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# Love, Marriage, Betrayal and Sufferings in Saraswoti Pratikshya's *Nathiya*

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## Abstract

*The paper illustrates the various facets of problems and sufferings of the Badi women based on Saraswoti Pratikshya's novel Nathiya. The novel mainly depicts the issues of socio-cultural and economic issues and complications of Badi women. The paper mainly aims to investigate the love, relation, marriage, betrayal, sufferings and other various difficulties of Badi from Dalit Aesthetic perspective. Badi women, as sex workers, are exploited and tortured by non-Dalits clients in different forms. The clients pretend to have love, relation and affairs to Badi women for not to pay their cost; and when the women are in deep love and propose for marriage they get deception, betrayal, tragedy and sufferings. The clients escape from their settlement and they never come back to them. Therefore, most of children are from single-mothers with unidentified fathers. The novel portrays the various facets of problems of Badi women interlinked to caste, culture, economy and socio-culture. The researcher applies the Dalit Aesthetics perspective as theoretical tool for the discussion on the primary text. Moreover, the researcher employs qualitative approach with exploratory method.*

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**Keywords:** *Badi Women, Love, betrayal, Sufferings, Dalit Aesthetics, Dalit literature*

## Introduction and Rationale

The paper deals with the love, marriage, betrayal and sufferings encountered by Badi women based on Saraswoti Pratikshya's novel *Nathiya*. The novel primarily demonstrates the socio-cultural and economic hurdles of Badi Dalits of Western region of Nepal. The novel, basically, captures the 1960s- 1990s scenario that how the community had to face the various problems in their day-to-day life; and how they had to be submissive before the feudalistic varna-based society. The Badi characters are sexually exploited in the name of cultural practice- *nathiya* where "a teen-aged Badi girl had to put on the *nathiya* (Nose Ring) after their first menstruation which means she was ready to sale her body to client;

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and she had to put off the nose ring after her first sexual relation with her client" (Tamu, setopati.com). Family would bid her body that as if who would pay the higher cost, he would be her first client. After putting off the *nathiya* she would start her profession as sex worker to support her parents.

In *Nathiya*, the Badi female characters work as sex workers but they are exploited, suppressed and betrayed by many non-Dalits, feudals and government officials as well. They are treated as entertainers who are born to fulfill the thirst of physical need of clients. They are hardly paid and treated properly by the clients rather exploited and betrayed by most of the clients. "The female characters such as Sāmali, Laxima, Chandrika, Raitabi, Ranjana, Mankali etc. are the real victims of the society" (Tamu, setopati.com). The novel, mainly discusses the socio-cultural and economic problems faced by the Badi community of the very region of three decades back. Moreover, it also reflects the love, relation, betrayal and sufferings faced by Badi women.

The aims of the paper are to portray the love and betrayal encountered by the Badi women characters of the novel; and to show the panic lives of the community. The paper employs the qualitative approach with exploratory method. The primary data and text for the research has been selected Saraswoti Pratikshya's *Nathiya*. The researcher applies Dalit Aesthetics as theory for the discussion and interpretation.

### **Discussion: Love, Betrayal and Sufferings in *Nathiya***

Pratikshya's novel, *Nathiya* as Dalit literature illustrates the love affair, relations, marriage, betrayal and sufferings of the major female characters. The Badi women are the victims of love relations and marriage. Sāmali, Laxima, Chandrika, Raitabi, Mankali and Ranjana encounter with betrayal and sufferings in different vintage of lives throughout the novel. However, the novel also includes the true and unbalanced love-story of Professor Diwakar Sharma. The character Professor Diwakar who works at Tribhuvan University, has a tragic love-story with Sāmali to whom he meets during his research project in Pakraiya, Dang. They have a love affair and end the relation when he returns to Kathmandu. Though, Diwakar makes a promise to be back within a month but Sāmali disappears from the Badi settlement without informing anyone. Diwakar searches her everywhere for years but cannot find anywhere. But he cannot forget her even a single minute throughout his life. He has a diary in which he drops few words of love and wishes every year on the occasion of her birthday. The novel reveals, "The name of the pain, tension and craziness was 'Sāmali'. It was question; it was memoir; and it was the torture...Sāmali. Recently, she appeared there with the earthquake in the incarnation of daughter. It was a strong

and branded earthquake..." (Pratikshya 3). Professor Diwakar is there in the convocation ceremony of TU. It is unexpected incident for Professor Diwakar that he sees Sāmali and her daughter in the program.

