to the end of tragically short life. The poetry of Shelley is impregnated with the spirit of revolutionary democracy (web site).

As rightly opined by Wood, Shelley did not confine himself to lamenting the oppression of the masses. He actively called on them to rise up against their oppressors and used his poetry to do it as in his poem *Song of the Men of England*.

Men of England, wherefore plough
For the lords who lay ye low? ...
Wherefore weave with toil and care
The rich robes youth tyrants wear? (1-4)

Shelley cared and wrote for the common people, and especially the workers. Very early on in his life, Shelley developed a passionate hatred and contempt for the class society in which he found himself. He flung himself at once into revolutionary activity. After his move to Italy in 1818 his best revolutionary poetry, especially the Ode to Liberty and Hellas, were written in tune with the European revolts of the time – in Spain, Naples and in Greece. But the anger burned furiously, never far beneath the surface. Every so often it erupted like the volcanoes he was always writing about. The most extraordinary example of this is his poem about the massacre at Peterloo – *The Mask of Anarchy*, which is one of the best political protest poems in English.

Rise like lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you.
Ye are many. They are few. (151-155)

If we refer to the history we can see many instances of the great literary pieces presenting a criticism of the contemporary society. The father of English poetry, Geoffrey Chaucer, also made a gentle criticism of the social follies and the hypocrisies in his masterpiece *The Canterbury Tales* where he employs the characters from various walks of life. Similarly John Dryden, Jonathan Swift, Lord Byron, George Bernard Shaw, and George Orwell also criticized the society in their creation.

Guernica, one of the most famous paintings of Pablo Picasso, is also an example of an art which is directly related to the contemporary society. In this painting, Pablo Picasso focuses on the terror of Spanish Civil War which disturbed Picasso mentally. Thus Guernica is a protest against the violence of war where he employs the images

like a fallen warrior, a mother and a dead child, a woman trapped in a burning building.

Examples of how the arts and humanities have influenced social change can be found in abundance in North America as well. The literary history of the United States is replete with examples of writers who have had a profound impact on the social and political events of their day. One of the most influential of these was the poet and essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose increasing support of the anti-slavery movement helped give the Civil War an intellectual and cultural authority.

Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) was so effective that it had enough elements to make it included in the list of the revolutionary and protest literature, with its severe criticism of the racial discrimination in the society. In this sense, she also evoked her disagreement to the society which victimized the African-Americans on the ground of their dark colour.

And the largest part of the poetry by Langston Hughes during the 1930s was revolutionary and demonstrated the poet's disagreement to the contemporary society where the African-American were denied any respect and many opportunities, and were behaved as if they were not human being. His poems were the expression of the disgust and rejection to the racial discrimination as seen in the *Harlem* poem. Hughes highlights the absurdities inherent in the racial prejudice in his poem "Harlem".

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up

like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore-

And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over-

Like a syrup sweet?

May be it just sags

like a heavy load.

Or does it explode? (1-11)

Poetry, in fact, has become the literary medium of choice for many of today's anti-war activists. Perhaps the most famous outlet has been Poets against the War as mentioned in the following poem *Hecuba in Vietnam*, by Thanasis Maskaleris

All your strength, America, is in your bombs!

What were your eagles are now carriers of death.

Strange loves twitch in your sermons.

What fear turns you to this terror? —

to drive people into the trenches and tunnels, to poison their land.

What fear makes you kill the children of Vietnam so savagely?

— pounding them to bits with your bombs.

What shame! — to crush down the weak, to force them under the

earth . . . (1-8)

A similar example is Randell Jarrell's poem *The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner* where the poet shows the horror and the futility of war in very few words.

From my mother's sleep I fell into the state,

And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.

Six miles from earth I loosed from its dream of life

I woke up to black flake and the nightmare fighters

When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose. (1-5)

2.2 Roaring Voices from Nepali Literature

Like the World literature, In Nepali literature also we find many instances where the poets have rejected to accept the oppression, injustice and exploitation and have wilded their pen to revolt and protest against social malpractice, hypocrisies and the cruel dictatorship in their contemporary society. In the introduction to his “Roaring Recitals: the Five Poets” Yuyutsu RD Sharma writes:

Rimal remains the first poet to initiate the tradition of protest against the oppressive regimes which in the following decades formed the corpus of mainstream Nepali poetry. Like Rimal, his successors Bhupi Sherchan, Banira Giri, Shailendra Sakar and Bimal Nibha also raise their anguished voices against the dictators of their times, partyless Panchayat system.

The very writers Bal Krishna Sama, Siddicharan Shrestha, and Laxmi Prasad Devkota, in the later part of their literary career developed as rebellious and revolutionary in attitudes. The spirit of rebellion against feudalism and the spirit of revolution against the Rana Regime can be found in their poetry and they provoke frustration and disillusionment in the post revolution transitional period Nepal in 1950s. Yuyutsu RD Sharma in his article “Little Literature: Great Dreams” writes:

The vibrant tradition that Rimal initiated influenced not only his contemporaries like Laxmi Prasad Devkota, Siddhicharan Shrestha and Balkrishna Sama but also generations that followed, including Bhupi Sherchan, Parijat, Basu Shashi, Poshan Pande, Krishna Bhakta Shrestha, Shailendra Sakar, Manjul, Krishna Bhushan Bal, Bimal Nibha and even several younger poets writing today.

An example can be drawn from Gopal Prasad Rimal who conjures the vision of 1950-51 revolution in his thundering poem “Dream of Mother”

Yes, like some morning glory
A dagger
Of justice shimmering at his waist
He will come (2-5)

Similarly Lekhnath Poudyal wrote a symbolic poem “The Parrot in the Cage”. In the poem the poet reveals the tyranny of the Ranarchy which is symbolically presented as cage. And the parrot in the cage is the symbolic presentation of the poetic persona. The poet is very unhappy to be born during the age where there is no freedom and living there was like a parrot in the cage.

