

## **Concern for Rights and Identity in Nepal: A Rhetorical Analysis of Nepali Indigenous Leaders' Speeches**

Hira Man Tamang\*

*ECEC Innovation in Education, Lalitpur, Nepal*

### **Abstract**

Rhetoric has the power to unite, divide, and liberate the people. However, Nepali indigenous leaders and activists often lack the skills to effectively use rhetorical language, despite possessing some competencies in rhetoric. This article aims to present some rhetorical ideas and skills to indigenous leaders and activists, enabling the indigenous people to benefit. To illustrate the point, this paper analyses the rhetoric of four indigenous activists who advocate for the rights and identity of indigenous people in Nepal. The speeches of Kiwahang Limbu, Dawa Tamang, Pasang Sherpa, and Rajesh Chaudhary have been used as the primary data for analysis. These speeches have been analysed based on Aristotle's concept of Logos, Ethos, and Pathos, Toulmin's model of Argument Claim, Ground, Warrant, Backing, Modifiers, and Rebuttal, and Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of CDA. The study found that the Indigenous people could receive limited rights and experience their identity because of their leaders' limited understanding and skills in rhetoric.

*Keywords:* identity-politics, indigenous, logos, rhetoric

### **Introduction**

This paper identifies and analyses the rhetorical devices in the speeches of indigenous leaders in Nepal who work to seek rights and identity. Moreover, it identifies and analyses indigenous leaders' rhetorical successes and failures. Indigenous nationalities have been marginalized due to political upheavals for many years, and this remains the case today (Lahurnip, 2018). They are backward and lagging because of the ruler's oligarchy, discrimination, and exploitation by the state on bureaucracy, language, culture, religion, education, and land (Tamang, 2019). Despite their resistance against the state in various forms like arms, strikes and movement, the state is repressing them in different forms like armed force, laws, taxes, discrimination and nepotism. Although indigenous people demanded and fought for their rights, they could receive limited

rights compared with what they demanded, and sacrificed their lives due to their leaders' limited understanding, knowledge, and skills in rhetoric. Indigenous people's bottom-line was federal provinces with the right to autonomy and self-determination in Nepal (Bhattachan, 2012; Rosling, 2024).

The indigenous leaders and people were confused in their demands because of different concepts and terminologies such as nation, nationalities, caste, ethnicity, state, identity politics, and sovereignty (Kandangwa, 2017; Pandey, 2024; Sherpa, 2009). They became divided into many factions, groups and political parties. Some people used 'caste-based state' as the slogan because of their limited understanding. As a result, the state and the elites got the opportunity to silence and repress them in the name of the undivided state, patriotism and sovereignty (Lawoti & Hangen, 2013). It seems that they failed in 'Kairos' because Nepali indigenous and non-indigenous people had a low level of understanding of the significance of 'federal provinces' after nationalities in Nepal (Miller, 2024). It created fear of the possibility of ethnic conflicts in Nepal.

The indigenous leaders and activists have limited experiences and competencies in rhetoric like 'logos', 'ethos', 'pathos', and communication skills because they had difficulty convincing the people as they claimed. Instead of uniting people, their slogans- 'caste-based state' and "Federal System with Identity, Constitution with Federal System" divided even the indigenous people and created confusion and fear among them (DRCN, 2023). Instead of dividing and blaming one another, they could be united themselves and collaborate with Dalits, marginalized, and minority communities, and fight for their rights and identity. Moreover, they became self-centred in their movements for an ethnic-based state and identity. They failed to raise and address the issues of marginalized, oppressed, minority groups, such as Muslims, Dalits, Thami, Baram, Ghale, and Christians, and represent them (Lawoti, 2012). Their well-wishers, like intellectuals, journalists, and human rights activists, also left them because they had a challenge convincing them, and their slogan posed a threat to them. Moreover, rulers became more strategic and oppressive towards Indigenous people. Consequently, they were more victimized because their rights had been cut off, rather than receiving more.

## **Research Questions**

These issues indicate that rhetoric has power and plays a significant role in liberating people from injustice, exploitation, and the hegemony of rulers if the rhetors can utilise their rhetorical strategies effectively. Moreover, it implies that rhetorical knowledge and skills need to be sharpened and utilized effectively and efficiently as a tool for demanding, bargaining, receiving, and restoring identity and rights. So, it demands an in-depth study to analyse and show the rhetorical success and failure in Indigenous leaders' speeches, and imply improvements. The following research questions have been asked to carry forward this study:

1. What rhetorical devices did the Indigenous Leaders utilize in their speeches to subvert the rulers' subjugation and discourses?
2. How do the Indigenous Leaders utilize rhetorical devices in their speeches to receive rights and identity in Nepal?

