

Identity Portrayal of Dalit Characters, Class and Culture: Comparative Study on Novels Written by Dalit and Non-Dalit Novelists¹

Shyam Lal Magarati & Prakash Rai

Abstract

The paper attempts to explore the identity portrayals of Dalit characters, their class, and culture in the Nepali texts by both Dalit and Non-Dalit writers. *KoAchut?* (Who is Untouchable?) by MuktinathTimsena and *Nay Ghar* (New Home) by Bishowbhakta Dulal, are selected two novels to examine the issue of Dalit characters, class, and culture. The study employs a qualitative method, particularly textual analysis for the interpretation. The data have been meticulously extracted from the novels to compare and contrast the internal dispositions and external socio-cultural interactions of the characters represented by the writers from both mainstream community and marginalized ones in Nepali surrounding. Major drawing from Stuart Hall's opinion of discursive identity and representation in cultural studies, the study tries to include the supportive perspectives from scholars such as Chris Barker, Eagleton, and Foucault, as well as insights from Indian writers like Vandana Bhatta, Ghanshyam, and Neha Arora to augment the textual analysis. The findings emphasize a recurring theme of class struggle in both narratives, showcasing Dalit characters wrestling with poverty and disenfranchisement while non-Dalit counterparts are positioned as prosperous and influential figures. A notable discrepancy emerges as Dalit characters are relegated to minor roles, contrasting with the predominant roles given to non-Dalit characters. Interestingly, Dalit writer draws from

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Dr. Shyam Lal Magarati, Lecturer, Surkhet Multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University; Prakash Rai, Lecturer, Bhojpur Multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

Email: shyamlalmagarati@gmail.com (corresponding author)

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personal experiences and real-life events while non-Dalit writer only speculates on the complex development and dogmatic progression of Dalit characters. This research sheds light on the socio-cultural complexity within Dalit literature, emphasizing the implication of comparative scrutiny in addressing the societal subtleties surrounding culture, privilege, and representation.

Keywords: Culture, Dalits, Non-Dalit experience, Speculation

Introduction

The Dalit group as mentioned fourth category according to the Varna System is the most oppressed group under social structure known as caste, caste division, and untouchable practices. To display the socio-cultural practices and representation of the Dalit community of Nepal, Dalit, and non-Dalit writers have been writing and continuously raising the voice of Dalits through their writings such as poems, stories, dramas, and novels. But the queries can be made: Who are Dalit characters? How are Dalit characters presented? What are their socio-cultural and economic conditions? How are Dalit characters presented in both Dalit and Non-Dalit writings? To respond the above queries, the researchers have selected two novels that are related to Dalit issues in Nepali context. The novel, *KoAchut?* (Who is untouchable?) written by MuktinathTimsena was first published in 2011 B.S. and the second time in 2067 B.S. The writer presents caste, class, culture, education, politics, and subaltern concerns as well. This novel depicts the reality of society with its prime focus on the everyday affairs of the people. There is a mixture of culture, of blood, of people, and of castes/races in society. The main character of the novel is Maya Thapa and the other characters are Khagendra Thapa, Devendra Thapa, Shibalal, Rabilal, and Sumitra, representatives of the high class. The minor characters are Gagane Sarki, Gore Damai, Induri Damini, and Ujeelee Damini, the representative of the Dalit community and from the lower class. Similarly, *Nay Ghar* (New Home, 2050-2073) is a novel written by Bishowbhakta Dulal (Aahuti). This novel is a daring experiment in Nepali progressive literature. The writer has realistically portrayed the picture of Nepali society. The novel begins from a simple social context and gradually it reaches its height. Surya Thapa is the main character whereas Sushil Maharjan, Prakash K mi, LalsinghSarki, Kiran, Hariman Kami are minor characters.