The novel describes a numerous socio-cultural and economic difficulties of Badi community. Presenting Dalit issues and their resistance through literature is considered as the aesthetics of Dalit literature. In this context, Priyanka Kumari and Maninder Kapoor remark that "Dalit literature plays a major part in breaking the hegemonic relations present in social, cultural, economic, religious, and literary configurations" (02). The literature depicts different hurdles of Dalits. In the novel, the clients use and misuse the bodies of Badi women who live in Pakraiya settlement of Dang to fulfill the physical needs. A police constable alias *hawaldār* pretends to love Laxima and exploits sexually and escapes from their when she forces to get married. The novel reads "After that the police constable never returns to Badi settlement. The people like the police constable betray to Badi girls" (Pratikshya 27). Badi girls are deceived and suffered in every step of lives.

The Dalit literature is the live experiences of Dalits. Alok Mukherjee remarks that "The central concern of Dalit literature is how best to represent the 'authentic experience' of Dalits" (10). Dalit characters in the novel also get trouble from the non-Dalit characters. Bekhaman, as businessman, attacks Sāmali brutally that she is completely bloody. Pratikshya writes, "Bekhaman put the clothes in mouth forcefully to control her screaming voice. The voice was controlled but her pain was more severe. She was full of blood due to brutal sexual attack. Bekhaman did not show any kindness to her..." (48). The male character sexually exploits cruelly but they are heartless to Badi women.

Dalit literature reflects an experience of the unique Dalitness that the literature has been challenged to represent realistically. As Kanak Yadav further remarks "...Dalit literary texts are read as 'authentic' narratives of the self, re-created through experience and memory" (77). *Nathiya* as Dalit text is an authentic voices of numerous Badi Dalit characters. The writer discloses that the novel is 95% realistic based on the interview of the victim characters. As the female protagonist, Sāmali gets fake love from Ranger, Muhammad (Hair dresser) and other characters as well. She becomes victims from them. In the novel, the Ranger convinces her for marriage but she gets more torture and tension from him. "Why did your brother visit here? Did he visit here to manage the sex clients? ...Why did you hide the reality? ...Did you start the sex business again?" (Pratikshya 138). The so-called husband, Ranger expresses the doubtfulness on her if Sāmali visits maternal home or any relatives from her maternal home visit there in the Ranger's quarter.

This is the common reality of Dalit characters who face in day-to-day lives. Sāmali never experience the pleasant and happy life throughout her youthful days.

Dalit literature is Dalits' expression about unequal social system. Sharankumar Limbale also believes that "Dalit have voiced their dissatisfaction against the unequal Hindu caste system" (29). Dalit characters face the caste-based discrimination in every social sphere. "Badi girls are coming, leave the way for them...they are from other species...untouchable. If anyone touches them, it would hit by heavy earthquake" (Pratikshya 32). They are considered as untouchable publicly but they are sexually exploited. The treatment shows the dualistic faces of so-called non-Dalit people because they play with their bodies most of the time.

Dalit literature portrays the panic life-style of Dalit women. They are subjugated sexually and physically in the daily lives. Indian writer Charu Gupta argues, "Sexual exploitation of Dalit women was an everyday fact, which was often expressed in terms of the alleged 'loose' character of Dalit women themselves" (25). Badi women's bodies are used and misused by non-Dalit male characters. In the text, Raitabi becomes mad because the local contractor, Gumansingh puts off her *nathiya* off fifteen years ago and he is still ready to put off the *nathiya* of her daughter, Ranjana. Raitabi claims that Ranjana is the daughter of Gumansingh, however, Gumansingh rejects it that there is no father of whore's children. The novel reads, "One day Raitabi was not seen in Hurikhola thereafter. There was only bloody knife. There was bloody penis lying with knife...both Gumansingh and Raitabi were absent there" (Pratikshya 225). From these lines, reader can easily assume that Raitabi kills Gumansingh and threw to Hurikhola and she also commits suicide. The incident also is sufficient that Gumansingh exploits to both mother and his daughter Ranjita. He rapes his own daughter in the name of putting off the *nathiya*. Raitabi has painful love story but she cannot claim him as husband.