## **Rhetoric: Dimensions and Dynamics**

Aristotle, the father of rhetoric, defines rhetoric as the art of persuasion. It is an art that is used to persuade the audience. Likewise, the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) says that “the art of using language to persuade or influence others; the body of rules to be observed by a speaker or writer so that he may express himself with eloquence.” Andrews (2013) argues that these traditional definitions of rhetoric are inadequate, inappropriate, and outdated in the twenty-first century. The Aristotelian function of rhetoric was limited to persuasion and influence on the audience, which does not encompass the full range of rhetoric in this multimodal world. Today, the meaning and function of rhetoric has been widened because it covers a wide range of functions of communication, such as informing, clarifying, delighting, and so on. He adds that a speaker or writer has been replaced by the notion of a “rhetor”, “maker”, or “composer”. The outdated conception of rhetoric was only a catalogue of persuasive techniques. Today, in addition to speaking and writing, rhetoricians are utilizing a wider range of resources, including images, moving images, gestures, and choreographed movements. That is why rhetoric has become multimodal, not only monomodal. Composer is the generally applicable term for rhetor, writer, speaker, designer, and artist, who are also used to denote a rhetor, which is more specific and appropriate.

### **Components of Rhetoric**

Aristotle states that rhetoric needs to have three components: logos, ethos, and pathos (Braet, 1992; Roberts, 2014). In short, logos are the argument, rational explanation, data, and evidence that convince people of the content. Likewise, ethos refers to the credibility, trust, reputation, and authenticity of the author, which makes the audience more likely to listen to the speech. Pathos is an appealing technique that creates emotion in the audience, thereby connecting with and convincing the people. This paper has analysed the rhetorical triangle in indigenous leaders' speeches. Moreover, Toulmin et al. (1984) have given an argument model which consists of claim, ground, warrant, backing, qualifier, and rebuttal. Where claim is the statement of the speaker who asks the audience to accept the truth or tell the truth. The ground is reason, data, fact, and proof behind the claim. The warrant links the data and other grounds to legitimize the claim. Backing is the additional support to the warrant. The qualifier is the strengths and limitations of the claim. The rebuttal is the counterargument that directly responds to the opponent's argument. This paper has employed this argument model to analyse the indigenous leader's speeches. Likewise, Booth (2009) presents rhetorical skill as an unethical 'rhetrickery' which betrays and misleads the audience. He has categorized the rhetoric into three groups: "Win-Rhetoric" (WR), "Bargain-Rhetoric" (BR), and "Listening-Rhetoric" (LR). WR tries to win the argument at any cost. Here, the rhetor proves and justifies that his/ her argument is right by using all means. BR is a diplomatic type of argument where a rhetor speaks in a diplomatic manner, presenting the results and consequences of accepting their point. Likewise, LR is a rarely used rhetoric that is based on Steven Covey's idea (Covey & Covey, 2020). It says first seek to understand, then to be understood. He encourages trying to be an empathetic listener, understanding the issue, and solving the problem in mutual understanding and harmony. Indigenous leaders' speeches have been analysed for whether WR, BR, and LR.

### **Political Rhetoric**

Martin (2013) provides a method of analysing any political speech, including 1) the rhetorical context, 2) the rhetorical argument, and 3) the rhetorical effects. He explains it by giving the example of Kennedy's speech. The rhetorical context is the time and place of speech. It is similar to Kairos, as Sullivan (1992) argues in his paper.

It is all about the right timing of the speech. It addresses the questions of who the audience is, what the situation is, and what the historical context is. The rhetorical argument is the content of the speech. It is all about the proper preparation and delivery of a speech. Likewise, the rhetorical effects refer to the short- and long-term impact of the speech on the audience, which motivates and compels them to work towards change. This paper analyzes how indigenous leaders use their speeches to educate and equip both indigenous and non-indigenous people. Dias and Paiva (2005) argue that emotion is stronger than reasoning, which guides people's reasoning behaviours and learning. Martin (2013) argues that rhetors or politicians play with people's emotions in a democracy. He further states that rhetors manipulate, create, and appeal to people's feelings and sentiments, inspiring audiences to agree with them and act as they want. It is a similar type of rhetorical strategy with 'pathos', which forces the people to move as the rhetor says. In this research, the study has examined how indigenous leaders can appeal to and manipulate people's feelings and emotions, motivating them to seek their rights and identity in Nepal. Moreover, this paper analyzes the Indigenous leaders' rhetoric through Aristotle's concepts of Logos, Ethos, and Pathos, and Toulmin's model of argument, which serves as the point of departure in this study.

### **Research Methods**

This study employed the qualitative interpretive design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This is a literature-based research study, grounded in a literature review (Cohen et al., 2013). The literature review research is regarded as a search and evaluation of the available literature on a given subject or chosen topic area. Four Nepali indigenous leaders: The speeches of Sherpa, Limbu, Chaudhary, and Tamang have been taken as the primary sources. These speeches have been analysed in light of the rhetorical devices of Logos, Ethos and Pathos pioneered by Aristotle; Toulmin's model of argument, Claim, Ground, Warrant, Backing, Modifiers and Rebuttal (Braet, 1992; Roberts, 2014; Toulmin et al., 1984). Likewise, the speeches have been analyzed based on Fairclough's three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis: description of the text, the process of production, and the interpretation of the text, along with an explanation of the power relations and struggles in the social context (Fairclough, 2013a, 2013b). The ethical consideration has been maintained by pseudonymizing the real names of the indigenous activists.