A parrot called bird, a twice born child,
By the Fate into an iron cage beguiled,
I find O God! Nor peace nor quiet rest,
For even in dream I lie oppressed. (1-4)

Poets always discover in them the sense of pride and dignity and they do not accept to be oppressed by the social constraints and deny to be enslaved by them. And they revolt against any form of exploitation and discrimination and always long to be free forever. In doing so, they use their literary creation, which are greatly shaped by the contemporary society as a whole.

Devkota who had a very good study of the poetical works of the English poets like Shelley, Byron and Wordsworth had a realization of the poet’s role in the fight against the socio-economic and political injustice prevailing in the society. Furthermore Devkota was in the prime of his youth when the anti-Ranarchy movement was undergoing. Devkota was punished for his initiation to open a public library in

Kathmandu and was discouraged by the censorship in the publication and expression. He had already witnessed the shooting and hanging of the martyrs in the 1940 by the cruel autocratic Rana rule. Thus, it was usual that this national political and social movement had a great influence in him, and ultimately influenced his literary creation as a result, Devkota wrote many poems containing revolutionary characteristics and defied the social, religious and political system that was sinking into the quicksand of injustice, hypocrisy, and discrimination.

III. DEVKOTA AND HIS CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

The period of poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota (1909-1959) witnessed many national and international incidents and their consequences. This was the period when Nepal was ruled by the Rana oligarchy. Nepali people were trying to be free from the shackles of tyranny which can be seen in the events associated with the first Democratic Party- Praja Parisad. In the international arena, the two World Wars were already over and the impact of the Great Wars was already seen in the life of the Nepalese people. In the neighboring country India, the fight for Independence was already fought and the British Empire had already left the Country. And in the next neighboring country China, Communism had come to power after a long period of the armed revolution. We can say, in Asia it was the dawn of a very important historical era. In this contest, Nepalese also fought against the Rana oligarchy and they acquired freedom and the fundamental human rights with the restoration of democracy in the country.

Even after the achievement of democracy, the dreams of the middle and lower class people were not properly addressed by the political power which was slowly going into the hands of certain people from the feudal class. Devkota grew with the pangs, depression, frustration, and disillusionments of the majority of the Nepalese population living under the unbalanced social system. So the poetry that Devkota created is the outcome of the conflict between the old and new regime, and the sentimentality of the people who were observing the behavior of the opportunists. We know Devkota was the person who never learnt to stay under any chain and always fought for the freedom. In the following subtopics, I have tried to give a glimpse of the contemporary society of poet Devkota.

3.1 Intellectual Emergence and Growing Disillusionment

When Devkota was born in Dillibazaar, Kathmandu, in 1909, the country was ruled by the Rana oligarchy. The Rana administration was not enthusiastic about educating the masses, so to acquire permission to study was a privilege. Devkota's family went through a lot of trouble to enroll him at Durbar School, the only school in the Kathmandu Valley.

There was no university in Nepal until 1919 when Tri-Chandra College was established. So, the one who would like to study had to go to India. Devkota also went to Patna, and earned LLB but he refused to practice law with its devious rules and regulation and incessant bickering, which he could only view with distaste. Thus, tuition remained the sole source of income generation for Devkota and his family.

During the Rana Rule, there were not many schools. Schools primarily had an easy access to the children of Ranas and their relatives. Education was not open to every body. People had to take permission for education. Since the Rana rulers never liked to see the people getting educated and empowered, because of the fear of being overthrown by the power, they never allowed people even to open public libraries. Even Devkota became the victim of the oppressive Rana regime while he initiated to open a public library in Kathmandu. About this incident which is popular as Libraty Parba (Library Incident) David Rubin writes:

In 1930 Devkota was arrested, along with several other young intellectuals, for signing a proposal for opening a public library. The sentence for this was three years of vigorous imprisonment, which was suspended on payment of 100 rupees and signing of a document stipulating that the defendants would not again engage in activities for the public welfare on pain of twelve years vigorous imprisonment. This

was the beginning of Devkota's long battle with the repressive Rana regime which would terminate only with the revolution of 1950-51 (7-8).

In the same period, Krishnalal Adhikari published a book entitled *Makaiko Kheti* (Cultivating Corn). In the introduction of the book he wrote "foreign dogs that are better treated would not do as good a service as the street dogs of Nepal to drive away thieves and robbers." For this satirical remark he was imprisoned for nine years and died in jail. This event is marked as "Makai Parba" in the history of Nepal.

Not only that, any movement aimed at social and economic development of the country was treacherously discouraged. Tulsi Mehar Shrestha was arrested for initiating Charkha (Spinning wheel) in Kathmandu valley in 1930 A.D. The Rana ministers felt that widespread use of Charkha would empower people and would cause trouble to the Rana Rulers.

In Nepal, like in many countries literature has always attracted the intellectuals. During the years of revolution against the Rana Rule, literature also attracted many brilliant people like Krishnalal Adhikari (the writer of *Makaiko Kheti*), BP Koirala, Vijaya Malla, Kedar Man Vyathit, Gopal Prasad Rimal, Siddhicharan Shrestha, and Laxmi Prasad Devkota. In the early years of the revolution these writers had started a forum around the literary magazine *Sharada* that was somehow permitted by the Rana Prime Minister Juddha Shamsheer Rana in 1934. The forum played a great role in producing the intellectual rebellion against the Rana rule, and regressive medieval, feudal, and religious social inadequacies. Nepali Society was turning to be hellish because of the socio-economic and political misfortune. The society was dying of the fear and exploitation in the autocratic Rule.

There was no freedom of speech, and publication. Even the literary creation had to undergo censorship. If anyone wished to publish book he must had first bring it to the Gorkha Bhasa Prakashini Samitee (Gorkha Language Publication Committee) for inspection. No book could be published without the stamp of the committee's approval. Michael Hutt writes:

If a book is published without the committee's approval its publisher would be fined 50 rupees. If the content of the book are deemed to be improper, all copies will be seized and punished proclaimed and meted out. The committee had a dual role. However, as well as publishing books that met with its approval it also operated a strong code of censorship (7).