The researchers chose two Nepali novels written by both Dalit and non-Dalit authors, based on the aforementioned objective and research questions. They then

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examined and interpreted the novels, identifying similarities and differences between the Dalit and non-Dalit authors in terms of characters, class, and culture. The researchers selected the primary texts purposively and used the qualitative approach. The data were collected from text information and descriptions. To analyze and interpret the data, the researchers used Stuart Hall's ideas of the "discursive approach" of representation under cultural studies as main and theorists such as Chris Barker, Eagleton, Foucault, Vandana, and Ghanshyam's ideas as supportive tools for research parameters. All the information collected from the primary texts was properly managed, analyzed, and interpreted using the insights of the theorists. After the analysis of data, the researcher found that Dalit characters in both novels have been living in poverty and miserable condition whereas non-Dalit characters are presented as rulers and high social status. Similarly, Dalit characters are not given the major roles whereas non-Dalit characters are given the major roles in both novels. Dalit characters are presented as underprivileged whereas non-Dalits are a privileged group of people in the society. In the case of character, class, and culture, the Dalit writer presents his own experience whereas the non-Dalit writer presents speculation (Dalit characters' description, development, and improved thinking politically). Thus, this research is significant due to the comparative study on the socio-cultural issue of the Dalit community presented by Dalit and non-Dalit writers.

Literature Review

The researchers reviewed the opinions of researchers, writers and critics such as: Ramesh Prasad Bhattarai, Ninu Chapagain, and ShyamLal Magarati on both novels *Ko Achut?* and *Nay Ghar* that are written by writers like Muktinath Timsena (non-Dalit) and Bishowbhakat Dulal (Dalit) respectively.

Bhattarai (2070) expresses his views on Muktinath Timsena's novel *Ko Achut?* (Who is Untouchable? 2011) and highlights the subject of Dalit emancipation. The novel has created the history of progressive novels written in the Nepali language. Bhattarai (2070) quotes Ninu Chapagain's view on *Ko Achut?* "it is the first novel on the issue of Dalit emancipation because of its focus on the social structure created by the upper caste rulers in the name of the Varna system and who prohibited the publication of the book (p. 202)." After the publication of this novel, the contemporary rulers were suspicious. Timsena's purpose in writing the novel was to see the end of the untouchable practices and caste discrimination from society. Moreover, he wrote this novel describing the issue of class. The novelist successfully displays caste discrimination with class problems and

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presents the pain, anguish, and torture of Dalits including prohibition and inequality in every aspect of their lives. For Timsena, the Dalit problem is the product of the strategy of 'divide and rule' of Brahminism and feudalism. Indeed he believes that emancipation is possible by the organization and unity of people of all castes. Similarly, Timsena opines that there are only two castes: rich and poor. Rich people have prohibited the poor from progress. The author desired to end caste discrimination and begin social emancipation. He stands on the side of the proletariat humanism and wants to end all kinds of discrimination to create a beautiful society (pp. 202-203).

Furthermore, Bhattarai (2070) sheds light on Dulal's novel *Nay Ghar* (New Home, 2050) and criticizes it for lack of focusing on the Dalit subject. The novels that are based (as cited in Magarati, 2021, p. 117) on the Dalit subject need to capture problems, pains, anguish, rejection, and prohibition in the society and their struggle and scarification. In this sense, Dalits themselves present their life events as they are more realistic than the Dalit writers (p. 207). So, Bhattarai opines that *Nay Ghar* (2050) is not a Dalit-centered novel. The novels that are written in the Dalit context should expose the suffering of Dalits, their rejection in society, their life experience, sacrifice, and struggle against such evil treatment (p. 207). Similarly, C p g in (2070) comments on *Nay Ghar* (New Home, 2050) that there is caste-based humiliation and discrimination that Dalits have been facing but the novel is not written based on the Dalit subject (p. 83). The novelist has included the marginalized people as the representative of Nepali society in general but the Dalits specifically.

In the same way, Magarati (2021) concludes that *Nay Ghar* focuses on the marginalized issues in general and establishes the thought of class struggle. However, the novel does not only emphasize on Dalit issues. The writer does not provide the main role to the Dalit characters but presents them very naturally, realistically, and trustworthily. He has narrated the development of the Dalit and non-Dalit characters naturally. Similarly, Magarati (2021) sheds light on the novel *Ko Achut?* which seriously talks about the class struggle. Unless all the marginalized unite together, emancipation from all types of domination is not possible. In this novel too, Muktinath Timsena does not give the main role to the Dalit character, GaganeSarki. Maya Thapa is the main character who is the wife of Khagendra Thapa and daughter-in-law of Devendra Thapa. Whatever Timsena did in the contemporary period for the marginalized people seems positive and

encouraging. But the comparison of beauty, growth, development, and ideology of Dalit characters and non-Dalit characters seems unnatural, illogical, and unbelievable.

