

RESEARCH PAPERS

1

Why does Fiction Matter? A Tale of the 1960s from Nepali Literature

Komal Prasad Phuyal

Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal

Abstract

The official finds its place in the chronicles of the state, while the ordinary reveals itself through the creative works of the people distanced from the official in society. The tension between the former and the latter adds dynamism to the social drama that inspires the creative genius to record the most ordinary with the precision of the lens beyond the access of the state. This paper centers on the basic question of relating fiction to study the historical worldviews and realities of a particular people, taking three test cases from the 1960s in Nepali literature: B. P. Koirala's *Narendra Dai* (written in 1964, published in 1970), Parijat's *Sirishko Phool* (1964), and Indra Bahadur Rai's *Aaj Ramita Chha* (1964). The three texts have presented the 1960s in Nepali literature from a perspective that lies beyond the reach of the official records in that all three authors have invented cozy but nonconformist worldviews of their own in order to set the quest of their protagonist. Drawing insights from new historicist theory, I have read the texts to see the ways each of the authors records the historical transitions of the 1960s from the perspective of the people, discussing how fiction matters in understanding and analysing historical realities of any point in time.

Keywords: agency, resistance, transition, people's history, self vs polity

Introduction

Often literary works imply the basic component of imagination and aesthetic sense of beauty, denying its role in imparting the dimension of social history in people. In other words, literature intertwines itself with history to derive the socio-political grounding, also referred to as setting in pure jargon of fiction. As a designer of a make-believe world, the fiction writer cannot fantasize about the absolute reality of her own to weave a completely new narrative that does not resemble any social set-up. Conversely, literature delves deep into the social configuration to explore the interaction among human beings and captures a social reality, though from a completely different viewpoint. This paper assumes that fictions matter in making sense of the time and place of a particular social reality and recording it for posterity. In other word, fictions turn into the repository of social history which continually informs the upcoming generation in the development of society as such and educates them by exposing the ills of earlier times.

As an imaginative form of art, literature also exercises liberty in designing human affairs to suit the taste of the author; still, the basic design and development of events find their way into the work of fictions in genuine ways. Fictions carry social history in the way historical documents present telling stories. In fact, each complements the other towards understanding the human possibility in life and society. The political reality and the imaginative power explore a novel way of presenting the social picture in literary form through fictions. This study examines the 1960s as the decade of historical/political transition in Nepali society as reflected through three seminal works of literature: B. P. Koirala's *Narendra Dai* (written in 1964, published in 1970), Parijat's *Sirishko Phool* (1964), and Indra Bahadur Rai's *Aaj Ramita Chha* (1964). I have read Koirala and Parijat in their original Nepal form, while I have made use of Manjushree Thapa's 2017 English translation *There's a Carnival Today* to analyse Rai's novel.

Critical Responses: Reading Existence, Gender, and Psyche

B. P. Koirala's *Narendra Dai*, Parijat's *Shirishko Phool*, and Indra Bahadur Rai's *There's a Carnival Today* are variously responded to in contemporary readings of the respective texts. As they were all

published in the 1960s, the quest for existence and meaning has always remained one of the main concerns of critics. Besides, the texts are read from the perspective of gender, in which the role of women in patriarchy is thoroughly examined. For instance, B. P. Koirala's Gauri or Munariya from *Narendra Dai* and Parijat's Sakambari in *Shirishko Phool* are treated as the epitome of women's revolt to bring about change in the ways of the people. All the texts have also been examined to see the rise of the voice from the margin. Indra Bahadur Rai's *There's a Carnival Today* writes the story of the quotidian life of Darjeeling and its people to document the insignificant issues gaining momentum in life as such. This section briefly reviews the major contemporary observations of the texts.