The more injustice grows, the more dissatisfaction rises among the people. And the poets speak up the same dissatisfaction in their creation. So, many people who revolted against the cruelty of the Ranas were killed, hanged or sentenced to jail. On this Michael Hutt further writes:

Although this law was not enforced very consistently, there were periods during which offending writers were punished with extreme severity. The committee therefore came to be regarded with suspicion, and because it maintained an effective monopoly over Nepali publishing inside Nepal until 1930s, poets and writers who wished to escape the over bearing censorship of their work had to publish and even live in Indian towns, most notably Banaras and Darjeeling (8).

The writers imprisoned by the Regime for their revolutionary spirit include Siddhicharan Shrestha, Vijaya Malla, Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala and even Laxmi Prasad Devkota. Most of these poets combined romanticism with the social realism

and they had a great influence on the contemporary intellectuals and youths. The political and literary movement during the period had a very close collaboration and their boundaries also got overlapped and the revolution was carried out with the welding job quite efficiently. About the writings of the period Abhi Subedi in his article “Uniqueness in the modern Nepali Literary Discourse” writes:

The utopia espoused by the single party policy in the country was shared by some writers. The conflicting utopias of the regime and of those who opposed the polity was reflected in writings as well. There were writer who disagreed with the utopia of the polity openly and were in clear disagreement with the ideologies espoused by the system. Their disagreements became articulated in modes of writings which were clearly political and showing one's own ideologies in clear terms. Literature written for the poor and oppressed and marginalized people can be considered as a clear example of such a mode of discontent.

A conscious and a voracious reader Devkota was not far from these entire National and international scenario and the incidents and they all had an important influence upon him and the literature he created. In Devkota there was desire for greater freedom of thought and expression and growing interest in the exposure to the world outside Nepal. Feeling suffocated by the Rana Regime and prevailing censorship, in 1947 Devkota gave up the job of professor at Tri-Chandra College that he had joined since 1946, and fought against the autocratic family rule of the Rana. Through the magazine *Yugbani*, he voiced his strong opposition against Ranarchy encouraging people to unite and fight for their human rights. On Devkota's voluntary exile in Banaras, Paras Mani Pradhan writes:

One fine morning he was found missing by the members of the family. He did not come back home and nobody knew about his whereabouts until a police squad consisting of about 25 persons surrounded the house of the poet at Maitidevi. This was a great shock to the poet's wife. One of her sons was lying seriously ill with typhoid when the police personnel were searching the poet's house. It transpired in time that Laxmi Prasad had surreptitiously moved to Banaras with a view to doing good to the people of Nepal, and had undertaken the task of editing one periodical named *Yugabani* which was started by the workers of Nepali Congress to fight against the tyranny of the Ranas of Nepal. During this time he brought out a booklet entitled *Pahari Pukar* which contained revolutionary poems written in *Jhyaure* meter, instigating the mass to rise against the autocratic family rule of the Ranas and bring about their downfall and establish democracy in Nepal. The people seething with discontent and ready to rebel against the tyrannies of the Rana regime received these inspiring poems with unconcealed pleasure and appreciation. The poet, however, was not properly paid by the party men and was obliged to pass his time in distress and disgust (13).

Many conscious people and the intellectuals participated in the 1950-51 revolution with great expectations. Devkota had left his home and his job of professor, many others were kept behind the dark wall of the cage, but they got disillusioned by the result which benefited only a handful of people and forgot the aspiration of the people as a whole. On this new realization of the intellectuals Mahesh Maskey in his article "Parijat: Progressivism in Nepalese Context" writes:

Many of these sensitive and conscious Nepali intellectuals, however, rapidly got disillusioned by the post revolution developments in Nepal. So much so that one of the core member of *Sharada* and a revolutionary writer Gopal Prasad Rimal lost his mental balance. At the height of rage and frenzy, he ran in the New Road with a naked Khukuri (Nepali knife) in his hand. The reason being the revolution, so dear to their heart, was actually left unaccomplished/ unfinished or rather betrayed, by being forced to compromise in the dictate of India without making a fundamental change in class relations in the Nepali society.

3.2 Uprising Political Consciousness

Devkota lived and grew up in a totally feudal society with a huge gap between the people. The literacy rate was abysmally low and the only means of support to economy was the subsistence farming. There was an extensive exploitation of the common people in the feudal society whereas the feudal lords were enjoying the wealth and the power with close relation to the Rana family.

During the Rana Rule, there was no environment for free politics. The Rana Rulers never wanted the Nepalese people to be politically aware because they always thought that political awareness among the people could bring problem to their reign. So the period underwent with out the freedom Rights. In such context the conscious people were engaged in the underground politics to raise public awareness among the Nepalese people.

In the Greater horizon, the world had already seen the consequence of the two great wars- World War I and World War II. Nepalese people had also taken part in the Wars as "Gorkha Soldier". Some of the Gorkha soldiers who returned from foreign countries after the World War I (1914-1918), were politically conscious and had a

broad perspective on the political sector, and the nation's backward condition was readily apparent to the returnees. So, some of the enthusiastic young men engaged themselves in the task of awakening the fellow Nepalese people which they did with the formation of Gorkha League in 1927.

During the reign of Juddha Shamsheer, Nagarik Adhikar Samiti, a committee for civil Rights was formed by its active members like Sukra Raj Shastri and Gangalal Shrestha. In 1931, Prachanda Gorkha, an underground political party was formed with a view to bringing about change in administrative system of the country. And a secret political party, Praja Parisad was formed in 1939 by Tanka Prasad Acharya, Dharma Bhakta Mathema and Dasharath Chand. The aim of the party was to overthrow the Rana Rule and establish a democratic system of government in the country. Upon the disclosure of the secrecy of the parties, Dasharath Chand, Sukra Raj Shastri, Gangalal Shrestha and Dharma Bhakta Mathema were given death sentence, and some others including Tanka Prasad Acharya were given life imprisonment.