The researchers reviewed the insights of Stuart Hall's (1997) 'discursive approach' of representation under Cultural Studies in the title *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. A field of academic study that finds its origins in the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (UK) and the work of critics like Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggard, and later Stuart Hall, Tony Bennett, and others. To analyze the representation of Dalits in the context of Nepal, the researchers have applied Hall's concept of culture and representation. Culture is socially constructed, produced, and consumed through language. So representation is possible only through language. So, the researchers imply Hall's concept of discursive approach. Discursive approach is concerned with the effects and consequences of representation-its politics. It focuses how language and representation produce meaning and how knowledge which a particular discourse produces, connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are presented, thought about, practiced and studied (Hall 6). The point is the meaning does not adhere to things, in the world, it is "constructed and produced" (p. 24 as cited in Magarati, 2021, p 129). It is the result of a signifying practice that produces meaning, that makes things mean. Hall broadly defines "representation as the process by which members of a culture use language to produce meaning" (p. 61 as cited in Magarati, p. 129). Similarly, Chris Barker's (2002) claim that "representation is constituted by numbers of ways of looking at the world which are motivated by different purpose and values (p. 2)" is also used as a supporting tool in this research. People are dominated by evil socio-cultural practices in society. Some cultural practices are good whereas some are bad. Some are conscious whereas some are unconscious practices. In this context, the researchers used Eliot's view that "culture for Eliot is far more unconscious than conscious, it cannot be wholly conscious" (as cited in Eagleton, p. 113). On the basis of this statement, Dalits in Nepali societies are dominated and discriminated consciously and unconsciously. Moreover, Hall opines "our culture commonly takes identity to be expressed through the form of representation; identity is an essence that can be signified through signs of taste, beliefs, attitudes and lifestyles." "Identity are wholly social constructions and cannot exist outside of cultural representations that constitutes rather than express identity" (Hall 108qtd. in Magarati 157). Dalit identity has been

constructed by upper caste people and misrepresented so real representation is necessary. Other insights of scholars from India such as Vandana, Ghanshyam, Arora, and Bhatta are imbedded for the analysis. Among many insights related to the representation, the insights appropriate for the representation of Dalits in Nepal are used. As the researchers studied the primary texts, ideas, opinions, and the criticism of writers, researchers and the critics on them, they did not find a comparison and contrast focused in their writings up in the case of Dalit characters, class, and culture. Indeed, this is a research gap for further study. Thus, the researchers explored the similarities and differences between Dalit and non-Dalit writers while presenting the Dalit issues.

Methodology

Researchers studied novels written on the issues of Dalits such as socio-cultural problems, illiteracy, lack of political access, poverty, religious problems, caste discrimination, and untouchable practices which were written both by Dalit and non-Dalit writers. After multiple readings, the researchers selected novels such as *Ko Achut?* which was written by Non-Dalit writer Muktinath Timsena, and *Nay Ghar* (New Home) by Bishowbhakta Dulal, a Dalit writer. The primary texts were selected purposively to explore the similarities and differences between Dalit and non-Dalit writers in the case of characters, class, and culture. To obtain the objective and answer the research questions, the researchers used the library-based qualitative approach, and data were collected from text information and description. After reading the primary texts repeatedly, researchers noted the required information for the analysis. Hall's insights into the "Discursive Approach" is concerned with the effects and consequences of representation-its politics. It focuses how language and representation produce meaning and how knowledge which a particular discourse produces, connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are presented, thought about, practiced and studied (Hall 6). Hall's insight "representation is the process by which members of a culture use language to produce meaning (p. 61)" is used. Similarly, Barker, Foucault, and Indian writers such as Vandana, Ghanshyam, and Arora's ideas are used as supporting tools for analysis and interpretation. To analyze and interpret the data, researchers began with the background of the issue, for the support of issues, they quoted from the texts, and related theories were imbedded and analyzed. After the analyses, they interpreted the issues accordingly. Then researchers concluded with major findings as per the objective and research questions. Similarly, researchers

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listed the major findings and justified the significance of the study following the research ethics.

