

# Spiritual Humanism in Devkota's *Muna-Madan*

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## Abstract

Devkota seeks spiritual humanism in order to restore moral, ethical and spiritual values in human beings. For him, the relationships between man and man, man and nature and man and God are vital. As a spiritual humanist, he focuses on acts of love and sacrifice for the good of humanity. According to him, this human world is to be guided by the universal spirit of God, the basis of spiritual humanism. He believes that God is present everywhere. Human beings have to realize it. Only spiritually motivated souls can sacrifice themselves for others. Devkota projects his ideas of Spiritual Humanism in *Muna-Madan*. He shows his tremendous reverence towards gods and goddesses because the marginalized and downtrodden people receive solace and living hope from God. Devkota believes that spiritually motivated people are compassionate and merciful towards fellow beings. Muna and her mother-in-law unconditionally love Almighty God for their ultimate salvation from worldly sufferings. The Bhote (a pejorative term for a Tibetan man) shows an excellent example of humanity by helping an unknown person Madan. This paper highlights Devkota's philosophy of spiritual humanism in *Muna-Madan*.

**Keywords:** *humanism, spirituality, mercy, compassion, pain and suffering, living hope, salvation*

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## Introduction

Laxmi Prasad Devkota (1909-59) is a spiritual humanist. He demonstrates himself as a champion of spiritual humanism in his *Muna-Madan* (1936). During the genesis of *Muna-Madan*, the Nepalese society was gradually turning materialistic. People were losing their spiritual values. Gradually, they were degenerated. Devkota voiced for the sake of spiritual humanism in his writings. Now we are living in a materialist society. We have developed the capitalist culture. In the modern world people

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give more importance on worldly pleasures. People are busy in getting material prosperity. But it only brings restlessness and misery among people. The root cause which separates us from the presence of God is our pride, arrogance and ego. The proud and conceited persons can never find God because they keep aloof from the poor and the downtrodden. Our greed and pride hinder us from having communion with God. Materiality is the choice of modern people, not spiritual humanism.

Nepalese society is divided on the basis of caste system. The upper castes are privileged and the lower castes are marginalized and exploited. Devkota has portrayed the contemporary social hierarchies in *Muna-Madan*. He has mainly presented the evils of caste system, class system and gender discrimination. The protagonist Madan is a Chhetri man. He goes to Lhasa to make his fortune. He leaves his young wife and old mother at home in Kathmandu. Madan is driven by his desire to make his fortune. He is blinded by his material lust. Ultimately he pays the price for his lust for material comfort. He loses his Muna and his mother. He could not save them.

In *Muna-Madan* Laxmiprasad Devkota presents the Nepali and Tibetan social contexts of the 20th century. At that time, the Newars living in Kathmandu were mostly Buddhists and Brahmins and Chhetris were predominantly Hindus. That is why Devkota gives the allusions of Hindu and Buddhist deities and religious practices. Muna and Madan are Hindus. The Bhote is Buddhist. The Hindus living in Kathmandu used to consider Bhotas as untouchables. Devkota was a liberal humanist so he defied the social discrimination on the basis of castes. Devkota ruptures the notions of higher and lower castes. Devkota strongly believes, “manis thulo dilalehunch jatale hudaina” [My translation: Man becomes great by his heart, not by his caste!](Devkota, 2009, p. 20). Love and compassion are human virtues. Even poor people can have kindness and compassion towards others.

Devkota portrays two ways of living in *Muna-Madan*. During Devkota's time, rapid urbanization was taking place in Kathmandu. People were turning materialistic. Human values like love and mercy were disappearing from them. They were selfish and greedy. In the beginning Madan wanted to uplift the economic condition of his family. He followed the common tendency of making his fortune working in Lhasa. Being activated by the beauty of Lhasa, he did not respond his family. But he realized his responsibility when he underwent suffering.

Muna, Muna's mother-in-law, and Madan's sister were living at home in Kathmandu. They had strong faith in Hindu gods and goddesses. They were not materialistic. Muna urged Madan not to go Lhasa leaving them alone in Kathmandu. Muna

emphasized the familial bonds, love and care. They never lost their faith in gods and goddesses. Up to the last breath of their lives, they prayed for Madan's well-being. In Lhasa, the Bhote nursed Madan and saved his life. He did it out of his humanity. He was a true follower of Lord Buddha. We can see the manifestation of compassion, mercy and love in the Bhote. Spiritual values like love, mercy and compassion are above the dogmas of caste system.