In India, the people were revolting against the English Rule and were fighting for the independence of the country. That political development in India was also influencing the Nepalese people as well to fight against the Rana rule. The formation of the All India Nepali National Congress in 1946 and the Gorkha Congress, and their reformation and unification to build up Nepali National Congress in 1947 are the important developments in the fight against the Rana rule. Michael Hut writes:

Despite a number of palliative measures taken to assuage political opposition, and despite periods of harsh repression exemplified by the 1941 execution of members of an illegal political organization, the Praja Parisad, the government's position became precarious after the departure of the British from India (7).

And at last in 1951 the Rana autocracy came to an end and the democracy was established. But the post revolution period was the period of a political instability. Government was changing now and again. The aspiration of the people was still to be addressed, and in the mean time the King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah ceased the democracy and introduced party-less Panchyat System. This entire socio-economic and political scenario both in the national and international context had a great influence upon the personal and creative life of Devkota that ultimately developed him as a revolutionary and humanitarian poet who defied all sorts of social atrocities, oppression, injustice and tyranny.

IV. DEVKOTA'S REBELLION

In his poetry Devkota advocates the poor, hungry, exploited and oppressed people and he frowns at the people who exploit the poor and hungry human being and humanity as a whole. The lover of humanity, Devkota always aimed at bringing happiness in the lives of the forgotten and rejected people who were suffering social outcasts. Padma Prasad Devkota makes a good judgment of Devkota's poetry as:

The constant victims of his satires, ironies, accusations and even abuses are the oppressors of the poor, the social vampires, who in the name of democracy weaved deftly a subtle net over the lives of poor people, offering no aid to lift them out of their holes. In doing so Devkota forgot all about himself and paid a Promethean Price as dominated by the history of those that must sacrifice themselves for the sake of others (20).

In the following two sub chapters I have analyzed Devkota's poems to show how he has criticized and revolted against his contemporary society with the view to reshape and create a better society.

4.1 Criticism of the Society

Devkota's poetry is an exposure of the prevailing social contradictions and the injustice of the contemporary society. His poems express his defiance against the ruling elites exploiting the common people. Similarly, the poet criticizes the social injustice and malpractices long prevailing in his society.

As Basanta Lohani opined, Devkota's poem "The Lunatic" is a revolt against Nepal's post upheaval setting of the 1950s: the uneasy transition, the mockery of democracy, the extent of human degeneration in the name of upholding new values

and righteousness, misinformation by leaders and newspapers alike, ruthless exploitation of people's rights and economic plunder.

Look at the strumpet-tongues advancing of shameless leadership!

At the breaking of the backbones of the people's rights!

When the sparrow-headed bold prints of black lies on the papers,

Challenge the hero in me called Reason,

With conspiracy false,

Then redden hot my cheeks, my friend,

And their colour is up.

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,

Everyone so irritated. (111-123)

This poem accentuates the political revolution for far-reaching social changes. The political change of 1951 was decapitated to uphold the dignity and the aspirations it carried. The common people were still deprived of the human rights and were exploited by the rich feudal lords. The economic disparities and the unfair competition were still prevailing in the society. The poet who always advocated the common people could not bear this and in the same poem he evokes his wrath as:

When I see the tiger pouncing upon the innocent deer,

Or the big fish after the smaller ones,

Then even into my corroded bones, my friend,

The terrible strength of the soul of Dadhichi—the sage,

Enters and seeks utterance. (124-128)

To a humanitarian poet Devkota, every human being is equal. He opines that a man must understand the problem of another man. Everyone has his/her dignity and every other has to respect that. But in the feudal society in which Devkota lived, the rich (feudal) people could never understand that. So the poet criticizes such a tendency where a man does not recognize another human being as a human being. So the anger in him overflows in the poem as:

When man regards a man as no man,
Then gnash my teeth and grind my jaws, set with the two and thirty
teeth,
Like Bhimsen's teeth, the terror-striking hero's,
And then,
Rolling round my fury-red-headed eyeballs,
With an inscrutable sweep,
I look at this inhuman human world
Like a tongue of fire. (130-137)

The poet had the realization of the social and the economic condition of the people in his society. He knew that a certain class was enjoying the power, wealth and women. Where as the majority of the population was suffering for their daily life. The poet could never accept this and as rightly opined by Basanta Lohani in his article "The Lunatic: A Revolution within", the poet is all out in his pervasive defiance challenging all those who were lording it over society for their enjoyment of authority, wealth, women and wine. He, thus, calls the king a pauper and denounces Alexander, the Great and the so-called hermit as a cowardly escapist.

I have called the Nawab's wine all blood.

And the courtesans all corpses.

And the king a pauper.

I have denounced Alexander the Great.

And I have deprecated the so-called high-souled ones. (80-85)

In his poem Devkota increases his power to be the tempest and volcano to criticize and destroy the corruption, greed, callousness and betrayal that prevails in the society. And at the same time the poet identifies himself with Prometheus who steals the celestial fire from the world of the Gods for the betterment of the mankind in the earth. In the poem "The Lunatic" the poet states:

The tenderly cruel!

The bird that steals the celestial fire!

The child of the tempest!

I am the wild eruption of a volcano insane! (150-154)

In the corrupt and unjust society, it was very painful for the poet 'to know', 'to think' and 'to be conscious' of these social evils, so in very submissive mood, the poet rejects to live in the painful conscious life and thus prefers to be a sheep hoping that not to know and to be ignorant is bliss. The frustration in him is social product. He always fought against Ranarchy, longed to change the social and administrative system of the country. But the post- revolution period could do nothing to fulfill the aspiration of the people. On the other hand he was also undergoing an economic crisis and he was unable to satisfy the family members and their demand. Thus the consciousness and the realization of his responsibility towards both the nation and the family was very painful to him. Devkota bursts his aggravation in his poem "Make me Sheep, O God!"