Result and Discussion

Comparison and Contrast in Writings of Dalit and Non-Dalit Writers

The researchers selected novels such as *Ko Achut* (Who is untouchable? 2011), and *Nay Ghar* (New Home, 2050) to find out the differences between Dalit and non-Dalit writers in terms of presenting Dalit characters, class, and culture. Emphasizing on the physical appearance of Dalit, Timsena's *Ko Achut?* mentions 'it is believed that Dam is mainly grey but Gore is white. His face and the bodily structure are as similar as the Aryan's (p. 2). Indeed the narrator describes the physical appearance of Gore who looks like an Aryan though he is considered a non-Aryan. It is relevant to quote Foucault here that, "power produces knowledge...power and knowledge directly imply one another (p. 318)." The upper caste people in the society are dominant and they create discourse and make it real accordingly. The description is biased because the description of Gore and Ujelee claims that only Aryan girls have the right to be beautiful and boys handsome. What is the basic logic of the difference between Aryan and non-Aryan in terms of physical appearance? The questions like this are raised while reading the physical description of Gore. Similarly, the speaker asserts the opinion of Khagendra Thapa:

Khagendra decides to make Gore his 'Mit' (the ritual friend) and shows a great desire to have food with him on the same plate. His language and accent are not like those of Dam is, sometimes only he tries to mix the accent of Dam i. "Didn't you have such experience?" Khagendra asked Maya. (pp. 3-4)

The description exposes Khagendra's desire to make Gore his ritual friend and to have food on the same plate seems to be artificial because he is from the upper caste ruling class. This shows only the sympathy of Dalits. Sympathy for Dalits is not sufficient in contemporary society but they need true love and respect for their work. Infact, the story shows that Khagendra cannot go against his father's desire who always dominates the marginalized people, especially Dalits. At this backdrop, Magarati (2021) questions, "can it be possible to end the caste discrimination and untouchable practice of dining with Dalits and making ritual friends" (p. 254)? Therefore, socio-cultural transformation is inevitable for the emancipation of Dalits in the context of Nepal.

Likewise, the speaker describes the cause of the physical appearance of Gore, Ujelee, and KhagendraThapa: "Gore ra Ujeleeko sundart parm tm ko den, Khagendrako sundarat m Prakritiko den." "The wonderfully beautiful Ujelee and the handsome Gore were the blessings of deities but the beauty of Khagendra was the gift of nature (pp. 3-6). The description shows that Dalits are beautiful because of deities whereas non-Dalits are beautiful because of nature. This discourse also seems biased. On the other hand, Prakash Rijal's (Kami) physical structure and appearance were described. According to Bishowbhakta Dulal (2050), Prakash was shining like the sun of May, very active and bold. Dulal has compared Prakash with the sun. He has not exaggerated him (p.325). In this context, Chris Barker's (2002) claim is appropriate to implement that, "representation is constituted by numbers of ways of looking at the world which are motivated by different purpose and values" (p. 2). Powerful people create their perceptions about dominant people in society. Here the speaker gives the impression to be prejudiced. In the same way, the narrator appreciates the beauty of Ujelee as: Ujelee is from the Dam i family but she is very pure in her body and soul. She takes a bath every day and wears clean clothes. She encourages other villagers to wear clean clothes. She wants sanitation like other human beings (p. 10). It is good to take a bath and wear clean clothes. Ujelee is living in the Dalit community and she remains tidy and teaches the same thing to other villagers. But it seems unnatural in the Dalit community. How can people manage time for their sanitation that is unable to manage everyday food? Maya further wants Ujelee as her elder sister and Induri as her mother. So she visits them. She shows more love to Ujelee and Induri than the heaven (p. 14). This is her greatness and she loves them even though they are from the Dalit community. The family environment was inconvenient for her even then she supported them.

Consequently, the narration is how Gagane realizes and comes into consciousness that Dalits have been dominated. When Gagane S rki reaches fifty, he realizes the importance of the organization while he is sitting under an orange tree. Thereafter, he decides not to plow the field. Before he was at this age, he was a ploughman and there was not a sense of struggle. He used to listen to the Pur a that was read by pundit Rabilal (p. 36). The portrayal shows the illogical development of the thought process of Gagane. Consciously or unconsciously whatever, Gagane is involved in religious preaching. Here, "culture for Eliot is far more unconscious than conscious, it cannot be wholly conscious" (as cited in Eagleton, p. 113). Gagane's consciousness remains rather

in a dormant state, not completely awakened conscious but rather unconscious. Magarati (2021) raised the question that who taught him to go against exploitation, domination, and caste discrimination. To have such consciousness, one should have either knowledge or friendship with elites. But Gagane neither had formal education, nor companionships with educated people and activists. Despite this, unexpected change occurs in his mind and soul (p. 255). Thus, Gagane's transformation seems unnatural.