## **Results and Discussion**

The qualitative data were generated by transcribing the speeches of purposively selected indigenous leaders. The transcribed data was categorized into different themes based on Aristotle's rhetorical triangle: logos, ethos, and pathos, and Toulmin's model of argument consists of six components: Claim, Ground, Warrant, Backing, Modifiers, and Rebuttal. Similarly, Fairclough's three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis (CDA) has been employed for the in-depth study of the rhetoric of indigenous leaders' speeches. Firstly, logos, ethos, and pathos were analysed in which logos denotes the content, reasoning, facts, and evidence, ethos means the credibility, trustworthiness, and authenticity of the rhetor, and pathos stands for motivating the audience by triggering their emotions, values, and beliefs, and calling them to action. Secondly, Toulmin model's six components of argument have been used to analyse the speeches. The indigenous leaders' claim, evidence, and facts to support their claim, the connection between claim and evidence, additional support for the connection between claim and evidence, and the use of qualifiers to strengthen the claim and counter arguments have been explored and analyzed in the texts. Similarly, the speeches have been analysed through the perspective of Fairclough's three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis (CDA); description of text, the process of production and interpretation of the text, and explanation of the power relations and struggle in the social context. Hence, three methods have been triangulated to enhance the validity and credibility of the study, have a deeper understanding and analysis of the complexity of the issue from multiple dimensions.

### **Analysis of Indigenous Leaders' Speeches (Argument) in Search of Rights and Identity**

Logos, one of the devices of Aristotelian rhetoric, appeals to the audience through logical reasoning, facts, and evidence (McCormack, 2014). Without the proper use of logos, the rhetors lack credibility, and the speech can be weak and shallow to convince the audience. Pasang Sherpa has some written papers in his hand while delivering his speech. It shows that he has prepared his speech well. He quotes from the Constitutions in Nepal, Harka Gurung's book, Rammani Dikshit and indigenous national song as references. He presents data as a backup for his argument and explains it in detail. He argues that indigenous nationalities have been marginalized and

dominated by rulers in Nepal. He articulates that the constitutions and laws have been written in favour of rulers. The indigenous nationalities have been marginalized because of the constitution and laws. He gives an example of Japanese people and their children to sensitize the indigenous people into their identity. He narrates the story of the Japanese people's suffering:

While explaining about Nagasaki, seventy/eighty-year-old people cry. Old people explain about the bomb blasting in Nagasaki with tears. When we asked the students nearby Nagasaki to explain about it, they also wept like those 70/ 80 years people. Why? Because Nagasaki's history was written in their textbook.

Sherpa is reasoning why indigenous students hesitate to take part in the movement and he gives the example of Japanese people to motivate them. He argues that Japanese people and students cry while sharing their history because their history has been written in their textbooks. However, the history of indigenous people has been erased in Nepal. Subsequently, indigenous people and their children have a limited understanding of their history. Hence, he argues that indigenous people are marginalized because of the system and laws of the state, not because of their incapability.

Kiwahang Limbu reports how indigenous people have been dominated by rulers in Nepal. He appeals to his audience to be united and fight against rulers' exploitation. Specifically, he sensitizes the Newa people and appeals to them to fight for identity and rights. He gives many examples of how Newa and Tamang people have been victimized by rulers in Nepal. He says:

Newa people's land has been encroaching by the outer ring road. Newar's land has been encroached on by Tribhuvan University. Hayat Hotel encroached Tamang people's land. Today, migrated apes and monkeys are living there as bosses.

He reports that many Newa and Tamang people have been displaced in the name of development. Rulers have been encroaching on indigenous people's land one by one. He argues for the significance of naming the provinces after indigenous nationalities. If the provinces are named after indigenous nationalities, they will be dignified and the state will be strong. He concludes his speech by urging the Newa people to be awakened, be united and fight for identity and rights.

Dawa Tamang is one of the indigenous leaders who has a significant role in the Indigenous movement and identity politics in Nepal. He has good rhetorical skills in terms of logos. He cites the Constitution of Nepal, UNDRIP, and different treaties which made his argument (logos) powerful and convincing to his audiences. He reminds the rulers that the king was chased away through the people's movement in 2062/2063 B.S. He urges the rulers to be sincere in indigenous people's issues:

I urge you if according to Sub-Article 1 of Article 138 of the Interim Constitution of Nepal, Madhesi and Indigenous people's demand for autonomous provinces have not been addressed and if you do not implement the agreement with us, you need to remember, movement occurred in Madhesh, where did the rulers go? Did they run away or not?

He warns that if they deny their demand, the rulers' condition will be as in Terai where rulers have been chased away. New leaders and political parties have been raised in Madhesh. If all the nations have been given the right of self-determination and autonomy, it unites the people and makes the state strong. This is how Tamang created and used logos, a rhetorical device in his speech to set free the indigenous people from the inhuman activities of rulers and refute the rulers' rhetorical weapons.