B. P. Koirala's *Narendra Dai* has been studied from various angles of observation. The scholars primarily focus on the presentation and treatment of women in their texts. For instance, Keshav Raj Chalise analyses the women in Koirala's novels. In his observation of the women, he finds coherence in the treatment of such women in Koirala's writings. Chalise states:

Indramaya in *Teen Ghumti*, Sumnima in *Sumnima*, Uma in *Babu Aamara Chhora*, Gauri and Munaria in *Narendra Dai*, and Modiain in *Modiain* are all the female characters where they determine the major part of the plot. These images of women are not stereotypical women with constrained roles. They have the power and revolutionary nature to symbolise their identity. They are not only individual characters, but they are representative figures of female beings. (314)

Such women present themselves as an agent of change in the social psyche of the time as they threaten the comfortably running flow of social values. Society must change and find a new course of direction for them.

Koirala's novel has been approached from an existential perspective as well. The 1960s marks the high time for such literature. Nimagna Ghimire studies the major trends in Koirala's writing and concludes that *Narendra Dai* is an absurdist novel (110). Still, the issues of women have always gained primarily in the readings of contemporary critics like Ashok Thapa. He argues: "In all his works, B.P. has portrayed women with dignity and lauded their assertiveness, honesty, perseverance and sacrifice" (626). Like existence and the issues of women, Koirala also makes use of

Freudian psychological observations in human interactions. V. Sharma thus synthesises:

Freud. B. P. wrote psychological stories relating to the problems of women, sex and the sadness of life. This style of story writing was new in Nepali literature, and for this reason he became very popular. Psychological aspects of such social problems as marriage between child-brides and middle-aged grooms, untouchability, caste and class distinctions, and exploitation of the poor and the have-nots by the feudal class are brilliantly depicted by Koirala, along with a touch of satire. (212)

Koirala's treatment of Freudian psychology exposes the inner human reality along with the social setup of his time. Koirala had experimented with a new form of writing the human existence as such.

Another major literary figure of the time was Parijat whose *Shirishko Phool* has attracted critical attention from diverse critics. In this study, I have gathered some of the contemporary studies on the novel. Saroj Dawadi studies the positioning of male chauvinism and the protest of women as the central issues in Parijat's *Shirishko Phool* (103). Dawadi places existential philosophy and absurdist ways of viewing reality as the context for the novel to weave the tale of the old soldier and the young girl. The issues of human existence are also one of the key concerns in reading the novel. Dipesh Neupane studies the text from an existentialist perspective to come to the following conclusion:

Parijat's *Blue Mimosa* portrays the real state of a modern man who confronts alienation, loneliness, meaninglessness and boredom in life. The central character Suyog develops a sense of anxiety and alienation after the death of his beloved Sakambari. He feels isolated and alienated in the absence of his beloved. He realises the futility of life and becomes restless like a fish out of water. (5)

The influence of existential philosophy as evidenced in the preface of the novel prevails in Neupane's analysis of the text. Such reading also paves ways to approach the text from the perspective of gender.

Furthermore, Indira Acharya Mishra analyses the novel from the feminist critical perspective and sees a woman's body as a site of violence. As she writes, "Sakambari's unfeminine activities challenge

patriarchy. She has not embraced feminine attributes prescribed for women. Suyogbir finds her insensitive as she damn cares about others' opinions. Yet, despite her unfeminine activities, he gets attracted towards her. But she remains indifferent towards him. She has the feminist consciousness" (31). Mishra views the patriarchy as the social structure positively supporting Suyogbir in his attempt to draw pleasure from Sakambari's body. Like Mishra, Ramesh Adhikari also reads Sakambari as a rejection of man's dictation on her body (31). From the feminist point of view, the novel is read as an interaction centred on the interaction between Suyogbir and Sakambari. Similarly, Hari Jung Shah also gives a feminist reading of the poem and argues that the protest from women occupies the central stage in the text (n.pag.). Such readings focus on the agency of women and their protest in the patriarchal setup of society.