Further, Gagane is well-experienced in his work. He asserts that there should be respect for the workers. People who exploit others; the king of that nation is the Yamraj and those who bear the torture are the sinners. It is the philosophy that he realizes in his old age which seems very illogical. He decides to leave his manual work before thinking about an alternative job for him (pp. 54-55). In the Panchayat system, it seems very illogical for a poor Dalit to think in such a way. Once he addresses the big gathering and asserts the importance of the unity of all the working class people, especially Dalits. Indeed, Gagane says "Unless all Dalits unite, they cannot go against the dominant, exploiters and people who humiliate Dalits. Gagane emphasizes that all people should do their work, if they do not obey; they should get punishment (p. 55). In the same way, Maya Thapa asserts that poverty, hunger, and frailty are caused by rich feudal lords and exploiters. They are not others but her family members and relatives. They are the cause of the exploitation of the Dalit community. Maya is confirmed to fight against domination whether they are her family members or not. Unless she eradicates different forms of exploitation, she will not be happy. The revolutionary expression of Maya, the representative character of the upper caste and ruling group is against the rulers (p. 57). Thus, the expression seems to be the fantasy and speculation rather than reality. In the same way, a Gine woman states, in secret everything is pure for the upper caste people, and all untouchables are pure. They stay with Dalits the whole night and do desired things, but the next day they become touchable and untouchables remain the same (p. 70). This is a good logic but not the natural consciousness of the Dalit woman which occurs in contemporary times when there was the rule of the king and Dalits were deprived of raising voice. People from the society started speaking against domination and exploitation to raise their voices for emancipating marginalized Dalits. So, all of them committed to go against untouchable practices and caste discrimination to maintain economic, social, and political equality (pp. 74-84). This perception is from the side of the common people, workers, marginalized, and Dalits but it does not sound suitable at

that time when people were not allowed to speak without restrictions. Magarati (2021) opines that it was a very revolutionary thought that all the representatives of different castes spoke supporting the marginalized and Dalits because they are from the same class. But it seems very imaginative and fantasy-like rather than reality. It can be imagined but not practiced in the society (p. 256). In the same assembly, Maya thanked Gagane for his revolutionary spirit and he was proposed to hold the post of general secretary of the party which also seemed very unnatural for the whole Dalit community (pp. 84-85). It is because such roles are usually assigned to the power holders in the society.

Likewise, the narrator highlights the great change in the nation, as he asserts after some time the government of Nepal Dalit Kisan Majdur (Nepal Dalit, Peasant and Workers' Organization) was established, organizations and the caste system was dissolved. After ten days, Home Minister Gagane S rki announced that Sete Sunar was appointed to the post of Khagendra. The next day Khagendra committed suicide (pp. 98-100). Definitely this seems ridiculous and unnatural because Dalits have not been appointed to such a high political post. It is not necessary that if Dalits are appointed in such posts, no need to replace the non-Dalits from that post.

Nay Ghar (New Home) was written by Bishowbhakta Dulal (Aahuti) in 2050 B.S. and its fifth edition was published in 2073 B.S. The major character in this novel is Surya Thapa. But minor Dalit characters are Mahadev S rki, Lalsingh, and Prakash Rij l (K mi). Although Dulal has not presented Dalits as major characters, those who are presented are active, energetic, bold, and politically conscious. Mahadev S rki who used to be first in the class was a member of the political struggle at the local level under Surya Thapa (p. 96). Similarly, Lalsingh was brought up by a S rki and his wife who were bond laborers in the Thakuri king in Madi. He was left in the temple; no one was ready to bring up him so S rki took him and brought him up as his son as they had no children. S rki had been cultivating the field since the time of Elder Thakuri. When Lalsing was grown up, S rki expressed his desire to send him to school but due to that demand, S rki was killed. When he was ten years old, he visited many places in India like Lakhnow, Delhi, Calcutta, and Asam. He worked in many places but at last, he got married to a girl in Asam. After their daughter's birth, his wife got married to a Bengali boy and chased him away. In Delhi, he was taught to read and write by Marwari's first wife. He returned to Nepal when he was twenty years old and went to Madi where his