This paper explores how Devkota projects his philosophy of spiritual humanism in *Muna-Madan*. First, this paper explains what spiritual humanism is. Second, it analyzes *Muna-Madan* from spiritual humanist point of view. Finally, the finding/conclusion is presented. The approach of this paper is textual analysis. Devkota's *Muna-Madan* is the primary text.

*Muna-Madan* (1936) by Devkota is a popular long narrative poem. It is also known as a *Mahakavya* (epic). In this regard, Padma Devkota remarks:

Mahakavi's works embody two major trends: his aesthetics seeks the roots of classical Sanskrit tradition while his modernist attitudes emerge in an eternal quest for the new. Deeply rooted in the culture and tradition of the nation, he embraces a liberal humanism and reaches out to the whole world. Interested especially in the cultural expressions of the international world, he naturalizes forms and techniques to enrich national literature. (Devkota, 2018, p. xxii)

Laxmiprasad Devkota uses the folk song (*jhyaure*) in *Muna-Madan* to capture the true spirit of Nepalese heart. While introducing Laxmiprasad Devkota as a great poet, Michael James Hutt writes, "*Muna and Madan (Muna-Madan)* was his first great success, a romance written in a melodic meter and simple language that struck a chord in the minds of ordinary Nepali readers" (Hutt, 1991, p. 43). By observing Nepali poets including Devkota, he writes, "Nepali poets also make innumerable references to characters and events from Hindu, and occasionally Buddhist, mythology and from their own historical past" (Hutt, 1991, p. 21). Regarding the significance of *Muna-Madan*, Michael Hutt in his *Modern Literary Nepali: An Introductory Reader* remarks, "*Munā-Madan* is a book of less than fifty pages, but its physical slightness belies its immense importance to the development of modern Nepali literature" (Hutt, 1999, p. 16). Undoubtedly we can say that *Muna-Madan* is a remarkable piece of Nepali literature. Many scholars consider Devkota as a liberal humanist. In this paper, my claim is that Devkota is not only liberal humanist, but also a spiritual humanist.

Regarding the central idea or theme of *Muna-Madan*, Mahadev Awasthi states,

“*prematatwa ātmika vastu ho ra artha wā dhan bhautik vasthu ho. Yī ātmika ra bhautik vastuko dwanda yas khaṇḍakāvyabhitra cha ra tyasai dwandako pariṇāmswarūp ukta premmaya jīwanko dhukhānta pariṇām yahāṃ dhekhāiyeko cha*” (Awasthi, 2018, p. 130). (My translation: “Love is a spiritual thing whereas wealth or money is a material thing. The conflict between the spiritual and material is within the subject matter of this short epic. The tragic consequence of such a conflict is the erosion of love, mercy and compassion in a person’s life.”) Love is the central theme in *Muna-Madan*. The more we crave for material things/materiality, the more we deviate from spirituality.

Being a romantic poet, Devkota projects pantheistic view of God in his writings. For Devkota, Nature is a dwelling place of celestial and earthly beings. It is a source of higher knowledge and spirituality. Like English romantic poet William Wordsworth, Devkota was influenced by the pantheistic view of Nature. Both of them see the presence of God in every object of nature. The universe is the manifestation of God. There is no unbridgeable gulf between the human beings and God. He is omnipresent. He is there in the clouds, in the planets, in the jungles, and in the oceans. The belief that God exists in every object of nature is pantheism. Every object of nature contains divine spirit; every individual soul can feel the presence. The ultimate substance (divine reality) is God so all things are aspects of God. We can gain higher sort of knowledge based on truth and spirituality.