The varna-based patriarchal and feudal society constructs Dalit women as inferior and subordinated identity. Indian writer Gopika Jadeja believes that "...representation of Dalit women and their sexuality has been constructed through the male gaze of upper-class patriarchy, which simultaneously appropriates the sexual and productive labour of Dalit women" (123). Economic class determines the life of everyone. If Badi women have good economic status, they do not have to be subordinated to upper-caste and class people for their bread and butter by selling their body. They sell their body in their parents' consent to make happiness. Samali speaks "to be a daughter of Badi woman is to be sad alone. Everyone is happy and fine due to her" (Pratikshya 51). The dialogue is

expressed by Sāmali after her first sexual relation with client from where she starts her formal profession as sex worker career for her family's happiness.

Aesthetics of Dalit literature presents the realistic picture of Dalits in their socio-cultural lives. Indian scholar Maya Pandit notes, "It is a live archive of memories of oppression, humiliation and resistant action where the inopportune and the forgotten emerges in diverse literary forms...narrative fictions" (168). The literature truly expresses Dalits' experiences in different forms and genres. In the text, Mankali Badi gets married to a businessman and later gets rejection. "...few years ago, Mankali elopes with a Marbadi of Nepalgunj. But she came back now. She returned slowly with her fractured leg and broken heart" (Pratikshya 102). Marbadi misuses her body for years and the leaves her alone. He never gets married to her formally. Mankali is back to Pakraiya with her broken body. The story is the common story of Badi women to whom non-Dalit clients use and throw them in the abyss of problems.

The character, however, Professor Diwakar has a distinct relation with Sāmali to whom he cannot forget throughout his life. "There was procession of memories...he would address those procession of memories in the pages of his personal diary, on the occasion of the birthday of Sāmali" (Pratikshya 03). It is reality that Professor Diwakar remembers her in every birthday. He remembers, "Sāmali or 'Sāmali Badi'. He has dreamed to make the sculpture of stone which is crafted; the living-stone sculptured by him. He did not know whether his stone changed into sculpture with his skill or not. The living-stone was suddenly disappeared..." (Pratikshya 03). Professor Diwakar always thinks about her but misses her more in the special day. He sees Sāmali together with her daughter.

Dalit literature is the collection of bitter memories of victim people. The victim people raise the voice for rights and equality through different movements. The movements are war for independence as Arun Prabha Mukherjee believes that "Dalit movement is a great war and Dalit literature is its epic" (156). The movement is for equality and justice. Inequal love between two different castes hardly reaches its destination. Sāmali breaks the promise because of her socio-cultural position. However, beautiful memories of love never fade out from mind. Sāmali always remains in the heart and mind of Professor Diwakar as well. He cannot forget her even after his marriage. Dalit literature is developed distinctly as Kumari and Kapoor notes about the literature that "...brings a totally new discourse that is not familiar in the world of literature but is representation of true stories i.e., closer to society" (02). In the text, Badi women characters are mostly betrayed and suffered by the non-Dalit male characters. However, Professor Diwakar loves Sāmali; and also gives

the name his daughter 'Sāmali' in memory of his girlfriend. That day in the convocation program, Professor Diwakar sees her daughter same as Sāmali. Thus, he writes a diary as, [Same face! Same color! Same facial shape! Same Physical figure! Same cuteness! I am surprised when she stepped on the stage to receive the certificate after the declaration as "First Master's Degree holder Badi Girl of Nepal". Same to same! Heart started to beat! I kept on pondering. It was not difficult to notice her; the girl standing on the stage is the daughter of Sāmali Badi. (Pratikshya 04)]

Professor Diwakar expresses love and feelings emotionally by seeing Sāmali's daughter. He mentions the same Sāmali in his PhD thesis, diary and everywhere in his heart. The plot includes his seriousness in love and relation. However, their love relation ends with tragedy.

Dalits are the victims of the socio-cultural system. Pandit also believes that "Dalit communities remain at the lowest rung in social hierarchy in diverse fields" (167). In the text, Sāmali and Professor Diwakar represent two different castes and economic hierarchy. Instead of caste and economic differences, Professor Diwakar shows his true love and promise to Sāmali. In the last meet, Diwakar makes a promise to return Pakraiya after a month and will get married to Sāmali. The narrator reveals:

[Before leaving Dang, Diwakar handed a *nathiya* to Sāmali and spoke, "This is a souvenir of my love. He spoke "I will return Dang by managing everything from Kathmandu within a month and give you a company by taking out from this hatred profession. Don't reject me. I will marry you and will give you every happiness" ...Sāmali did not respond, either 'Yes' or 'No'. Just, she kept on looking on Diwakar's face crazily. (Pratikshya 279)]

Both Diwakar and Sāmali are in deep love affair and they cross all the limitation love as well. They make a promise to be united after a month. As promised, Sāmali puts on the *nathiya* and keeps the promise alive. The text also reveals that Sāmali quits the profession and starts a new life. It is all due to the power and promise of Diwakar. It shows their love, promise and trust which has power to change a person and life style.