Like Koirala and Parijat, the maestro Nepali novelist Indra Bahadur Rai populates his 1964 novel with the characters from the margin who reside in the hills of Darjeeling and work in the tea estates. For Bijayata Pradhan, Rai tells the story of the people not represented in mainstream writing. Pradhan writes: "This novel becomes important because it is the first work to sense the simmering discontent of the people of Darjeeling, urban and rural alike, towards the prevailing administrative system. It is also the first work to depict the political mindset of the people living in the hills of Darjeeling" (179). The formation of the political consciousness in the hills of West Bengal gains priority in Rai's writing. The ordinary people are placed in the backdrop of the political tremor that begins to show its first impact in the making of the collective identity of the people in Darjeeling. Nabin Paudyal also reads the novel, focusing on the political context of post-independent India. Paudyal emphasises the political episode of the murder of eight tea estate laborers in 1955 (n.pag.).

The formation of collective identity has become the key concern of critics in the novel. Though such readings have focused on the voice of the margin, the concerns and depiction of history have not been adequately paid attention to.

The available readings indicate a hitherto unexplored domain: the relationship between history and literature. How does literature

serve the cause of history? How does history metamorphose itself into the great fictional narrative of a particular age? When literary critics approach fictional texts to seek an answer to such questions, they realise the significance of writing fiction. The social history may not be as exact as the official political narratives of the time in that such history captures the major socio-political development of the era. However, the exclusionary nature of power tends to erase and/or omit certain aspect of historical reality, provided such reality does not serve or challenge the position of the prevailing order. In such circumstances, the official narratives are a mostly incomplete account of the past. Fictions complement history by surviving the detailed picture of society by placing the observer and the observed at the edge of society. Often, it takes a great deal of efforts to unveil the hidden in such narratives. Fictions matters in that it serves contemporary society by informing about the past through aesthetic weaving of the possible narrative, closely founded on the reality of the society that produces such narratives.

Nexus between History and Literature

This study makes a textual discussion of three Nepali novels from the 1960s in order to examine the social and historical forces embedded in the making of the works of literature. In other words, this study centers on exploring social history through aesthetic works of the time. Deriving theoretical insights from Michel Foucault and Stephen Greenblatt, this study interprets the novels as the embodiment of social history. Even though literary texts are more concerned with imagination and aesthetic presentation in terms of both expression and argument, the people and their interaction are modeled after the real world. The organic development of the interaction/conflict shapes the course of action taken from the world. In this sense, both the literary and the historical merge together to sustain each other. The literary needs historical as much as the historical needs the narratives of the time to survive in the ages to follow them. As part of textual scholarship, the paper has examined B. P. Koirala, Parijat, and Indra Bahadur Rai as the critical insight into their contemporary history in their literary expression in order to establish the claim embedded in the question: “Why does fiction matter?”

Nepali Fictions in the 1960s

The 1960s presents itself as a unique decade in both literature and politics in Nepal in that the literary responds to the political in the most complicated ways. King Mahendra's new political system curtailed all the fundamental rights in Nepal, while Nehru's India never took the hills of West Bengal as any significant human society at all. In a such political context, Nepali literature responds to the larger questions of political transition through longer narrative works of art. B. P. Koirala, Parijat, and Indra Bahadur Rai do not raise the issue of their political boundary as such: instead, they move beyond to bring together the people and culture to pass on the political statement. The historical annals only do not suffice come true in such circumstances –history generally serves the purpose of the people who sponsor it. On the other hand, literature percolates deep down into the veins of the society from which to pick up the issues of the people, ignored hitherto from the political centers. Outlawed Koirala was imprisoned in Sundarijal jail, from where he rewrites the ills of the nation by weaving the narrative of Narendra Dai, Gauri Bhauju, and Munariya –all of them defy the centrally governing ethos of the time. They are ready to sacrifice themselves for their convictions. Parijat's antihero Suyogbir participated in World War II in Burma, experienced the hardship of battle in life, and derived an irregular sense of life from his encounter with women in Burma. Such perceptions of life and society instrumentally shape his self to understand the world around him, consequently leading him to force Sakambari to commit suicide. In Indra Bahadur Rai's *There's Carnival Today*, Janak experiences a lot of upheavals in the hills of West Bengals. The political tensions and the stress in the common people's lives help bring about Rai's philosophy of life emerging from the hills of Darjeeling. Creative response to the 1960s from Nepali literature adequately documents the political drama of the time from the people's perspective. In the absence of such literary writings, the tension would not have been recorded in the official annals by the repressive political orders.