Devkota has a tremendous love for humanism. He does not believe in renunciation of world of senses. He gives emphasis on man’s relationship with man and with God. To serve mankind is to serve the Supreme. Devkota criticizes the Nepalese tradition of exclusiveness and isolation. He criticizes the discrimination on the basis of castes. He discards the hollowness of any traditions and rituals. Our service to humanity is essential for one’s spiritual growth. Humanity is at the heart of his writings. Humanism emphasizes the value and agency of human beings. Spiritual humanism is the blending of spiritualism and humanism. Spiritual humanists accept the existence of God. So, they believe in the presence of divine force in Nature. Any spiritually motivated persons can spontaneously offer their help and support to the poor, needy and downtrodden. Devkota speaks against discrimination or division among the human beings on the basis of class, caste and creed. In his poems “Bhikhari” or “Beggar” and “Yatri” or “Traveler”, Devkota expresses his philosophy of humanism. He writes in “Bhikhari”:

her, her tī jhutrā, cithara  
hāya he samaya niṣṭhur!

Jīwanpathmā bicarā patharā  
 kāṃpirahēkā thururu!  
 jhallar jholī baḍhāuṃcha baburā  
 karle asthir, katar (Devkota, 2012, p. 1)

My translation: Behold! Behold!! The rags and shreds

Ah! The merciless time!  
 What a wretched beggar in his path of life!  
 Shivering and shaking!  
 Spreading his bags helplessly!  
 Destined to be forsaken as a coward!

In the abovementioned lines, Devkota portrays the miserable condition of a beggar who is seeking help from others. Being a human, he is also the temple of God. Devkota feels sympathy for the helpless beggar. In the same poem, Devkota further writes:

mānissaṃgama mānisko yo  
 antardilko rodan  
 bhāiharusaṃga bhikshāko yo  
 muṭhī dayāko yācan  
 ghām ujjālo āṃganmā yo  
 ek aṃdhāro awalokan  
 gulābaharuko hāṃsobīc yo  
 ek unyauko rodan (Devkota, 2012, p. 2)

My translation: A poor person man before other persons

Expressing pain from the depth of his heart  
 Asking for alms from his fellow beings  
 A handful of compassion and mercy.  
 In this bright and beautiful courtyard  
 A dark and gloomy observation!  
 Among the smiling roses,  
 A sad expression of a fern.

The poor fellow is asking for help to survive. The person is conditioned to be a beggar. Being a humanist, Devkota dislikes the disparity/gulf between the poor and rich in this world. The beggars, the destitute, the downtrodden and the untouchable are also human beings. Their hearts are the dwelling places of gods and goddesses. We can please the Almighty by helping the downtrodden and the destitute. Devkota appeals us to be compassionate towards the needy.

Similarly, in the poem “Yatri” or “Traveler” Devkota reveals his idea of spiritual humanism. All human beings are in their journey of life. Their duty is to fulfill their dharma (duty). Only spiritually enlightened hearts can help the needy selflessly. In the poem, Devkota appeals the whole humanity to be compassionate and help the destitute. Devkota writes:

pharka pharka he! jāu samāu,  
 mānisharūko pāu  
 malam lagāu ārtaharūko  
 caharāraheko ghāu  
 mānis bhaī īswarko tyo  
 diwya muhār haṃsāu (Devkota, 2012, p. 19)

My translation: Return! Return!! Go and hold,

The feet of people!  
 Apply ointment to the injured  
 To their burning wounds  
 Living as a human, make God’s  
 Divine face smile.

The rich and showy people go to the temples to visit gods and goddesses without realizing that the deities reside within themselves. According to Devkota, they can please their gods and goddesses by serving the poor and downtrodden. The same philosophy of spiritual humanism is expressed in *Muna-Madan*.

Devkota projects his idea of spiritual humanism in *Muna-Madan* as Rabindranath Tagore in his *Gitanjali*. In the Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech delivered on the 26th of May, 1921, Rabindranath Tagore pleaded for love and unity among human beings:

Man is not to fight with other human races, other human individuals, but his work is to bring about reconciliation and Peace and to restore the bonds of friendship and love. We are not like fighting beasts. It is the life of self which is predominating in our life, the self which is creating the seclusion, giving rise to sufferings, to jealousy and hatred, to political and commercial competition. All these illusions will vanish, if we go down to the heart of the shrine, to the love and unity of all races. (Tagore, 2012, p. 20)

Tagore longs for a peaceful world. He pleads for undivided humanity and harmonious relationships.

In Song Number 35 of *Gitanjali*, Tagore's quest is to see the world undivided by narrow domestic walls. He wants us to be fully awake and move towards perfection.