Dead tired I am, O God!
Make me a sheep, please.
This house of mine, a sword of Damocles
This bane of thinking
This sin of knowing
This heart-burning judgment of conscience
The three kinds of worries that I may fall into
This show of rising higher
This curse of bearing responsibility !
No! No! I so not want the magnificent pomp!
Let all the accounts be cleared after death!
Sweet and carefree!
Give me a beast's irresponsibility!
O God! (1-14)

Poet Devkota was undergoing a severe economic problem in his almost whole life. In his short life he mostly lived an unhealthy life. He had not enough money to spend for his treatment. No one was there to understand his problem and support him. In the contemporary Nepal there was no health facility and had to go to India or foreign countries which would be very costly. He suffered all this in his life and it had developed him as disgust and he expresses it in the poem “Make Me a Sheep, O God” as:

No matter if he dies. It is up to the wish of my Lord!
Worry I won't- let not my breast dry till he lives,
Until his body becomes full.
Or the grass becomes hard

And he does not become able to eat by himself

And no doctor is to be called. (50-55)

Devkota lived in an uneducated society which blindly followed the religion and other superstition in the name of religion. In the contemporary society the concept of "Heaven" and "Hell" was very strong, and for achieving the heaven, men used to practice many unreasonable religious performs. The orthodox Brahmans were exploiting the people in the name of god which was very similar to the "selling of indulgence" practiced by the medieval Popes in the European countries. The conscious Devkota never believed in the religious orthodox so the poet makes an attack on the contemporary religious orthodox and rejects to live such a false and hypocritical life through his poem "Make Me a Sheep, O God".

Let me not become a Brahmin to live on dirty water washing away
other's sin;

Let me not advance my feet towards Hell, being fully conscious of sins
as the virtuous persons. (60-61)

Devkota's poetry contains satiric remarks against the unreasonable practices in the society. An undercurrent of the poet's dissatisfaction on the misconduct of the social behavior flows in his poems. The poet witnessed that even after the revolution of the 1950-51 the condition of the common people in the society remained unchanged and their investment of hope and expectation was ruined. The poet could not tolerate it and he made his harsh criticism against the human civilization in his 'Donkey's Criticism against Human Civilization', which was originally written in English.

Science has made you blind to soul,

Luxuries have made you foul

Politics have made you ghoul.

O my soul!

Hee hee haw, hee hee haw!

Poets are, they your march hares

Philosophers useless owls?

Learned men all useless blaers,

How the society reels and owls

Hee hee haw, hee hee haw! (44-53)

Devkota was always agonized by the plight of the people whose life could not change even after the revolution. And his concern for humanity was never lessened rather got broadened in horizon. In his poem "Hill Prayer" the poet shows his disagreement to the society in which the rich people are always inclined to earning more riches and the poor people suffer for food, shelter and clothes. He shows his anger to the society where the dogs of the feudal lords and powerful people eat (the rice milk) delicious items but the poor suffer for a simple dish to fill their stomach. The poet bursts as:

No food for us, no cloth for us

Only the bellies of the great burst

The dogs eat rice milk

We only the barley-dust

We never have chance to say

Our king is very benevolent

Our belief and devotion died away

Till now we were very silent. (qted. in Adhikari 80)

We can also find Devkota's anger in the language he uses in his poetry. He calls himself the enemy of the society which is decaying with its social mischievousness. And like the storm he wants to sweep the decaying and rotten practices in the society where he lives in. we can see this clearly in his "The Song of the Storm" is very clearly.

The Enemy of Age I Come,
Sweeping across decaying worlds
Sweeping over its rotten things (C)

The poet loves the reality and does not like to dabble at the trap of civilization leaving the reality. In his poem "Make Me a Sheep O God!" he makes question to the civilized and the so called elite people for their flattery, artificiality and deception in a rejectionary tone as:

Why the tongue artificialized?
Why the ears artificialized?
Why so many perfumes for a dirty nose?
Why the sculpture - writer Vedavyas and a number of works
like Shukabahattrari fancy false ?
Why the hard labour of ignorance deep?
Why the yoking of the body?
So much of tears and cries - all of no use!
So much of shrieks of laughters for the change?
Why such a great deception over the flaming funeral pyre?
Why playing on so many strings? (18-27)

Poet Devkota witnessed the consequence of the great earth quake in 1990 BS and have used it as an image in his poem that speaks against contemporary society which was corrupt. In the poem "The Donkey Speaks" the poet criticizes the raising corruption, and the false pride of the human being as:

What did 1934 tell you, Sir!
Did you see your architecture dilapidate to dust?
You set your Brahman sentinels over your hard won revelations.
And did you see society purifying with corruptions? (55-58)

Devkota was dissatisfied with the existing social condition which was kept in complete darkness by the feudal rulers. There was no freedom of thought and publication whoever made attempt to revolt against the feudal lords, they were either sent to jail or murdered. Devkota expresses his anger and desalinate in the language he uses in his poetry.

The lion summits roar and thunder
to break the jail of ages dark.
And the stars of heaven shower
turned into drops of water,
O'er the grave where Day lies buried
after its golden martyrdom, (34-36)

Devkota is very rich in using the grand images, and symbols in his poetry. The selection of these symbols and image also express his deep rooted anger against the unjust inhuman tendency. The use of the words like wake up, rumble, roar, sweep, rotting world, broom and the images like wind, tempest, monster all show that Devkota is very revolutionary and wants to sweep the rotting society where a men can not understand the problem of an another man, and is treacherous and devilish in

behavior. "To the Tempest" is a profound example of Devkota's use of grand images and the use of symbols in his poetry.

Wake up, wake up, thou figures of wind!
Rumble and roar, O thou Kali of the tempest!
Man is still blind to man
With a screen over his eyes!
Go thou, sweep the rotting world
With thy big broom of change,
Sweeping away the hordes of the decrepit!
Even today does man with his monster's acts
Flow like a stream!
Come thou, sweeping waves of dust,
Of all the shadows of the past! (32-42)

In "The Song of the Storm" he identifies himself with the Sylvan Fury and the Kali of the wild to fight against the injustice. He drinks "the wine of madness" to get intoxicated and to sing song of the divine war.