Fictions matter in Nepali literature, for they document the socio-political history and hurdles of the time, the quest for liberal sensibility, and the political awakening to rewrite the contemporary needs of society in the 1960s. The historical comprehension of the

creative front reveals itself in the form of personal observation and national context. The larger picture gets imprinted in the form of social history as such. Similarly, feudalism, tuberculosis, and World War II have deeply engraved their impact on the consciousness of the time. The quest for liberal sensibility rests in the political resistance as embodied by Gandhi and the breaking of caste barriers at the time. The novels under examination boldly pass the statement on these issues. On the whole, the novels politically rewrite the awakening of societies in the best possible ways.

Nepali novels present history and hurdles in the 1960s. Dealing with the personal history of a retired war veteran, Suyogbir Singh, Parijat envisions an antihero who deeply broods over the nature of life after the war. Even on Sakambari's birthday, they have a party where Suyog visits them as an invitee. Parijat writes: "A golden head attached to a body of five feet and three inches, Sakambari stands in a saree of handloom, her back facing me. I am a youth of five feet six inches. Am I young? When I realised she was twenty-one years younger than me, I fell 21 kos (37.8 miles) away from the reality of Shivaraj's living hall" (53). The personal differences contribute to the comprehension of meaning in Suyog's life. He develops the same apprehension that the children in *Narendra Dai* feel for the protagonist of the same name. They do not know the reason but Narendra holds fear for all of the children in the village. As he appears in the scene, the children run away. Koirala thus presents Narendra arrival from Kolkota in his narration: "Sannani happened to look at a bullock cart coming from the west as we were in the sun for a while. She cried in haste, "Hide! Hide! Narendra Dai is there! Hide!" (4). To both Suyog and the children, the society and the entry of the protagonists are strange things respectively. They experience an uneasy atmosphere in such a context.

Both Parijat and Indra Bahadur Rai explicitly locate the national history in the happenings of the novels. For instance, Parijat places the whole context of World War II and the participation of Nepali soldiers in Burma to fight against the Japanese soldiers (90) to create a backdrop for the emergence of Suyogbir Singh, the Warrant Officer from the army. Bishalnagar and Indrachwok in the 1950s become the major sites for meeting both Suyogbir and Shiva. Such context adds to understanding the historical and spatial significance of the literary

work. Likewise, Indra Bahadur Rai enchains the whole narrative in real time by devising various historical allusions. He says that Janak's father died in 1930. As the author writes,

Janak received news of his father's death in Calcutta in his second year of studying banking. The colleges had been closed, since the day before, to celebrate CV Raman's Nobel Prize victory. Janak put off a plan to visit Dandi, the site of Gandhi's Salt March, and returned to Darjeeling to support his grieving mother. Her composed bearing and serene countenance took him aback. (3)

In other instances, Rai refers to various points in national history to chronologically develop the events in the novel. He refers to Gandhi's rearrest and people's disagreement regarding the banning of the Congress (6) in the marriage to show that the events took place in 1932. The novelist knows the aesthetic measure of chaining the events in historical frames. He does not miss the major events in the region as he documents the effect of the great earthquake of 1934 on Janakman's life since Rai shows the protagonist shift his residence to another house after the shake (25). In the fictional works of the 1960s, the personal and the national intertwine the national aspiration and the personal efforts to accomplish them.

Like the personal and the national, the social forces are adequately documented in the creative works of the time. B. P. Koirala believes that fiction necessarily is rooted in the reality that people live in their life. The real and the imagined come as inseparable aspects of human life. He writes:

Whatever the storyteller utters is all part of his autobiography. Perhaps, fiction refers to enjoying the reality of past life again, drawing the incidents forcefully from deep memory. I vividly recall the incidents from the past, see the people from the past and gradually invite them in the voice of faith into my heart –“Oh, Gauri Bhauju, Oh Munariya, Oh Narendra Dai...!!!!” (2)

Rai also agrees with Koirala in the exploration of the inner social reality which Rai explores through his alter ego in Janak, displaying artistic orientation in that he thinks of writing a novel about Darjeeling someday in future. Rai narrates Janak and Sita reading Bhabani Bhikshu's "Will He Ever Return Again?":

Sita smiled. "You are being literary today," she said to her husband.