father was killed. But he could not stay there for long so he returned to Banaras and started a carefree life. Due to the continuous drinking, and smoking habit, he coughed blood. Some hermits took him to the hospital where he met Kiran, a political cadre. For a month, he was with him and his thinking about life changed (pp. 153-158). A person becomes vigorous and self-confident when s/he is in contact with socializing agents. Lalsingh also becomes assertive after contact with different people and events in his life. Then he returned to Nepal with Kiran and started his struggle against domination as a full-time political cadre. He led Madi struggle successfully where Ram Prasad Sharma, a village leader, was punished for seizing the land and property of Hariman K mi. People were under his torture, exploitation, and physical punishment (p. 128-30 as cited in Magarati, 2021, p. 262). After the punishment, Ram Prasad spoke: "Maile biraye, maile p pgare, mal i gom h ldiye panihuncha, mal i R ptim bag ye panihuncha." 'I made a mistake and sin so put me on the burning fire or draw me in the Rapti River (p. 130). It is suitable to quote Tilak Pariy r that "movement for the Dalit liberation remains incomplete if we do not attach it to the movement for class liberation" (p. 16). Because of the class movement, R m Pras d confesses in front of the public. There was a great mass and people were whispering that it was justice to punish him. They were very happy about his punishment. Lalsingh, the commander of that movement, in his middle age, lost his eyesight even then he was devoted to the marginalized people in society.

PrakashRij l (K mi) was the elder grandson of Hariman K mi. He was with his grandfather and his mother Chameli but his father had been to India. He was thirteen years old and was studying in grade seven. Although Hariman was an uneducated ironsmith, he was conscious of his grandsons' education (p. 119). Next year when Ram Prasad seized their land, there was a big flood in Rew River. That flood continued for a year so Hariman's family was homeless. Moreover, they took shelter in a neighbor's house for six months, but they could not remain longer than this. So they were compelled to make a hut on the bank of the Mugai River. Due to that catastrophe, Prakash and his brother left school. Hariman was too old to work. His mother was a manual worker. His brother started pulling a rickshaw in Narayanghat and he was also working in a garage there. The owner was ruthless so he came to Kathmandu (p. 329). While they were celebrating May Day in 2044, Ram Kumar Rai and Prakash were arrested. Amid the crowd he spoke, 'If the cruel government throws the brick at the public, they should reply with the stone' (pp. 325-26). He is impatient and quick to respond but homeless who has

left the family on the bank of the river and is completely involved as a full-time cadre to the party. He never lost his courage (p. 359). Surya opines about Prakash that: "he was so clever and able that he would escape from the circle of police force at any cost" (p. 404 as cited in Magarati, p. 263).

In May (Chaitra 24), 2046, Prakash was leading the crowd and shouting the slogan, 'Live long Inlab' (p. 412) 'Bire, leave the country' (p. 415) unfortunately a bullet pierced his body and he was badly injured. At last, he spoke "Surya brother I have completed my duty and responsibility. Tell Kiran comrade that a son of untouchable has fought until his death (p. 419)." At this point, Mahanty's (2004) insights are aptly relevant to cite that "class is a politico-economic category referring to a social group embodying certain relation of production. The ruling class or classes are the owner of the means of production (p. 25)." For this injustice, domination, discrimination, and unequal division of mode of production, a Dalit lost his life in the struggle. Prakash also became the victim of the movement. Blood was flowing from his body. Then the doctor declared him dead.

Consequently, Dalit characters are presented differently in Dalit and non-Dalit writings. Jajoria (2017) presents Dalit literature as the voice of an oppressed community seeking justice for centuries in the name of caste. Dalit writers claim that it is necessary to have a Dalit identity to be a Dalit writer as they believe that Dalit literature is "lived literature." At this backdrop, the Dalit characters Gagane S rki, Gore Dam i, and Ujeele Damini in Timsena's novel *Ko Achut?*, portrayed by non-Dalit writer are always negative or merely sympathetic (p. 206). There is no major character in this novel from the Dalit community. Gagane S rki is presented as a subordinate to Maya Thapa. Here Dalit characters are presented as very weak, pathetic, and the subject of sympathy. Maya Thapa and Khagendra Thapa have sympathy for them. They do not evaluate their skill, creativity, and work but only beauty. Furthermore, their physical appearance is presented as they are like the Aryans. The writer claims, that Dalits are moderate in color but they are white. Thus, this representation is not fair when the narrator says that the beauty of Gore and Ujeele is due to the blessing of God whereas the beauty of Khagendra is the cause of nature (pp. 3-6). In contrast, Prakash K mi, in *Nay Ghar*, is described naturally that he was like the shining sun of May (p. 325).