Rajesh Chaudhary delivered that speech using "logos" in his speech in a Tharu people's programme where they were about to start the movement. Although he presented limited data, he used the poetic language, Tharu people's mother tongue, songs, idioms, symbols, metaphors, and myths as logos which makes his speech excellent and effective in convincing the Tharu people of his point. He refutes the critics and opponents of the Tharu people's movement, identity and rights by showing the national flag and map of Nepal painted on a volunteer's face. He says:

The flag in front of our stage is Nepali or not? One of the volunteer brothers has painted the flag of Nepal on his face. This is the Tharu People's movement. Is not the Nepali to paint the flag of Nepal in the Tharu movement? We want to make it clear that we are Nepali. We are self-respectful Nepali people. We are the indigenous people of this country. We are not fake. We are genuine Nepali people. What we are doing, for what we are gathering? Many people are trying to catch the fish in muddy water.

He is using symbols and metaphors in his speech, which makes the people easy to understand. They could argue that Tharu people are genuine Nepali people who want to self-respectful life. Likewise, he used simple rhythmic language, which is easy to understand. Then he used the myth to convince his audiences. He says:

Uncle Shakuni is using a deceiving trick. ... Shakuni Uncle's game-Mahabharat's game is being continued today also. Bhatta's nephew humbly requested to uncle. What is the way forward? How to protect the undivided far western?

He used mythical characters as metaphors for political leaders which made his speech interesting. It shows that he has good rhetorical skills; logos to convince the people of his point. Although he has been able to convince his people how they were discriminated against and dominated, he uses limited data and facts.

### **Credibility in Indigenous Leaders' Speech**

'Ethos' is considered as the image, credibility, and trustworthiness of rhetors (Herman, 2022). The ethos demands moral integrity, character, expertise, experience, professionalism and competencies to build trust and goodwill from the speakers. While analysing the Indigenous leaders' speeches, it was found that they have limitedly used 'ethos' in their speeches. Although they have delivered excellent speeches with logos, enough explanations, data, and examples, they seem weak in creating ethos. Whatsoever, some of them have used it in their speech. Limbu starts his speech with who he is and how he is an authentic and credible person to talk about the Indigenous movement:

Movements have been continuously going on for 15 to 20 years in the far-east [Nepal]. As a chairperson of that movement; greetings from Kumar Lingden, Jojoloppa! Lhasso! Fyafulla! Sewaro! Namste! Jay Limbuwan! Jay Newa! Jay Tamangsaling! Jay Khasan! Jay Khambuwan!

It shows that Limbu wants his people to listen to him and understand what he is sharing. He attracts people's attention. He is aware of his audience, but he is not so much familiar with them. So, he introduces himself and shares about his participation in the movement which builds trust in him. Moreover, he is telling his audiences that he is a capable and educated leader, who can lead the people in the right direction. People

see how much their leader is responsible and accountable which develops trust in them. He articulates;

I am the chairperson of Limbuwan. If Limbus say to separate the Limbuwan from Nepal, I will say Limbuwan is not allowed to separate from Nepali but Limbu and Limbuwani people should receive the right.

It indicates that he is taking responsibility for the indigenous people's movement. He assures people that the indigenous people's movement, the federal system, and the right to autonomy and self-determination do not separate the country. These examples show that he is aware of creating ethos as a leader.

### **Pathetic Portrayal of Indigenous People**

Pathos is regarded as something that arouses emotions, values and beliefs of audience and engage them in a particular mission and task (Kastely, 2004). A rhetor can be connected with the audience, motivate them and call for action by making them emotional. Four indigenous leaders aggressively delivered their speeches. They put forward a compelling argument with many examples, stories, idioms, and indigenous languages. The data shows that they are good at arousing emotions (pathos) in the audience. Chaudhary uses local dialects, metaphors, songs, and idioms to arouse pathos in his audiences. Sherpa uses humour and stories to arouse pathos in his audiences. He tells a funny story to his audiences to share and raise awareness of indigenous people. He says:

Today whatever I shared with you; I humbly request you please keep on sharing with others from today. Share with 10 people in this meeting about it. Share with husband at the time of sleeping. Share at the time of lunch. Dear youths and friends, share about at the time of dating. Raise awareness even at the time of dating. Slowly spread it throughout the world. Share about our issues and our movements.

It shows that he is intentionally using funny language to make his audience laugh. He is creating pathos for his audiences and convincing them to share about Indigenous people's movements. Likewise, he tells a story of indigenous women who were inhumanely raped and killed by rulers. He shares:

If you listen to the wall carefully, you will hear the crying and shouting of young girls. That is the crying of our sisters who were raped by rulers. If they got

pregnant, they used to be burnt alive and buried inside those palaces. That is crying of them. Have you ever understood the discriminatory history?

It shows that he wants to arouse the emotions and awaken the indigenous people through telling stories. Such examples indicate that Sherpa is trying to establish pathos in his audience.

Limbu tells stories and metaphors to evoke pathos in his audiences. He portrays the Newa people's condition in previous days and today to stir them up against the rulers' domination and exploitation. He shares:

Before 25 to 30 years ago, here we used to call the Newas 'sahuji'. The majority of Newas were rich. Today when I use a taxi, usually meet Newas as taxi drivers. I talk with them and ask. They replied to me that they had land, road encroached on it, at last we sold the rest of the land and bought a taxi. Hence, a large number of Newa people are going to be landless and slum-area people. This state is trying to do it.