They both thought of the protagonist Sani from the story. The road to Chitlang hovered before Sita's eyes – a log, dusty road, the sweltering heat of the day...

"You used to say that you're going to write a novel," she teased him, reminding him of his old dream.

"I'm collecting material for it; I'm examining what I've already collected," Janak said. "I'm close to reaching a conclusion, which is – one lifetime is far too little for a person." (103)

Life and literary works cannot remain detached from each other in that each draws materials and inspiration from the other. Koirala introduces Narendra as one of the attractive youths who have a proper sense of fashion for his time. Narendra as the protagonist holds glamour: "He has the attraction of a brute type. It was not the attraction of a smooth marble statue; rather, it appeared like a sculpture derived from ordinary stone by average artists. Such statues are filled with roughness in determination and the elements of the brutal. It holds the craze of the cliff in which the scary occupies the greater portion" (2). Such characters inspire the social reality and prepare the ground for change. Narendra and Janak come close to challenging and rewriting the social core. Janak states:

"I've looked at, analysed, and thought about a lot," Janak said after sitting back down. "I feel that we end up wherever the river currents lead. Life is merely a green leaf afloat on the water of a river. You are a leaf; I am a leaf. What an enormous exigency. We live life, and we make life live in life: this is the only meaning in a meaningless life." After a pause, he added, "These things are the things I'd write about if I were to write." (103)

The perceptions from society find their due place in both Koirala and Rai in that they deal with ordinary people's lives as the source of inspiration.

Along with history, the fictional world deals with the contemporary issues of societies. The crumbling feudal order, tuberculosis, and the impact of World War II emerged as the fundamental hurdles of the preceding time. Rai critically observes the situation of Janakman's father-in-law in eastern Nepal. He is a representative of the feudal order. Similarly, Rai passes on a very critical statement regarding the exploitation of the indigenous people in Eastern Nepal. He writes:

After looking around to see who owned large, productive plots of land, people would start cases against the Rajbanshi, Sattar or Dhimal families and take over the plots for themselves. The history of Morang's indigenous peoples carried the ancient curse of the court cases and offices of Gorkha's rule. Although the saying went "Go to Gorkha if you want justice", the indigenous people's experience taught them, "Yet live on in the Gorkha kingdom if you don't." They would flee overnight, abandoning their homes and fields, their wives and sons and daughters. The day after they fled, their land would become the property of some brave Gorkhali victor. In those days, when day and night were equally murky in Morang, the Gorkhals committed daylight robbery, looting wealth and life and dignity. (12-13)

The injustice infused in the indigenous people in Nepal appears in a very vicarious remark in Rai's text. Also, Parijat also presents Shiva's mother staying in Madhes. In the 1960s, Koirala also presents the tale of Narendra Dai from the middle class Kshetri family from the eastern plains. Though Parijat tangentially touches upon the issue, Koirala and Rai's essentially delve into feudal order as the hurdle of development in their time.

All three creative authors bring to the center the issue of consumption. Koirala's Narendra Dai develops tuberculosis and suffers a lot from it (42). A plague of the time, Namgyal suffers from it in Rai's novel (49). Contemplating the impacts of TB, Rai moves on to present Namgyal's wife behaving weirdly: sexually dissatisfied, Yamuna appears in the text (81). As Rai narrates the encounter between Janak and Yamuna, "Janak straightened up, laughing. 'Here's where your attraction lies,' he said. 'From your waist to your feet, that part of you is long and slim and truly becoming. I like it' (85). Narendra and Namgyal share the same fate of early exit from the world for no sin on their part: the spread of the fatal illness claims their life. Parijat also deals with this issue seriously in her text as she helps Suyog understand the reality of life by presenting a case of tuberculosis and attraction in his neighborhood. Like a voyeur, he observes love between the shopkeeper's wife and the young softdrink hawker boy, just sixteen years of age. The matured woman suffers from tuberculosis. She has a hoary chest; still they make love for two hours (47). They exchange the pleasure of their body in the absence of the shopkeeper for two hours every day until she dies one day (125).