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert  
sand of dead habit

Where the mind is led forward by thee into

Ever-widening thought and action —. (Tagore, 2012, p.59)

People are to be free from selfish desires. They are to be filled with love and compassion towards their fellow beings. In Song Number 36, the poet prays to his lord, "Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service" (Tagore, 2012, p. 60). Tagore believes that no one can serve humanity without having love and compassion for others. In Song Number 37, Tagore presents a metaphor of a traveler. The voyage of one's life comes to an end. Yet, he envisions the continuation of life even after death.

But I find that thy will knows no end in me.

And when old words die out on the tongue,

new melodies break forth the heart; and

where the old tracks are lost, new country is

revealed with its wonders. (Tagore, 2012, p. 61)

Like Tagore, Devkota also believes that everyone is a traveler. So, one's duty is to help others. Only spiritually enlightened individuals can sacrifice for others.

### **Textual Analysis**

In *Muna-Madan*, Madan, the protagonist departs for Lhasa despite the pleas of his wife Muna. Leaving his wife and his old mother at home, he arrives Lhasa with a group of merchant friends. There he earns sufficient wealth. While coming back home, he contracts cholera on the way. His friends desert him to die in the forest. Luckily, a Bhote finds Madan. Then he takes him to his house and nurses him. Madan is healed completely after sometime. Great tragedy is waiting Madan at home. His Muna passes away. His mother dies soon after he arrives home. The poem ends with the death of Madan.

At the time of departure from Kathmandu to Lhasa, Muna warns Madan saying, "The Tibetans on the cliffs are like beasts of the forest that feed on cows!" (Hutt, 1999, p. 131). Muna requests Madan to take her with him to Lhasa but Madan promises her to come back soon. In response, Muna says:

You are my Rama, you are my Krishna,  
 Think of the forests, the hill slopes teeming  
 With Bhotes,  
 The wild animals that feed on holy cows.  
 . . . Take me with you, love. Let me be with you.  
 Let me nurse your weary limbs and aching brow. (Devkota, 2018, p. 17)

Muna reminds of his troublesome journey to Lhasa. She pleads him to take her with him. As an ideal wife, she wants to help him in his suffering.

Madan says he has great responsibility to fulfill. He wants to pay the debt and strengthen his economic condition. He is driven by his intense desire to travel to Lhasa. Being a male, he is supposed to earn and feed his family members. For him, it is a noble mission. Madan believes that God will bless him:

. . . With God above  
 and courage my friend I shall overcome huddles.  
 While doing good, should some misfortune strike,  
 Shall I die on the way, ah, my love,  
 once again, beyond this earth, in heaven,  
 why, we'll meet again. (Devkota, 2018, p. 21)

Madan thinks that it is his social obligation to support his family financially.

At any cost, Madan has to earn money to improve his economic condition. He is compelled by the materialist way of life. He is not an exception to it. Muna does not like Madan's decision to go to Bhote to earn money. She is very critical about it:

A trader in a wild country,  
 Bearing hardships, what will you gain, O say,  
 by going to Lhasa and leaving her behind?  
 Bags of gold are like dirt of the hand,  
 what shall we do with wealth?  
 'Tis better to live on greens and nettles, my love,  
 with peace of a happy mind.  
 Love, with a contented mind. (Devkota, 2018, p. 19)

Madan is attracted towards sinful wealth. But Muna does not long for bracelets of heavy gold. This is the conflict between the material and spiritual.

Muna fulfils her great responsibility by caring an old mother-in-law at home. Her life is laden with pain and suffering. Muna is loyal to Madan. She is ready to

undergo the fire-test as Sita had gone through. She is willing to live in in paradise with Madan for ever.

In the city, the corrupted and perverted always try to get advantage of others. One of the city rascals/rogues attempts to seduce Muna. By concealing her sorrow in her heart, Muna is living in her solitude.

. . . The sweet rose  
born of its succulent roots is the warm's food.  
The flower of the city is the rogue's prey.  
The human hand muddies limpid water,  
humans scatter thorns where humans tread. (Devkota, 2018, p. 49)

In a materialistic society, the stronger deceive or cheat the weaker. Human beings are the enemies of human beings. In this world, man is man's greatest enemy. The (*gundas*) rascals exploit simple and honest people. The rogue gets infatuated seeing beautiful Muna. The savage beast inside him turns violent. He is so cruel that he wants to quench his thrust of lust through the act of seduction.