In the novel, a mute and serious character, Jay Nepal hardly speaks to anyone but he speaks to Sāmali frankly. He loves her, but he never expresses it to her. Since, Sāmali's marriage date is fixed with Ranger, Jay Nepal becomes sad. As a result, he decides to leave Pakraiya forever. Before departure, he meets Sāmali and shares some heart-touching feelings to her. The narrator reveals:

"If you have made this much serious decision, why are you crying loudly?" She asked.

"... Just think that this is my first and last tearing in your name. I have finished the tears of your name. Think that I will never cry remembering you"...She was confused and asked "do you love me?"]

"There is politics in love here, Sāmali. Love also does politics. (Pratiskhya 113)

The mute character, Jay Nepal also expresses his love and feelings to Sāmali indirectly by dropping the tears from eyes. Finally, he decides to leave the Badi settlement forever.

Love and marriage for Badi girls are temporary and mockery. Since, Sāmali gets married to the Ranger but cannot get love and care from him. When Sāmali becomes pregnant, the ranger gives physical and mental torture due to her caste and previous profession. "You are so lucky that you were Badi girl...you are Thakuri now. Thakuri landlady" (Pratikshya 117). It shows that he is more husband than lover now. Later on, he expresses "I am feeling regret by getting married with a Badi girl. I cannot trust on the character of Badi girl. Whore can sleep with anybody any day" (Pratikshya 135). Regarding the marriage, torture and shortness of love relation of Sāmali, Gouri Tamu comments:

[Sāmali got married to Ranger by thinking him a lover but after marriage the Ranger did not remain a lover but he changed as tyrant husband. After bearing a lot of physical and mental torture, one day the pregnant Sāmali left quarter of Ranger and gets married to Mohammad for shelter who had hair salon in Nepalgunj. (setopati.com, 5 Falgun 2074)]

Mohammad gives a company to her and accepts to be a father of the newly born daughter. As soon as, he becomes sick and cannot work in his salon. One day, Sāmali's brother Budhe takes him to India for treatment, Muhammad disappears from the hospital. Sāmali's second marriage also ends with tragedy. There are many single mothers' children in Badi settlement whose fathers are unidentified or escaped from them.

Some relations are truly meaningful which give beautiful memories in life. Professor Diwakar meets Sāmali during this research work and they become closer between each other. He wants to get married with her but she has bitter experiences of marriage and betrayal. She does not believe anyone easily. Diwakar proves her as a true; and, honest lover and Sāmali also performs her true love to him. But she wants to make her love alive forever. As a result, she makes a decision to disappear from this patriarchal, materialistic and racist society. Sāmali's letter reveals:

[I felt that I need to flow when I met you. It raised the hope and confident to me. But I am extremely sorry Diwakar, I cannot flow and reach to you. I know where to flow by the Badi woman. I know very well. I left the Badi settlement by deciding to flow alone in the difficult road. I love you so much...as much as you love me.... I cannot get married to you. I had already married twice who would say to love me. At last, I didn't get anything except pain and torture. Marriage kills the love. I cannot see my love to be died with you. I am leaving you to keep my love alive. I have a *nathiya* given by you. I will be yours until and unless the *nathiya* remains on my nose. I love you forever. (Pratikshya 277)]

The letter clearly describes that she disappears from Diwakar because she wants to make their love alive. In her experience, marital relation kills the true love which she does not want to kill her love by getting married to him. In *Nathiya*, the Badi girls and women easily accept the love and marriage proposals but all of them get betrayal, deception, physical and mental torture, exploitation and sufferings. Therefore, they do not trust anyone in love and marriage; rather, they continue their profession for their survival.

## **Conclusion**

The novel *Nathiya* as a masterpiece of Dalit literature portrays the socio-cultural and economic problems of Badi women of western Nepal. In this paper, the researcher mainly reflects the issues of aesthetics of Dalit literature connecting with love, relation, betrayal and sufferings as if how they fall in the abyss of love, betrayal and sufferings due to their caste and social hierarchy. The paper not only reflects the problems of characters that they face in daily life but also shows the love-story between Professor Diwakar and Sāmali; and Sāmali indirectly rejects him to get married due to her previous experiences of marriage, betrayal and sufferings. In crux, the paper illustrates the various facets of complications of Badi community, their love, relations and marriage.

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