It indicates that he is trying to create pathos for the Newa people. He tells the story of how they are going to be landless and poor due to the rulers' domination and suppression. Tamang depicts the pathetic condition of indigenous people, warns the rulers and encourages his audiences to fight for rights and identity. He reports and warns:

I want to warn you. If you kept on suppressing, betraying and dominating us, we were running away from you. Afterwards, we do not have a place to run away. We are turned towards you. If you tried to lie again to us, we are ready to capture the Singh Palace, not only the Constitution Assembly.

This statement shows a clear picture of Indigenous people who were running away from rulers in the past. Rulers were suppressing them by all means and strategies. It implies that Tamang is trying to encourage his people to assert their rights and identity in a more assertive and aggressive manner.

### **Analysis of Indigenous Leaders' Speeches through Toulmin's Model of Argumentation**

The Toulmin model is a renowned framework of argument, reasoning, and communication which can be utilized to analyse the effectiveness of speeches (Toulmin et al., 1984). Claim, ground, warrant, backing, qualifiers, and rebuttal have been

identified and analysed in the selected speeches. It is identified that Sherpa has argued strongly while analysing his speech through Toulmin's model of argument. All the components of the argument have been identified in Sherpa's speech. He argues that indigenous people have been marginalized because of biased constitutions and laws, not their inability. Likewise, Indigenous youths, students and women are reluctant to get involved in the indigenous movement. It can be taken as the ground for his argument. Likewise, he talks about rulers' physical, sexual, financial, linguistic, political, environmental, cultural, and political discrimination and domination of Indigenous people. It can be taken as a warrant. He tells some of the stories regarding how indigenous people were exploited by rulers. It is identified as the backing or support of the warrant. Then he uses the word 'only', which denotes the qualifier; a component of the argument. Sherpa has established up rebuttal sufficiently, making the argument against counter-argument. For example:

While talking about Bramhan-Chhetri, some intellectuals say that you also should study like Bramhan and Chhetri, and should be clever like Bramhan-Chhetri, why do you be jealous of Bramhan-Chhetri? Instead of scolding Bahun-Chhetri, it would be better to educate your children. Why don't you go to school and enrol your children?

It seems that Sherpa is aware and well-known about rebuttals and succeeds in establishing a rebuttal in his argument. He argues to the counter-argument of rulers and their people that indigenous people are not marginalized and backward because of only illiteracy and laziness. They are in pathetic condition because of different forms of discrimination, biased laws and systems.

Chaudhary explains that Tharu people have been discriminated against and betrayed by the rulers and their people and they want to live self-respectably. His claim is one of the components of the argument. He said that undivided far western is going to be given to the rulers' people bypassing the Tharu people and their demands. It is the ground of his argument. He presents many examples such as the police mistreating them, and political leaders forgetting their earlier promises of giving a federal state to the Tharu people. It can be taken as the warrant for his argument. To support his warrant, he asks the question is there a representation of Tharu people in the police? It is an example of discrimination towards the Tharu people. Although he did not use

qualifiers in his argument, he used rebuttals in his speech. He argues against the counter-arguments that Tharu people are using the national flag of Nepal. He clearly explains that Tharus are not separating Nepal, they want to live a self-respectful life.

Limbu's argument consists of a claim, ground, warrant, backing, qualifier and rebuttal. He says that the Newa people have been suppressed by the state, and they should awaken and fight for their rights and identity. It is a claim in his argument or speech. He gives many examples and tells many stories about how Newa people have been dominated. He says that the Newa people's land has been encroached by the state in the name of developmental works. This is the ground of his argument. He shares the findings of his observation and says that Newa people have been recruited only for low-paying jobs at Tribhuvan University. Newa people's land was taken for the University. It can be said as a warrant for his argument. He shares that twenty-five and thirty years ago, Newa people were called 'Sahuji' because they were rich. Today many of them have become drivers. It is backed in his speech. Moreover, he is aware of opponents, rulers and their people's fallacious arguments. He explains that indigenous people are demanding their rights and identity; they are not demanding a separate state (country) in Nepal. He assures that whoever demands a separate state in Nepal, indigenous people oppose them and fight against them. Although he did not use the qualifiers, he used the rest of the components of the argument.

Tamang's speech consists of most of the components of the argument. He argues that rulers should address indigenous people's demands and issues. The state should give the right to autonomous and self-determined traditional territory as their federal provinces. It is his claim in his argument. He shares that Nepal is a multi-national, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious country. The state should not separate the nationalities in the multi-national country. If the state does so, the state would not be strong. That is why Indigenous nationalities should have rights. It is the ground in Tamang's argument. According to the Interim Constitution of Nepal, International law, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and an agreement between Indigenous Nationalities and the Government of Nepal, indigenous nationalities should have autonomous and self-determine provinces which need to be named after their nationalities. It is the warrant of his argument. Although he did not use 'qualifiers' in his speech, he used 'rebuttal' very well. He gives a powerful

counterargument to the rulers and their people's argument. He asserts that rulers and their people question the patriotism of Indigenous nationalities and blame them as separatists while talking about Indigenous nationalities' rights and identity. He questions the rulers on how they can question the patriotism of patriotic Indigenous people.