I am the Sylvan Fury, the Kali of the wilds,
Dancing on my cavern bells, with their repeating echoes,
While the Earth, the upper lower heavens to my tunes
Beat time in clap.
I dance in the swirling dust that is my flying saree,
As I drink the wine of madness, and intoxicated sing! (41-46)

The poet discovers in him the power of Nature-Kali (a powerful Hindu goddess) to bring catastrophe to the devils of the society. The poet is very aggressive to say that his playgrounds are battlefields and is set to destroy the "devils and the

cunning jackals" of his society. The poet has the hunger of the ever-thirsting Kali and thus wants to drink out all the inhuman practices as we see in his poem "The Song of the Storm".

Battlefields are my playgrounds,
When I flash my circling fires
The jackals of annihilation howl.
I am the purple Kali with the blood-red-tongue,
I am the ever hungering, the ever-thirsting Kali.
I am the accumulated heap of all the burning throes
of long despised humanity. (49-53)

The poet embodies Nature, the mother power of lion and superman, to challenge the darkness that prevails in society for a long time. He does not feel to be weak to fight against this darkness because he has the power of thunder and has his wrath in him. In the poem "The Song of the Storm", the poet declares:

I am the Mother Power of the Lion, Superman,
And with my puissance I challenge
the dark night of the ages
Like a fury with the thunder do I sunder
fettors strong that my lions tether.
For the lion is my bearer,
the charger my wrath conceived. (60-63)

In "Hill Prayer" Devkota gives the picture of the Nepalese social life and his concern for human rights, justice and the respect. He shows his reaction against the feudal society that oppresses and exploits the poor and the helpless innocent people

and calls them to rise and revolt for the basic human rights food cloth, home and justice.

Now no more sleep, let us rise up

In the name of god,

We will fight for food clothes and for a home

In the name of justice. (qted. in Adhikari 80)

Devkota knew that there was a huge gap between the lives of rich and poor people. Devkota, who suffered the great economic crisis, could realize the pang of the poor people suffering for Dal-Bhat-Duku. So, in the poem Dal-Bhat-Duku he shows his disapproval to the political leaders who can not realize and understand the problem of the poor and hungry people. At the same time he warns the politician/leaders that the poor people can wage war if they are kept hungry and oppressed for a long.

Let the wise understand:

For 'Dal-Bhat-Duku' men wage wars and die

For this they toil

To rationalize it is today's tapasya,

A needful austerity to solve the problem of this age.

The leader who knows this not

He's just a sheep:

Would he be able to steer the nations' ship? (86-93)

4.2 Devkota's Utopia

Devkota's criticism of the society is not a mere rejection and hatred in a misanthropic attitude. Rather his criticism, satire and disagreement are aimed at creating a happy and harmonious society which he always dreamt of. Thus in his

poetry he appeals for building a golden world and cultivates a strong belief for the day to come. About Devkota's poetry Promod pal writes:

Devkota was primarily an inspired social reformist and humanist whose avowed aim was to attack and eradicate the social evils plaguing society. He wielded his pen extremely with this end in mind. Devkota made it his business to scrutinize the bewildering and kaleidoscopic maze that is society, and proceed to distill and deduce certain basic, humane concepts and canons of social conduct. In this sense, at least, he commanded a one-man crusade against the drawbacks of society (22).

The youth every where are the bearer of the power to change the society.

Devkota is very conscious of the potential strength of the youth, thus in his poem "Wake Up" he draws the attention of the youth towards the world that is growing ugly each day. He welcomes the youth to participate in his mission to building a happy new world- "a temple of gold".

Wake up. O Union of Youth!
For today the nation has grown ugly
Come; let's build a world all new,
A temple of gold. (1-4)

Since the world he lives in is very ugly because of the malpractices, the injustice and inequality he wants a new world where all men be equal. The poet who had seen many of his contemporary intellectual thinkers kept behind the iron bars, defies the society with no freedom. He wants to see everyone free and happy and he wishes to see everybody to enjoy the light of education. He knows it is not possible under the corrupt social and administrative system, so he desires for a new free and harmonious world as he does in his poem "To Me".

Give me a world where
There's no high hill nor bays below,
Where all men are equal.
To Me a Munia-bird
That cries not in the cage but flies freely all around. (1-6)

A true humanitarian poet Devkota cannot live in the society being deaf, blind and dumb to the feudalists (the vultures) exploiting humble and the poor people, he rejects the ugly society and longs for a beautiful society where there is no oppression, murder, hunger, and darkness as Devkota gives picture in his poem "To Me".

Let there be no vultures on roofs
Nor corpses on the ground
Anywhere in this land.
The oppressors of the poor
Mayn't walk around with a swagger, conceited
The exploiters of the people,
Let all eyes be lighted up,
Having food, clothing, shelter, (9-17)

To build such a world he appeals the people to wake up and overthrow the long ruling tyrannical Ranarchy, and create a peaceful and civilized society. He knows that without sweeping out all the rotten stuffs of the society- social injustice and economic disparities, it is not possible to set a new and happy world, so the only way is to wake up and clean the society. And anyone who does not come up for this mission is like a dead, thus possess no existence. We can see this clear articulation of the poet in his poem "Wake Up" as:

Sweep out all this rotten stuff,

Build a new home, new doors, new windows

Let your blood overflow

To plant a garden

Decorate it for posterity!

Sticken at heart, we're put to shame

Before the civilized world at large.

O all those who still sleep are dead! (17-24)

In his poem "To the Tempest" Devkota grieves that his brothers and sisters are in the darkness of the ignorance that caused the society grow unhappy. Devkota wants to see all the people be happy and live in the free and bright society. He shows his innate disgust to the society that lacks the sense of brotherhood and thus longs to destroy all the evils of the society and reform it to a new happy and enlightened society.

Man in the dark night of delusion sleeps!

Brother forgets brother today!

How terrible, how unhappy is society today!