The novels of the 1960s deal with the issue of World War II. Parijat's *Suyogbir* emerges from the war, dead at his heart. He recalls his war days and his encounters with multiple women in Burma. He treats them like an object, without any kindness at all (91). He calls himself "old, drunkard, and soldier" (54) and finds it difficult to adjust to society. He is quickly attracted to women. He does not respect anybody: Sakambari commits suicide because *Suyogbir Singh* kisses her on her lips. Parijat narrates:

I had lost control of myself. I was not in a position to tell right from wrong. Excited, I kissed her soft lips firmly holding at her fair neck and I felt abandoned by the compassion even before satisfaction. I was soaked in sweat as if awake from a frightening dream: my heart was palpitating. What would I do now? It's impossible to change history. I knew I would not be able to undo the malfeasance. (112)

Like Parijat, Rai also shows the impact of war in the hills of Darjeeling. However, Rai uses it as a frame of temporal reference to locate the events progress in the text:

The three or four years between the Second World War and India's independence swept Janak along, as if on ocean currents and waves, to the meeting points of different situations, different nations and eras. Though it was no longer possible to keep advancing in the same way, he tried to remain in commensurate circumstances. (7)

Since Parijat worries much about the meaning and existence of people, she heavily deals with the issue in her text. She also declares that the war turns the human heart into a machine (35). The impact of war also becomes the hurdle in the writings of the novels in the 1960s.

In search of liberal sensibility, the novels have made use of resistance as such. Gandhi is politically personified as the epitome of resistance in that he moves beyond breaking the traditionally set boundaries. Koirala presents *Narendra Dai* influenced by the Gandhian ideology of life. As a social reformer, he does not accept the idea of caste and untouchability (23). *Munariya* offers water from the well to a cobbler: the Mother opposes this because it breaks the rule of untouchability (24). A true Gandhian activist, he does not subscribe to traditionally held values that his mother celebrates at home, resulting in conflict with his mother. Rai also designs his protagonist very close to *Narendra Dai*. Rai's *Janak* has assimilated the idea of

nonviolence in his life and it enhances the sense of tolerance in him. Rai explains:

“No, you mustn’t beat anyone, Aama. Non-violence...” Janak would tell his mother about Gandhi. “You must have faith in humanity and love everyone, even a foe, understand, Aama? You must lovingly conduct a satyagraha and make him realise his mistake. Do you know, Aama, that demands grounded in the truth have the power to bring about a complete transformation in the heart of a guilty man? And even if by chance he becomes harsher or more oppressive or cruel, we must observe the vow of civil disobedience, and not be enraged or seek revenge. Do you understand now, Aama?” (4-5)

Janakman has high tolerance, certainly emanating from his conviction in the Gandhian philosophy of life. Such a bent of mind helps him relate to his contemporary political development and participation in politics and business.

The characters challenge the existing social conditions by rewriting some of them. One of the domains is marriage. In *Parijat*, Shiva’s father had an intercaste marriage with a Gurung girl (32). The whole set of people is both culturally and biologically hybrid. Koirala’s Narendra overwrites the decision of his family by rejecting his wife, Gauri. Immediately after the marriage, he realises that Gauri is not fully grown. He develops a sort of special affection for Munariya. He engages the children in the game of football and goes to the other side with Munariya as he says he knows where the good grass is (7). In the rigid social structure, marriage functions as the special drama through which the couples realise themselves in the form of family. The struggle turns into a very complex phenomenon in Nepal. However, Rai’s characters emerge very comfortable with such kind of practice. Janak Yonzan falls in love with Sita Pradhan who comes to Darjeeling for further study. Rai tells: “What this demonstrates is how closely Janak and Sita –the “father and daughter” of the *Ramayana* –guarded the secret of their “sinful” love, the precious truth that only they knew. Janak’s confidant Sumshere knew only this much: Sita had come here from Nepal to study. She was probably a Pradhan by caste” (5). Both of them are well-accepted in society without any tension. On the contrary, Munariya also has to fight the hardest battles to elope with Narendra. She elopes with him to avoid getting married to her betrothed (38). She did not think of

anything before falling in love. She just loved Narendra and ran away with him. Munariya could not conform to the norms of society. Such conformation would not make it possible for her to realise her love (46). By breaking the institutional dictation, all three novels present a unique solidarity in the quest for liberal sensibility in society.