Dalit literature is the voice of all oppressed communities who challenge the rigidity of the caste system and demand equality. Both Dalit writers and non-Dalit writers

have written about Dalit lives. There is a difference in the writings of Dalit and non-Dalit writers which can be captured through sympathy and empathy. A Dalit critic, Neha Arora, states that "it is enough to say that any piece of literature is Dalit literature which concerns Dalits and which is inspired by the Dalit Movement" (p. 161). Infact, there is not an example of the Dalit movement and punishment given by Gagane to the dominant group of people and exploiters in *Ko Achut?* On the contrary, in *Nay Ghar*, Prasad, and Lalsing were involved in the struggle of Madi and punished Ram Prasad Sharma who was seizing public as well as private property especially that of Hariman K mi (pp. 128-134). Further, Prakash fought against the Indian factory owner and punished him for not paying his salary (pp. 319-23).

Furthermore, Dhangle (1992) claims that "it is not necessary to be a Dalit to write Dalit literature." On the other hand, Sharatchandra Muktiboth writes about the Dalit consciousness that produces Dalit literature as he opines, "an outstanding work of Dalit literature would be born only when Dalit life would present itself from the Dalit point of view" (p. 267). Certain Dalit writers and critics like Kardam and Bhatt (2011) claim that literature written by non-Dalit writers is caste biased. They charge that non-Dalit writers cannot represent reality as a Dalit writer can do. It is interesting to note that in most of the works of non-Dalit writers, Dalit protagonists fail to fight against the system and are portrayed by the authors as victims who can never bring change. However, Gagane S rki fails to fight against the cruelty and domination. But Lalsing S rki and Prakash Rij l (K mi) fight against the domination and get success in the struggle.

Dulal, a Dalit activist and writer from the Dalit community has experienced pain, anguish, suffering, and torture from the state power structure whereas Timsena is from the upper caste and has observed the domination, suffering, and hunger of Dalits but he does not have the similar experience as Dalits. In the words of Ghanshyam (2011), "Dalit Literature is the literature written by Dalits in which they have expressed their pain and anguish. The non-Dalit writers who write about Dalits could not come under the category of Dalit writers because they do not represent the true Dalit consciousness" (p. 92). In Dalit literature, there should be realistic descriptions and the depiction of reality should be trustworthy. There should be gradual development and growth in characters' physical, mental, and political aspects then only that can be reliable as we see in Lalsing S rki and Prakash K mi, in *Nay Ghar* on the other hand Gagane S rki, in *Ko Achut?*, shows unnatural, unexpected and unbelievable development. Change occurs in him without

reading, writing, life-long experience, political awareness, and social service (Magarati, 2021, p. 267).

Another critic Vandna Bhatt opines "Anubhava (experience) takes precedence over anum na (speculation) in writing Dalit Literature. Dalit writers can paint the picture of Dalit life in a balanced, realistic, and critical manner (p. 119)." However, the political progress, the post of General Secretary, and at last the post of home minister of Gagane S rki seems to be only speculation. Moreover, Gagane carries the principles of humanism and socialism but he is not presented as an activist in the field. In contrast, Lalsing and Prakash are presented as practical activists. They enact their principle in society. So far as the presence of the Dalit protagonist is concerned, Dulal fails to create the Dalit protagonist. Even the subordinate character Prak sh dies during the struggle. Umed Singh also opines that non-Dalit writers can write about Dalits but they could not capture the anguish born out of the unjust social system based on caste and class inequalities (p. 121). Similarly, Kardam asserts by quoting Ramnika Gupta that "only ash knows the experience of burning" (Agarwal, p. 176). As the majority of Dalit writers believe that only they can truly voice their agony and suffering. In the same way, Gagane S rki appears in the narration when he is twenty-five years old but does not narrate about his family and relatives. He replaces his father and ploughs Rabil l's field. His relationship is also limited to an old woman and later to his beloved Sumitr (Rabilal pundit's wife). Unexpectedly he awakens at the age of fifty and realizes his situation without prior details except his listening Pur na (as cited in Magarati, p. 268).