Kick up the dust, crushing all the pulp! (20-23)

Socially and politically conscious Devkota could never accept to be enslaved by the exploitative and oppressive Ranarchy. Neither could the kind, humanitarian, and the lover of justice and freedom accept the corruption, oppression, inequalities and the hypocrisies in the society even after the achievement of Democracy in the country. So he expressed his strong dissatisfaction in the poems he created. But within his dissatisfaction and rejection to the contemporary society he has a hope and vision for a clean, saintly and a better world as he does in his poem "To the Tempest":

Tomorrow, the sky washed clean,

The air all pure and saintly

Spring sweetly laughs

The winter at its end! (65-68)

Devkota's poems attack the feudal, orthodox and the oppressive socio-political set up of his contemporary society. There are various cross-currents of revolutionary spirit against the contemporary ways of social and literacy practices. His poems are the criticism of the autocratic Rana rule that was over luxurious and was enjoying the unreasonable power of the authority. We can also find the poet's disagreement against and the hatred for the orthodox and feudal society, injustice, discrimination, and inhuman and immoral practices in the society. The poet realizes that there is an unprecedented fall of humanity in the men in the society. Devkota's poetry not only makes a criticism of the socio-political system but also aims at waking up the sleeping spirit of the Nepalese people, and his revolt against all sorts of atrocities, oppressions, injustice, and tyranny is because he is a true humanitarian poet.

V. CONCLUSION

The poems by the great poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota reflect his disapproval to the social injustice, economic disparities, degradation of humanity and leadership, corruption, follies, hypocrisies, and the monstrous exploitation of the common people in the contemporary society. He employs two moods, namely revolutionary, and humorous and ironical, in his provocation.

In his short span of life, Devkota witnessed the consequences of the two great World Wars; experienced the terror and suppression of the Ranaarchy as demonstrated in 'Makai Parba', 'Charkha Parba', 'Library Parba' and 'Martyr Parba'. Simultaneously, he witnessed the exploitation, corruption, hypocrisies, follies and the advancing of shameless leadership, and human degradation.

The poet who suffered a great economic crisis, that compelled him to be helpless while his sons were dying of malnutrition, being deprived of the proper health care, could realize the pang of depression, frustration and the anger of the common people who were poor, illiterate, exploited and oppressed. Thus he advocated the forgotten and forlorn, and frowns at those who exploit humble, poor, and the hungry human and the humanity at large. Like many other intellectuals Devkota participated in the fight against autocratic Rana oligarchy at the cost of his job of professor at Tri-Chandra College, and the happiness of his family members.

In 1951 the tyrannical Rana reign came to an end, and democracy was established in the country, but unfortunately, even after the achievement of democracy, the dream of the common people to see a free and harmonious society failed. There was only a change of person in authority but it brought almost no change in the corrupt, hypocritical, exploitative and hierarchical structure of the society. Through his poems, Devkota revolts and shows his disagreement to the social

injustice and malpractices that governed the society for a long. He also depicts the growing disillusionment among the common people and the intellectuals in his poetry.

‘Disagreement’ and ‘disapproval’ arise from consciousness and perception of “unjust injury”. It becomes natural that circumstance and consequence (political, social, religious, and economic) surrounding this “unjust injury” play an important role in guiding a creative awareness to a certain direction.

To a conscious and a humanitarian poet Devkota, who always loves “freedom of thought” and “freedom of expression” feels this “unjust injury” when suffocated in the Ranarchy and the prevailing censorship. This “injury” intensifies in him when the poet witnesses the economic disparity in the society where “the dogs of the feudal lords eat rice- milk” and the poor people suffer for “Barley-dust” and “Dal-Bhat-Duku”. Similarly, when “a man regards a man as no man”, when “brother forgets brother” and “man be blind to man”, then the perception and the realization of this “unjust injury” further intensifies. And it crosses boundary of limitation when he becomes compelled to see his beloved children dying of malnutrition and a proper health care; and the time when he receives a name-“crazy”. The poet pangs and pains to see the society “purifying with corruption”, “Brahmin living on dirty water washing away others sin”, and when he finds science “making people blind to soul”, luxuries “making people foul”, and politics “making people ghoul”. The anger in him overflows and thus he disagrees to see the “tongue and ears artificialized’ and the “yoking of the body”, then lion, thunder, and the volcano in him burst to break the “jail of dark age”, “to sweep the decaying worlds” and bring catastrophe to the ‘jackals” and the ‘social vampires’. When Devkota realizes this ‘injury’, the anger and dissatisfaction in him finds outlet in the poem in which he defies all these elements

that injured him, and of course the unity of these elements is society. Thus it is safe to say that Devkota exposed his strong disapproval to the contemporary society.

Of course, Devkota criticized, attacked and disapproved of his society that was ruined of the social injustice, economic disparity, follies and hypocrisies, and the degeneration of humanity, but this criticism, rejection and disagreement is never the product of hatred and misanthropic attitude, but it is the result of his love to his society, and his strong desire to see the society progress and improve. In his revolution and rejection he envisages a happy, saintly, clean and harmonious society-his utopia. This was his gradual development and maturity in his literary carrier.

Though Devkota expresses his disagreement and rejection to certain person as he did in poem “The lunatic” and “Bhutlai Jhataroo”, (in reacting to “Rahul”, and Bishow Mani Acharya Dixit, as opined by Janak Lal Sharma), his rejection and disagreement is primarily with the tyrannical authority, the inhuman practices and malpractices in the society. Devkota’s satire and disapproval to the society is partly the result of pique. He was in a continuous suspense by the authority, he was sacked from the job, and was called “crazy”, he was sent to jail, and was fined 100 Rupees (than a huge amount) for initiating to open a library. So he exposed the absurdities and the follies of the so-called civilized and elites, and the ‘Alexdender the Greats” of his society, who were glued to the wealth and power that give up the company in no time.

To defy and criticize the contemporary social malpractices, now Devkota embodies the submissive mood and celebrates the animal innocence and irresponsibility, and now he evokes the strength of the Nature- Storm, Tempest, Volcano and Kali to bring catastrophe to the evils and to sweep the “rotten stuffs” of the society. The use of grand images, the use of “jhyaure meter”, and the breaking of the literary norms of his predecessors, the use of satires and ironies, show the poet’s

success and maturity in showing disagreement to his contemporary society, and giving the picture of his utopia-“the golden world”.