In this way, Indigenous leaders are good in their argument because they have used almost all the components of Toulmin's model of argument. They are good at their claim, ground, warrant, backing and rebuttal. It seems that they could use qualifiers in their argument.

### **Analysis of Indigenous Leaders' Speech through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

Indigenous leaders' speeches have been analysed through the three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis: description (text analysis), interpretation (processing analysis) and explanation (social analysis) (Fairclough, 2013a, 2013b). The data indicate that the indigenous leaders maintained the 'intertextuality' by quoting references from the different texts in their speeches for credibility and authenticity. Similarly, they maintained the 'interdiscursivity' by using both formal and informal language to increase the gravity and to build the connection with audiences respectively (Statham, 2022).

#### ***Description Level (Textual/ Linguistic) Analysis of the Indigenous Leaders' Speech***

**Word Choice.** The indigenous leaders' word choice reflects their resistance and struggle against the rulers and unjust systems, their identity politics, and their summons for unity and solidarity. They used the words of resistance and struggle in their speeches like raise, voice, right, powerful, powerless, dominate, domination, kicking, dropping, protest, self-governed, mass, and morcha. It demonstrates how much they are committed and passionate about their identity, resistance, and struggle against the rulers and their unjust and unfair systems. Similarly, they use words related to identity and rights, and unity and solidarity, like Jojoloppa, Lhasso, Fyafulla, Sewaro, Namste, Limbuwan, Newa, Lhosar, and Friends. It shows how much they are desperate for their identity, culture, and history, and their longing for unity and solidarity in the struggle against the rulers, exploitation, and discrimination.

**Grammar and Sentence Structure.** The analysis of grammar and syntactic structure reveals the power relations in CDA. Active and passive sentences, repetition of

phrases, clauses. and sentence patterns, imperative, and questions can be identified and analyzed to reveal the struggles between the different forces.

**Active and Passive Sentences.** This study found that the indigenous leaders used both active and passive sentences, for example, "Federal system has been brought to connect the people of this country, not to divide the people." This is one of the examples of how the indigenous leaders' oratory using soft and diplomatic language. Such language helps to connect and empower the people. Likewise, they use active sentences like "I want to urge the Chhetri-Bahun friends whose forefathers sold the country", and "Bahun leaders used to come in winning places. Indigenous people were sent to losing places." These active sentences indicate the rhetorical failure of Indigenous leaders because this sort of powerful language can hurt and offend people.

**Repetition for emphasis.** This study found that indigenous leaders used the strategy of repetition to emphasize their points and strengthen their arguments. For example:

They give a holiday in the name of the dog. They give a holiday in the name of a cow. They give a holiday in the name of the crowd. They give a holiday in the name of the snake. Then at the time of the Sakela celebration, we need to apply to the home ministry to request a holiday.

This example indicates that indigenous leaders' strategy of repetition may contribute to receiving the right to holidays in the festivals of Indigenous people.

**Imperative sentences to call the people for action.** The data shows that the indigenous leaders used imperative sentences to empower, raise awareness and call the indigenous people for resistance against the rulers and the unjust system. For example:

Share with 10 people in this meeting about it. Share with husband at the time of sleeping. Share at the time of lunch. Dear youths and friends, share about at the time of dating. Raise awareness even at the time of dating. Slowly spread it throughout the world. Share about our issues and our movements.

It shows that the indigenous leader could empower the audience and call them for action. Furthermore, the indigenous leaders used imperative sentences to challenge the rulers. For example, "Listen! Oh, Comrade Prachanda! Please tell us". These imperatives demonstrate that the Indigenous leaders tried to make them responsible and

warned them not to suppress the Indigenous people and to provide them equal rights as soon as possible.

**Questions to engage and challenge the audiences.** The data shows that the indigenous leaders asked the questions to the indigenous people and rulers at the same time to engage them in their speech, challenge and call them to action. For example, "Only old-aged like me, 50 years over, ex-armies come into the Indigenous people's movement. Why do students not come? Why don't women come? Why don't youths come?" This example demonstrates that the indigenous leader urgently asked the indigenous youths and women to join in the movement.

**Pronouns and Power Relations.** The data shows that the indigenous leaders used pronouns like I, We, You, and They. The Indigenous leaders' understanding of power relations is evident. For example, "I urge all people that today's movement is the beginning of our movement" and "You people, none sing the national song of NEFIN". These statements show that the indigenous leaders showed their dominance/ power by using the pronouns "I" and "You". It may create an impact on the audience. These examples reveal the ILs' rhetorical competencies about the power relations through which they empower the people and challenge the rulers.

### ***Interpretation Level (Process of Production and Interpretation of Text) Analysis of Indigenous Leaders' Speeches***

The data reveals that ILs were experienced and well-prepared to deliver the speech because they quoted from the references. They quoted from Harka Gurung, Ram Mani Adi, the Indigenous People's History, and Constitutions, the Agreement between the Indigenous People and the Government of Nepal, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to strengthen the argument. Their background, activism and speeches demonstrate that they produced the text through their lived experiences.