The city rascal sends Naini to Muna. She questions the intention of Madan in Lhasa. Muna becomes fiery with her. She boldly confronts sister Naini.

Listen, Naini! Don't think I am like the others!  
Go, whisper these words in the ears that delight.  
Plentiful of city vermin are endowed  
with precious youth. Bring down the moon, lift Himal,  
But do not conspire to turn my heart around. (Devkota, 2018, pp. 53-55)

Spiritual Muna considers Madan her Krishna. He is wholeheartedly devoted to Madan. Muna is not deviated from her fidelity to Madan.

Madan is engrossed by the natural and artistic beauty of Lhasa. Unfortunately, he forgets his home. He fails to fulfill his duty to his family. Only in the seventh month, he remembers Muna and his mother. He sees the images of them. He cannot sleep. Then he decides to return home.

Now he desired to return to Nepal;  
hiding heavy bags of gold, reserving  
the sacs of musk carefully, he took leave  
from Lhasa asking for God's blessings. (Devkota, 2018, p. 63)

Now Madan is on his way to Kathmandu. His Muna and his mothers are alive in his imagination.

In Kathmandu, Muna is eagerly awaiting the arrival of Madan. Unfortunately she has not yet heard any news about Madan.

Memory gathered like the clouds, the moon  
disappeared. Into a sorrowful darkness  
she shed a drop of tear. Muna spoke:  
“O my Krishna, you have forgotten me.  
How could you, Lord, with a cruel heart  
wander away? How could you forget me?” (Devkota, 2018, p. 93)

Muna’s heart is filled with immense grief. She tearfully pleads Pashupati and Guhyeshwori. Muna sees a bad dream of being chased by a buffalo. Her mother-in-law comforts her not to fear the bad dream. But in reply Muna says:

The right eyelid twitches, I am worried.  
My heart aches deep inside and my head spins.  
My parents are in heaven, an innocent orphan,  
I find both in you, mother, and confide  
The gushing of my heart. (Devkota, 2018, p. 65)

Muna’s old mother-in-law believes that God Almighty sees everything. He gives justice to the humble.

Unluckily, Madan is stricken by cholera on his way back home. He is helpless. He urges his friends to favor him in his miserable condition:

Friends, don’t leave me in the forest, a prey  
to cruel crows and vultures. Back at home  
my aged mother, poor old mother will die  
and my Muna, lovely as the moon,  
will swoon to death. O my brothers, O my friends,  
I will not die just yet. . . . Save me,  
and my aged mother will bless you all. (Devkota, 2018, p. 71)

Instead of helping, Madan’s friends escape from there fearing the danger of contracting cholera. Madan’s friends desert him all alone. He is destined to die there. They ask him to stay there by remembering the Lord in his mind. It gets darker in the forest. His stone-hearted friends are already gone. The whole world turns cruel to him.

Fortunately, a Bhote approaches, bearing a torch. The stranger responds to the miserable condition of Madan.

. . . The Bhote looked around  
 To find out who was crying, saw the sick man  
 And spoke with love, 'Your friends and companions  
 Are wicked. My house is but two miles away.  
 You will not die. I shall carry you there.  
 Is that alright? Do not afraid.' (Devkota, 2018, p. 75)

The Bhote takes him to his home. He provides him the shelter and nutritious food. Madan gets recovered.

Poor Madan clutches the Bhote's feet considering him his Lord and appeals him to save his life. Madan finally realizes what humanity really is.

. . . Save me and God will look  
 After you. Those who help humankind  
 Are blessed in Paradise. A chhettri born  
 I touch these feet of yours with no disgust  
 Man's measure is his heart, not caste. (Devkota, 2018, p. 75)

The Bhote's help is priceless. Helpless Madan addresses Bhote as his savior touching his feet.

In Bhote's home, Madan feels the presence of God. The Bhote is not materialistically rich, but there is happiness everywhere. The source of Bhote's happiness is Nature. "God's effulgence was reflected in dew drops.//How He spoke in colorful songs of birds!" (Devkota, 2018, p. 77). These lines project the pantheistic view of Devkota. The surrounding of Bhote's house is the blending point of nature and culture. Madan is enchanted by the beauty of Nature. His heart is filled with joy. "Madan's soul enjoyed the salvation of Buddha's world" (Devkota, 2018, p. 85). Yet, he is reminded of his responsibility at home in Kathmandu.