Such fictions aim at awakening the political sensibilities in the 1960s to rewrite the current needs of society. Rigorously writing the socio-political dimensions of society in the creative texts, all three authors challenge the existing order. In 1960, Mahendra imprisoned B. P. Koirala. In *Narendra Dai*, Koirala compares his life to that of Gauri: he comes to realise that one does not have to commit sin to suffer perpetually in life (34). The stoic nature of life requires political intervention to bring about transformation. Parijat calls it the crisis of meaning in her time: she shows killer denrobium densifloram to Suyog and says that she enjoys looking at the flowers suck the hornets in them (41). Sakambari's crude ways of viewing the principles of nature frighten the very core of Suyogbir. However, Parijat exposes the murky soul of the antihero as Parijat writes, "I am an old soldier. I don't have any hobby for flowers but women. I began to have a headache. I attempted to forget myself playing with the fresh blue flowers" (44). Suyog has lost any political sensibility, turning himself into a machine. The crisis of his time develops from the absence as such. Indra Bahadur Rai documents the life of the people, otherwise left out in silence from the annals of Indian history. He employs the art of fiction in order to record the social history of the people at the margin of the nation. In this sense, Rai's novel serves the people to write themselves afresh and rewrite the larger canon by placing themselves as both participants and observer of the larger national canon. There was a strike at Tukvar Tea Estate as they continued the British rules. For the first time, Darjeeling wants to rewrite the colonial legislation on its own terms (134). The tension at the tea estate grows further and a political process sets out in Darjeeling for the first time (190). Rai closely observes the society form its political ethos to rewrite the needs of its time and uses the political demonstration in Darjeeling as the carnival in the novel (211). The novel holds up the issue of political awakening in Darjeeling in the 1960s. Like Koirala and Parijat, Rai also seeks the intervention of the people in shaping the political spirit in his society.

The 1960s captures the contemporary ethos of the transitioning society by writing down the historical happenings of the time. The fictions review the development of history from the 1920s to the effects of World War II on human sensibility. Furthermore, the major obstacles of the time are the rigid social structure and tuberculosis. All the fictions closely connect the development of the plot with such issues. The feudal order and the attitude of the state towards it attract Rai's attentions as much as Koirala's. Though Parijat does not directly discuss the implication of the feudal order, Suyog embodies the whole system in his gene. All three novelists give adequate space to tuberculosis to derive meaning from the life of the people employed to deal with the development of the plotline. The terminal disease claims the major character in Koirala's text, while the minor characters suffer from it in Parijat and Rai's novels. It helps to form a new understanding of life in Parijat's Suyogbir and Rai's Janak. The fictions also uphold resistance as a necessary mode of life: Parijat equips Sakambari with it to challenge the arrogance of Suyogbir; Koirala's Gauri, Narendra, and Munariya live by resisting, challenging, and living life on their own terms; finally, Janak knows that Darjeeling requires it to grow lively. In Koirala and Rai, Gandhi's impact is felt through the development of the personality of the lead characters: Narendra and Janak. On the whole, the fictions present the quest for liberal sensibility through resistance which challenges the feudal ethos embedded in the caste hierarchy through marriage, challenging untouchability, and enhancing the spirit of tolerance of the other. Fictions function as a fertile space to grow and impart political sensibility, implying the need for larger political intervention in the existing order of society. Koirala, Parijat, and Rai rewrite the contemporary quest and ethos in the fictions in order to help grow a more tolerant society where the self understands and respects the other.