### ***Explanation Level (Power Relations or Socio-cultural) Analysis of Indigenous Leaders' Speeches based on CDA***

The data show that there has been a struggle between the rulers and indigenous people from the past to the present. The rulers tried to suppress and rule over the Indigenous people through hegemonic discourses. Similarly, the Indigenous people tried to subvert the rulers' discourse by creating counter-discourses. For example:

Sometimes I have heard that Bahun-Chhetries are six inches taller than indigenous nationalities. And Indigenous people are six inches shorter. Then how can we manage it? We do not say to make an equal shortening of Bahun-Chhetries. However, we would say Tamang should be elevated by six inches and made equal. This is our demand.

This statement reveals the struggle between the rulers and the Indigenous people in the discourse. The rulers attempted to nullify and silence the people's voices through nationalistic discourse. Likewise, the Indigenous leaders challenged the rulers by creating the discourse of social justice, quality, and equity. Subsequently, the political power has been exercised through the language. For example:

Now, I would like to discuss the examination system in Nepal. Which language do we use to write in the exam? Of course, we write in the Khas language. Mathematics is also in the Khas language. Science is also in the Khas language. Social studies are also in the Khas language. Nepali is also in the Khas language. It is okay. Leave it. Now answer needs to be written in the Khas language.

This statement demonstrates the language politics and power struggle between the indigenous people and the rulers. The state has been hegemonizing and discriminating against the indigenous people through language politics. The state has been imposing the Nepali language as the official language, the language of instruction, and the language of the evaluation system. However, the Indigenous people kept on resisting the state and rulers and raised their voices for their identity and rights. Consequently, the Constitution of Nepal, 2015, has ensured the Indigenous people's rights (Constituent Assembly, 2015). Although it is inadequate and inappropriate in practice, proportional representation has been started in the federal, provincial, and local political and administrative units (Thapamagar, 2024). The reservation quota has been provided to the indigenous people, women, Dalits, Muslims, Tharu people, Disabilities, and people from remote areas. Now, different mother-tongue-based schools have been started in Nepal (Dhakal, 2021; Fillmore, 2020). Tamang and Nepal languages have been declared as the official languages of Bagmati Province (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Law, 2023). All the indigenous languages have been declared the national language of Nepal (Constituent Assembly, 2015). The indigenous language, culture, literature, arts, knowledge, and civilizations have been revitalized in Nepal (Maharjan,

2018; Upadhyay, 2021). The state provides the holiday in the festivals of Indigenous people. Although it is insufficient and lacks proper implementation, free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) has been obtained from Indigenous people before starting developmental projects, such as hydropower (Sherpa & Rai, 2013). This is how the Indigenous people have their rights and identity in Nepal.

The Indigenous leaders' speeches or the discourses of social justice, quality and equity have been analysed based on the Aristotelian Rhetorical Triangle, Toulmin Model of Rhetoric and Communication, and Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of CDA. Although the ILs excelled at logos and pathos, they could improve their ethos to make their rhetoric or discourse stronger and more meaningful. Similarly, although they were good at claims, grounds, and rebuttals, they could improve the warrants, backing, and rebuttals to make their discourse fruitful. Consequently, although the ILs were good at word choice, repetition, imperatives, questions, and pronouns, they could sharpen their use of passive sentences, pronouns, and metaphors.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

It was found that Indigenous leaders have good rhetorical strategies and skills to empower the indigenous people and to subvert the rulers' discourses. However, there is still, room for improvement. They could learn and refine their rhetorical strategies, knowledge, and skills, and pass them on to new generations. They could educate, equip, and involve the youths in their movements and campaigns. Indigenous people, for the most part, are socio-culturally and religiously diverse in Nepal, owing to their rich socio-cultural and historical heritage (Bhattachan, 2003). So, the Indigenous leaders and activists can utilize their sociocultural and religious celebrations and ceremonies to educate, equip, and motivate them to fight against rulers' domination and discrimination. They could attract the youths through socio-cultural programs and empower them to search for their identity and rights. Although the state represses and silences indigenous people's voices, they are continuously raising their voices against the discrimination and domination of rulers. Although it is nominal, indigenous nationalities have been represented in all the political and administrative positions at the federal, provincial, and local levels. Indigenous, marginalized, and minority people could have their rights, dignity, and autonomy recognized through the movements and activism of identity politics if they possessed rhetorical competencies.

## Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge Research and Development Department of ECEC Innovation in Education (a leading teacher training and school consultation organization in Nepal) and thank them for providing me opportunity to prepare this article.

## Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

## References

- Andrews, R. (2013). *A Theory of Contemporary Rhetoric*. Routledge.
- Berenstain, N., Dotson, K., Paredes, J., Ruiz, E., & Silva, N. K. (2021). Epistemic Oppression, Resistance, and Resurgence. *Contemporary Political Theory*, 21(2), 283. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-021-00483-z>
- Bhattachan, K. (2012). Indigenous People's Right to Self-Determination in Nepal. *Ethnicity and Federalisation in Nepal*, 139-165.
- Bhattachan, K. B. (2003). *Indigenous Nationalities and Minorities of Nepal*. Minority Rights Group International.
- Booth, W. C. (2009). *The Rhetoric of RHETORIC: The Quest for Effective Communication*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Braet, A. C. (1992, 1992/08/01). Ethos, Pathos and Logos in Aristotle's Rhetoric: A Re-examination. *Argumentation*, 6(3), 307-320. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00154696>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2013). *Research methods in education*. Routledge.
- Constituent Assembly. (2015). *Constitution of Nepal 2015*. Secretariat of Constituent Assembly, Singha Darbar.
- Covey, S. R., & Covey, S. (2020). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Simon & Schuster.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage publications.
- Dhakal, B. R. (2021). Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education in Nepal. *Scholars' Journal*, 4, 82-92. <https://doi.org/10.3126/scholars.v4i1.42465>