Bhote is guided by the spirit of true humanism. He selflessly helps Madan in his suffering. Madan sees the image of God in Bhote. Madan wants to offer a bag of gold to Bhote as a gift. But Bhote denies to accept it from Madan for his help. The Bhote says:

I was fortunate to serve you.  
 We do not seek returns.  
 Go, keep us in your mind! We farm our own food  
 which we consume. We take nothing for free.  
 What can you give? What I can take?  
 I don't ask for anything. Just remember  
 Chyangba's name. Tell your people about him. (Devkota, 2018, p. 105)

Bhote helps Madan out of compassion and love. His heart is filled with Lord Buddha's pity and compassion. Bhote not only demonstrates an act of true humanism, he also teaches how we can help others selflessly.

The Bhote does not take the gift of gold for doing charity. He takes it as his duty (*dharma*). He very sincerely fulfills it. The Bhote asks Madan to go back to his family. He simply asks Madan to remember the name of *Chyangba* (young man) and send the old woman's blessings out to his children in Bhot. Seeing the greatness of the Bhote's heart, tears flow from Madan's eyes.

At home, Madan's old mother lies on her bed waiting for her death. The light of Madan's house grows dim. It is flickering out. During her last stage of life, Madan's mother speaks the bitter reality of human life. Every person must leave this world. She addresses her daughter-in-law:

. . . Everyone travels this path,  
The rich and the poor. This dust returns to dust  
on the shores of sorrow. Bear it stoically,  
Don't yield to sorrow, to the net of grief.  
Devote yourself to the Lord to illumine  
the final path. I have seen the garden  
of the world bloom and wither away; in my sorrow dear, I came to know God.  
Seeds planted on earth bear fruit in heaven;  
what we give on earth, we receive in heaven. (Devkota, 2018, pp.107-109)

Madan's mother is bedridden. She is waiting for her death. She expects her son to arrive before her soul departs from her body. By grasping Muna's hands she says, "Dear daughter, now my time has come. I must leave this world. Weeping will not help you, daughter. Don't weep" (Devkota, 2018, p. 107). This is the way of the world. What matters in this world is humanity. This realization gives everyone a sense of living hope.

Madan arrives home with sacs of gold. But he could not save his mother and wife. His sick mother passes away. Madan transfers his responsibility to his sister. He asks her to fulfil his mother's desires to build taps for drinking and shelters for exhausted travelers. Then, Madan seeks Muna here and there. Finally he knows that his Muna has already passed away from her uncle's house. He could not believe this harsh reality of Muna's death. Madan's sister consoles him. Due to the demise of his dear mother and Muna, the jewel of his heart, he is angry at God. He, too, wants to be liberated from the ocean of suffering of this world. Madan says, "Don't

look towards the earth, I too shall come. //With a token of tear in my eyes, I too shall come to visit you” (Devkota, 2018, p. 133). Leaving this physical world of suffering, Madan wants to live in the spiritual world with Muna. Finally, Madan realizes the immortality of soul.

Madan performs the act of detachment from the material world. He offers his wealth to his sister and asks her to fulfil his mother's wish. The last section of *Muna-Madan* encourages us to act:

In the body's wick the flame of the mind  
burns to create a serene heaven.

Worship God with your act, says Laxmiprasad. (Devkota, 2018, p. 143).

Devkota reiterates the teaching of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. One should work without expecting the fruits of action. The fruit of one's action lies in the hands of God.

Finally, Devkota reveals his philosophy of life. Everyone should be guided by his/her spiritual quest. In the journey of one's life, one should always struggle to come out of the prison house of material greed and dead customs. The closing verse of *Muna-Madan* tells:

. . . Mustering courage,  
we have to understand this world. Resolutely  
facing it, let us flap our wings from earth  
towards the sky. If life were just eating and drinking  
were life, what would living men?  
What would being human mean  
if we have no hopes for the future? (Devkota, 2018, p. 143)

While living on earth, we are to be spiritually awakened. One is to be enlightened with spiritual knowledge. Madan's spiritual connection with God has not been broken. He has not lost his sense of responsibility towards his family and community. He retains his spiritual sensibility expressed at the time of departure to Bhot. “Fear not, God is above. Collect yourself! //It won't be dark forever, love. New day shall dawn” (Devkota, 2018, p. 27). Madan is not afraid of anything because he is sure that God is with him in his journey of life.