Why Fiction Matters

The hard historical chronicles of states, by the limitations of their own, fail to reach the people who form the ethos of the present. Societies turn dysfunctional when the roots of the ruling heads lose ground in such ethos, emerging from the people. Fictions matter significantly since they show the ground to the ruling heads and help

identify the genuine spirit from the bottom. Creative genius can intervene in society to see the complexity of human life, existence, and political and social development. Without any restrictions, novelists can also intervene in the consciousness of the people even while in jail and direct the formation of a national spirit. The tension between the people and the state invites the critical attention of creative people to explore the point of equilibrium.

At a unique point in history, Nepali literature got three great fictions in 1964: B. P. Koirala completes *Narendra Dai*; Parijat publishes *Shirishko Phool*, and Indra Bahadur Rai's *Aaj Ramita Chha* also reaches the reader. The three texts review South Asian historical development from the 1920s as a backdrop for multiple points of junctures in the life of Nepali people. They touch on and examine the critical hurdles of the time in the form of feudalism and tuberculosis: the repressive social and medical issues shape the direction of human quest in the novels. The crises of meaning catch a large share of reflection in all three novels as the misery of the time are rooted in an inability to understand oneself and others. The three texts capture the spirit that lies beyond the access of the official annals of the state and promotes the nonconformist views of life. The texts emerge as political commentary on the life of the people as they seek to pose a threat to the existing order. Fictions matter, for they have the political ambition to serve the people at the base.

Works Cited

- Adhikari, Ramesh Prasad. "Search for Social Identity in Parijat's *Blue Mimosa*." *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature*, vol. 8, no. 2, February 2020, pp. 23-32.
- Chalise, Keshav Raj. "Koirala's Novels: Pattering Social and Political Cognizance." *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Translation Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1, Jan-March 2019, pp. 310-318.
- Dawadi, Saroj. "Parijatko 'Shirishko Phool' Upanyasko Sanskritik Adhyayan" [A Cultural Study of Parijat's *Shirishko Phool*]. *The Saptagandaki Journal*, vol. 9, February 2018, pp. 101-108.
- Ghimire, Nimagna. "Narendra Dai Upanyasko Bisangati Chintan" [Reflection on the Absurdity in *Narendra Dai*]. *Madhuparka*, no. 543, Bhadau 2071 B.S., pp. 106-110.
- Koirala, B. P. *Narendra Dai*. Sajha, 2066 B.S.

- Mishra, Indira Acharya. "Woman's Body as the Site of Violence in Parijat's *Blue Mimosa*." *Researcher*, vol. 4, no. 1, January 2020, pp. 30-40.
- Neupane, Dipesh. "Alienation in Parijat's *Blue Mimosa*." *Patan Pragya*, vol. 4, no. 1, June 2019, pp. 1-5.
- Parijat. *Shireeshko Phool*. Shajha, 2063 B.S.
- Paudyal, Nabin. "Aaj Ramita Chha Upnyasma Chitrit Rajnaitik Paridrishya" [The Political Context Depicted in *Aaj Ramita Chha*]. *Samakalin Sahitya* [Contemporary Literature]. May 1, 2022. <<https://www.samakalinsahitya.com/sahitya/details/6489>>.
- Pradhan, Bijayata. "Voices from the Margins: A Study on the Texts Based on the Life of Tea Workers in the Tea Estates of Darjeeling." *Research Chronicler*, vol. 2, no. 4, May 2014, pp. 177-180.
- Rai, Indra Bahadur. *There's a Carnival Today*. Translated by Manjushree Thapa, Speaking Tiger, 2017.
- Shah, Hari Jung. "Shirishko Phool Upnyasma Nari Chetana" [Feminine Consciousness in *Shirishko Phool*]. *Samakalin Sahitya* [Contemporary Literature]. May 3, 2022. <<https://www.samakalinsahitya.com/Sahitya/details/7050>>.
- Sharma, V. "B. P. Koirala: A Major Figure in Modern Nepali Literature." *Journal of South Asian Literature*, vol. 27, no. 2, Fall 1992, pp. 209-218.
- Thapa, Ashok. "Rhetorical Analysis of Female Characters in *Narendra Dai*." *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2019, pp. 626-633.