- Dias, J., & Paiva, A. (2005). Feeling and reasoning: A computational model for emotional characters. In C. Bento, A. Cardoso, & G. Dias (Ed.), *Progress in artificial intelligence Berlin*. Heidelberg.
- DRCN. (2023). Ethnic identity movement after the naming of Koshi Province and Its potential implications: *Democracy Resource Center Nepal (DRCN)*.
- Fairclough, N. (2013a). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2013b). *Language and Power*. Routledge.
- Fillmore, N. (2020). Mother tongue-based multilingual education in Nepal: Past, present, and emerging trends. *Annual Review of Comparative and International Education 2019 (International Perspectives on Education and Society)*, 39, 231-254. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-367920200000039020>
- Herman, T. (2022). Ethos and Pragmatics. *Languages*, 7(3), 165. <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages7030165>
- Kandangwa, N. (2017, September 25). *Nepal's Ailing and Confused Indigenous Rights Movement*. Indigenous Voice. <https://english.indigenousvoice.com/news/nepal-s-ailing-and-confused-indigenous-rights-movement>
- Kastely, J. L. (2004). Pathos: Rhetoric and emotion. *A companion to rhetoric and rhetorical criticism*, 221-237.
- Lahurnip. (2018). *Alternative report of the indigenous peoples of Nepal*. Government of Nepal.
- Lawoti, M. (2012). Dynamics of mobilization: Varied trajectories of Dalit, indigenous nationalities and Madhesi movements1. In *Nationalism and ethnic conflict in Nepal* (pp. 193-225). Routledge.
- Lawoti, M., & Hangen, S. (2013). *Nationalism and ethnic conflict in Nepal*. Routledge.
- Maharjan, R. (2018). *The Journey of Nepal Bhasa: From Decline to Revitalization* [Master's thesis, The Arctic University of Norway].
- Martin, J. (2013). *Politics and Rhetoric: A Critical Introduction*. Routledge.
- McCormack, K. C. (2014). Ethos, Pathos, and Logos: The Benefits of Aristotelian Rhetoric in the Courtroom. *Washington University Jurisprudence Review*, 7(1), 131. [https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law\\_jurisprudence/vol7/iss1/9](https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_jurisprudence/vol7/iss1/9)

- Miller, C. R. (2024). Kairos in the Rhetoric of Science. In *Landmark Essays on Rhetoric of Science: Issues and Methods* (pp. 184-202). Routledge.
- Ministry of Internal Affairs and Law. (2023). *Provincial Official Language Act, 2080*. Ministry of Internal Affairs and Law, Government of Bagmati Province.
- Pandey, K. P. (2024). Ethnicity and Madheshi Sub-National Identity in Nepal. *History and Sociology of South Asia*, 18(2), 168-185.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2230807523122636>
- Roberts, W. R. (2014). *Rhetoric*. Princeton University Press.
- Rosling, F. R. (2024). *Indigenous Peoples' Experiences of Autonomy and Self-Determination in Nepal*. International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA). <https://www.iwgia.org/en/resources/publications/5583-indigenous-peoples-experiences-autonomy-self-determination-nepal.html>
- Sherpa, P. D., & Rai, T. B. (2013). Experience of Nepali Indigenous Peoples on Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). *Journal of Forest and Livelihood*, 11(2), 82-86. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jfl.v11i2.8626>
- Sherpa, P. Y. (2009). *Indigenous Movements: Identification of Indigenous Concerns in Nepal* [Doctoral Dissertation, Washington State University].  
<https://hdl.handle.net/2376/100689>
- Statham, S. (2022). *Critical Discourse Analysis: A Practical Introduction to Power in Language*. Routledge.
- Sullivan, D. L. (1992). Kairos and the Rhetoric of Belief. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 78(3), 317-332. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335639209383999>
- Tamang, H. M. (2019). *Representation of Tamang People in Yug Pathak's Urgenka Ghoda* [Master's thesis, Tribhuvan University]. Kathmandu.
- Thapamagar, R. B. (2024). Indigenous Nationalities and Politics in Nepal: Constitution Assembly to Parliament. *Journal of Nepalese Studies*, 16(1), 152-168.  
<https://doi.org/10.3126/jns.v16i1.71788>
- Toulmin, S., Rieke, R. D., & Janik, A. (1984). *An Introduction to Reasoning*. Collier Macmillan.
- Upadhyay, I. (2021). *The Tharu Cultural Museum: A Conduit for Cultural Revitalization and Indigenous Identity Creation* [Master's thesis, UiT The Arctic University of Norway]. <https://hdl.handle.net/10037/21795>