In the journey of life, Madan explicitly appeals his God for help. Devkota is a spiritual humanist. In *Muna-Madan*, the Bhote, though rustic and simple, has compassion towards the needy. He is no more calculative of loss and gain. When he finds Madan in a miserable condition, he helps him selflessly. He discards the material gift in its return. Man is born to suffer. Man only attains immortality after

being purified by suffering. According to Devkota, the body is just an outer covering, and the soul inside is immutable and indestructible, immortal and imperishable. In the essay “Life, Love, and Death in *Muna-Madan*,” Shreedhar Lohani analyzes the traits of the Bhote, Muna and Madan. According to Lohani, “The altruistic Bhote as opposed to the town ruffian is a rustic character—simple, natural and noble whereas town ruffian as a foil to the Bhote is a villain corrupted by ‘civilization’ and potentially dangerous to life and society” (Lohani, 2012, p. 22). Muna, a victim figure, is the heroine in *Muna-Madan*. Both Madan and Muna are victimized by the patriarchal conceptions of masculinity and femininity. Muna ultimately defies all kinds of sufferings. In this regard, Lohani further writes, “Her death becomes an act of triumph over the town ruffian or anybody who takes woman as a mere plaything. Through death Muna not only transcends the world of oppression and arte, but defies death a positive act of the will” (Lohani, 2012, p. 24). Muna bears the trials and tribulations enabling her to enter the realm of spirituality.

Finally Madan realizes that he should be liberated from the clutch of the way of this world. Regarding Madan’s suffering and realization, Lohani explains:

*Muna-Madan* clearly posits the philosophical doctrine that in life Reality or Truth is covered by a veil of illusion. It is only after qualifying oneself by love and suffering leading to purification and knowledge and dedicating oneself to one’s duty that the veil of illusion is lifted. Only the Light is real and death is actually the process of waking up from the divine dream we call life. In the Bhagavad Gita Lord Krishna says that the body is just an outer covering, and the soul inside is immutable and indestructible, immortal and imperishable. Death is therefore not a catastrophe but a natural process. Suffering is sacred. (Lohani, 2012, p. 21)

Madan realizes that he has to leave this world for the salvation of his soul/spirit. He decides to leave the suffering of this world. For him, suffering is the ultimate way to the paradise where he would meet his Muna and enjoy their everlasting unification.

## Conclusion

As a spiritual humanist, Devkota emphasized on love and kindness to others. Devkota has a tremendous love for humanity. He gives emphasis on man’s relationship with man and with God. To serve mankind is to serve the Supreme. Devkota criticizes the tradition of exclusiveness and isolation. He hates discrimination. He discards the hollowness of any traditions and rituals. Our service to humanity is essential for one’s spiritual growth.

As a true humanist and spiritual realist, Devkota advocates an acceptance of life and its activities. One's obligation is to fulfill his/her duty. According to Devkota, all human beings are the bearers of the same God. Discrimination has no place in Devkota's spiritual humanism. Devkota projects the synthesis of humanism and spiritualism in *Muna-Madan*.

In an age of capitalist culture, spiritual values are missing. People are giving more importance to the worldly pleasures. They are busy in getting material prosperity. But it only brings restlessness and misery among people. The modern world is in need of spiritually guided human souls for the good of humanity. Only spiritually motivated people can uplift the wretched condition of modern world. They are ready to go through the path of hardships and suffering. The essence of spiritual humanism is love, the gift of God. Without it, no human can help or serve others selflessly. Love is a binding force and a supreme human virtue.

Devkota reiterates his philosophy of spiritual humanism in *Muna-Madan*. Devkota hates the discrimination among the people in terms of castes and economic status. According to Devkota, God dwells in the hearts of human beings. God is pleased if we offer our service to humanity. Hatred and division in the name of caste, creed or class have no place in Devkota's spiritual humanism.

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