In contrast, L lsing and Prak sh K mi are social. They are presented as dynamic characters. They have relations with all the groups of people. Brought up in S rki's house, L lsing stayed in Madi for ten years. After S rki's death, he goes to India. He roams with hermits, prostitutes, and loafers there. He gets married in Asam and returns to Nepal when he is twenty years old. He meets Kiran, a mature person in politics whose principle changes him. Similarly, Prak sh, a literate boy gets tortured at an early age which teaches him to struggle. He moves to different places in the country reaches Narayanghad and starts a job in a garage. He is not satisfied there and moves to Kathmandu and starts a job in a factory in Basbari. He gradually develops because of life events like Lalsing.

In *Ko Achut?*, Timsena has presented Gagane S rki as a minor character who depends on Maya Thapa and works with her support. It has presented the picture of

Nepali society that culture influences human life especially that of Dalits. Indeed, they are compelled to live a very miserable life because of caste discrimination and untouchable practices. The novel has presented that poor, marginalized, and Dalits should unite and go together for class struggle. The novelist presents the Nepali society in 2011 B.S. But there is not a Dalit protagonist. The change that occurs in Gagane by listening to Pur a is unbelievable and irrelevant. First of all, it exposes the inter-caste and intra-caste untouchable practices, at last, all the people from the society promise to unite and go against the domination. Instead of struggling against domination, discrimination, oppression, and suppression of upper caste rulers such as Devendra Thapa, Dan Bir Rana, and Pundit Rabil I, he becomes a home minister at once, and the novel ends. It is like fantasy. Gagane becomes the leader and general secretary but readers get no minimum information regarding how he is awakened to the consciousness of caste, untouchable practice, and class (as cited in Magarati, p. 270). Hall (1997) opines that meaning does not adhere to things, in the world, it is "constructed and produced" (p. 24). It is the result of a signifying practice that produces meaning, that makes things mean. In the context of Nepal, there will be justice for Dalits and marginalized people when they are exposed as they have been facing socio-cultural issues due to the social structure constructed by the rulers.

Conclusions

The research concludes by exploring the similarities and differences in the representation in Dalit characters, class and culture of both Dalit and non-Dalit writers novels. Both writers raised the voices of marginalized people and encouraged them to unite through a single organization for the class struggle. They prioritized the class struggle sidelining the evil cultural issues of Dalits in the context of Nepal. Neither of them has given the main role to the Dalit characters. But they differ in representing Dalit characters. Timsena in *KoAchut?* presents Dalit characters as sympathetic, dependent, weak, and less revolutionary. Moreover, Timilsena presents that Dalit characters get sympathy more than true love from the upper caste people. There is more speculation rather than reality in the sense that Gagane without any supportive evidence stops ploughing the field as he becomes general secretary first and then home minister. Similarly, during that time all the people were raising their voices against the power structure which seems to be fantasy rather than reality. Indeed, Timsena fails to create a revolutionary, active, independent, and confident main Dalit character rather dependent

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on Maya Thapa. He focuses only on the class struggle forgetting cultural aspects of Dalits and the upper caste people. In the same way, Dulal in *Nay Ghar* emphasizes the communist struggle against the power structure sidelining the issues of Dalits. Likewise, he fails to create a main Dalit character. Prakash is revolutionary but he dies before the end of the struggle. However, he has focused more on the class struggle than the Dalit problems. The representation of Dalit characters in *Ko Achut?* is not fair as the narrator claims that the beauty of Gore and Ujeelee is due to the blessing of God whereas the beauty of Khagendra is the cause of nature (pp. 3-6). In contrast, Prakash, in *Nay Ghar*, is described naturally that he was like the shining sun of May (p. 325). There is not any example of the Dalit movement and punishment given by Gagan to the dominant group of people and exploiters in *Ko Achut?* On the contrary, in *Nay Ghar*, Prakash, and Lalsing involved in the struggle of Madi and punished Ram Prasad Sharma who usurped private property especially that of Hariman K mi (pp. 128-134). Further, Prakash fought against the Indian factory owner and punished him for not paying his salary (pp. 319-23). In conclusion, both writers have represented Dalit and non-Dalit characters differently. The common point is, they have raised the issue of class struggle.

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