WORK CITED

- Acharya, Jayaraj. Introduction. Laxmi Prasad Devkota: Selected Poems. By MM Thakur. Kathmand: Sandesh Griha. 1998.
- Adhikari, Indra Vilas. The Poetry of Laxmi Prasad Devkota and the British Romantic Poets: A Comparative Study. Kathmandu: Pairavi Prakashan, 2003.
- Bandhu, Chudamani. Devkota. Lalaitpur: Sajha Prakashan, 2036 B.S.
- Bhatta, Govinda. "Laxmi Prasad Devkota Ma Krantikari Pravity." Bhanu. Year 5, Kathmandu: 1968.
- Daiches, David. Critical History of English Literature, 2nd Ed. 4 Vols. New Delhi: Ronald. 1960.
- Devkota, Padma Prasad. "Humanitarian Attitudes of Wordsworth and Devkota (A Comparative Study)." Diss. T.U. 1974.
- Devkota, Padma. A Pond of Swans and Other Essays. Kathmandu: New Hira Book Enterprises, 2004.
- Foot, Paul. "Poetry of Protest." Socialist Review, No.155, July-August 992, pp.18-20. Online. <<http://www.poetrymagazines.org.uk/magazine/record.asp?id=1878> > June, 2006.
- Gautam, Shreedhar. "Devkota's Address to Readers in Shakuntala." The Kathmandu Post, 21 October, 2001.
- . "Devkota's Legacy and Critics' Decency." The Kathmandu Post. 8 December 2002.
- Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 5th Ed. New Delhi : Affiliated East-West Press Private Limited. 2000.
- Hudson, William Henry. An introduction to the Study of Literature. Delhi: Radha Publishing House.

- Hughes, Langston. "Harlem". Elements of Literature. Ed. Robert Schools et al. Delhi: OUP. 1997
- Hutt, Michael. Modern Literary Nepal: An Introductory Reader. Delhi: OU Press, 1997.
- . Himalayan Voices An Introduction to Modern Nepali Literature. Delhi, 1993.
- . Devkota's Munamada: Translation and Analysis. Delhi: OU Press, 1996.
- Ishwar, Baral. Ed. Indreni. Kathmandu: Kavya Pratisthan, Vol. 1, Issue II and VII.
- Jarrell, Randall. "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner." The Norton Anthology of Poetry. Ed. Margaret Ferguson. et al. New York. 4th Ed. 1996.
- Joshi, Kumar Bhandur. Mahakavi Devkota ra Unka Mahakanya. Kathmandu: Sahayogi Prakasha, 1974.
- . Devkotaka Kabita Yatra ko Bislesan ra Mulyankan. Lalitpur: Sajha Prakashan. 2047 BS.
- Lohani, Basanta. "Devkota's "The Lunatic": A Revolution Within." The Kathmandu Post 6May. 2001.
- Maskey, Mahesh. "Parijat: Progressivism in Nepalese Context." The Nepal Digest - 12 June. 1995.
- Pal, Pramod. "An Appraisal of Laxmi Prasad Devkota and William Wordsworth as Romantic Poets." Diss. T.U. 1977.
- Pandey, Nitya Raj. Mahakavi Devkota. Lalitpur: Madan Punskar Guthi, 1960.
- Poudel, Khem Narayan. "Triumph of Prometheus: Shelley's Vision of Humanism." Diss. T.U. 1998.
- Pradhan, Paras Mani. Mahakavi Laxmi Prasad Devkota. Kalimpong: Bhagya Laxmi Prakashan. 1978.

Rexorth, Keneth. "The Function of Poetry and the Place of the Poet in Society." 1936.

<<http://www.bopsecrets.org/rexorth/essays/poetry-society.htm>> July, 2006.

Robert, Shaw B. "The Poetry of Protest." [http://www.poetrymagazines.org.uk/](http://www.poetrymagazines.org.uk/magazine/record.asp?id=1878)

[magazine/record.asp?id=1878](http://www.poetrymagazines.org.uk/magazine/record.asp?id=1878) July, 2006.

Rubin, David. Nepali Visions Nepali Dreams: the Poetry of Laxmi Prasad Devkota.

New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.

Schools, Robert. et al. Ed. Elements of Literature. 4th Ed. Vol 2-4. 4Vols. Delhi:

Oxford University Press, 1997.

Sharma, Janaklal. Mahakavi Devkota: Ek Vyakti, Dui Rachana. Kathmandu: Saja

Prakashan, 2032 B.S.

Shrestha, CB. My Reminiscence of the great Poet Laxmi Prasad Devkota. Kathmandu:

Royal Nepal Academy. 1981.

Subedi, Abhi. "Devkota ko Bikashshil Swrorup." Mahakavi Laxmi Prasad Devkota.

Ed. Bhawani Ghimire. Kathmandu: Bidhyarthi Pustak Bhandar, 2059 B.S.

---. "Nepali Literature a Critical Survey." Nepal: Perspectives on Continuity and

Change. 1989.

---. "Uniqueness in the Modernist Nepali Literary Discourse." 2005.

Thakur, MM. Laxmi Prasad Devkota: Selected Poems. Kathmandu: Sandesh

Griha.1998.

Whelpton, John. A History of Nepal. UK: Cambridge University Press. 2005.

Woods, Alan. "British Poets and the French Revolution." Online. < [http: www.](http://www.marxist.com/art_and_literature/british_poets/htm)

[marxist.com/art and literatrue/british_poets/htm](http://www.marxist.com/art_and_literature/british_poets/htm)> March, 2003.

Yuyutsu R.D. Ed. and Trans. Roaring Recitals, Five Nepal Poets (Gopal Prasad.

Ramal, Bhupi Sherchan, Banira Giri, Shailendra Sakar and Bimal Niva). New

Delhi: Nirala Publication.1999.

Yuyutsu, R.D. "Little Literature, Great Dreams." Spotlight. Vol 21, No 20. 2001.