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## Writing and Rewriting the Pharmakon: The Use of Horse in Modern Nepali Fiction

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### Abstract

First introduced by Jacques Derrida, the Greek usage of the concept ‘pharmakon’ refers to three things: either the poison, the remedy, or the scapegoat. In modern Nepali literature, the horse as pharmakon has appeared as the most self-contradictory image: it has referred to the loss, assertion, and reinforcement of honor. This paper takes BP Koirala’s “The Colonel’s Horse,” Madan Mani Dixit’s “Lattu Miyako Ghodi” [Lattu Miya’s Mare], Nayan Raj Pandey’s *Ular [Imbalance]* (1996), and Mandira Madhushree’s “Budhanko Ghodi” [Budhan’s Mare] (2017) to see how each of the authors makes use of a horse to discuss the modern values in Nepali society. To address this issue, the present study aims to explore the uses of horses in Nepali literature to explore the inner composition of self and the contents lying therein. On the one hand, such analysis contributes to animal studies in modern Nepali literature; on the other, it highlights the changing perceptions of horses in Nepali society. The creative artists use a particular symbol to discuss the unique contemporary phenomenon through it. The authors from Koirala to Madhushree have found the horse to be a point of departure to reflect on the modern world’s inner and outer reality. On the whole, the selected Nepali literary texts treat the horse as a symbol to bring psychological and socio-economic reality into it, thus pondering on it as a modern pharmakon in modern Nepali fiction.

**Keywords:** Pharmakon, animal studies, human agency, modern Nepali fiction

### Introduction

Modern Nepali literature began in the 1930s when Nepali society first glimpsed an intellectual awakening although some of the instances of such awakening were observed in the early modern Nepali fiction. For instance, BP Koirala (1914-1982) had envisioned the fall of the feudal order through his seminal story “Karnalko Ghoda” [The Colonel’s Horse] as he critically examines the soul of the Rana Oligarchy in it. Other authors have also adequately dealt with the changes in society in the 1930s and 1940s in

Nepal's literary landscape. The paper focuses on the use of horses as modern semiotics in Nepali fiction, as creative writers have employed horses to write the opposite aspects of social and political life.

This study has explored how modern Nepali fiction uses horses as a symbol to reveal a deeper sketch of the modern Nepali self. As a symbol, they represent loss, assertion, and reinforcement of dignity and honor in Nepali literature. The present study has taken BP Koirala (1914-1982), Madan Mani Dixit (1923-2019), Nayan Raj Pandey (1966-), and Mandira Madhushree (1972-) by taking their fictional works "Karnelko Ghoda" [The Colonel's Horse], "Lattu Miyako Ghodi" [Lattu Miya's Mare], *Ular* [Imbalance], and "Budhako Ghodi" [Budhan's Mare] respectively. They are closely read and analyzed to examine the relationship between humans and animals, exploring the way such relationship makes sense to the world. Using the term 'pharmakon' in a modern sense, these fictional works treat the horse as a symbol to incorporate loss, assertion, and reinforcement of human dignity and honor.

In this paper, the study explores how and why the authors have employed the horse as a symbol, referring to the opposite spirit of their contexts. In particular, the use of horse reflects on the political goal of such use in creative literary works. Therefore, this study has attempted to interpret the political goal behind the use of the horse as a modern pharmakon in Nepali fiction. The study has taken four texts that have used horses as characters from the above-mentioned creative writers. In addition, ~~I have~~ the study has not dealt with other texts in Nepali literature that have discussed or referred to horses as their subject matter.

### Literature Review

Many scholars have tangentially discussed Koirala's "Karnelko Ghoda," Dixit's "Lattu Miyako Ghodi," Pandey's *Ular*, and Madhushree's "Budhanko Ghodi." Often, Koirala is approached from a Freudian lens of interpretation. The same type of reading has also gained primacy in the case of other writings. For instance, Michael Hutt states that the influence of Western philosophy appeared in Nepali writings in the 1950s as the authors began to assimilate the Western models of thinking about society. As he states, "Rather than presenting a straightforward narrative involving stereotypical characters whose motives and status remained unanalyzed, several Nepali writers began to investigate the mental processes of the unconscious and subconscious mind and to suggest that the old moral certainties could no longer remain unquestioned. The earliest examples of such innovative works are stories such as Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala's "The Colonel's Horse" (*Karnelko Ghoda*), published in the late 1930s, in which a young woman who is married to an elderly colonel sublimates her sexual frustration in an infatuation with the Colonel's stallion..." (174)

Hutt's reading of Koirala's fiction humanizes the horse in order to sublimate the repressed content from the Colonel's wife. Besides, Hutt's reading seeks to read Koirala's fiction against a Freudian model of the formation of the unconscious, primarily governed by libido. Extending Hutt's argument, Keshav Raj Chalise writes that the wife was sexually dissatisfied with the Colonel: thus, she comes closer to the horse to sexually please herself (182). Chalise reads the story to explore the issue of sexual attraction between the wife and the horse as he concludes that the Colonel kills the horse out of his jealousy for his wife's attraction towards the horse.

However, political readings of such texts have revealed different kinds of meanings. In psychoanalytical interpretations of the texts, the horse has carried out the function of serving as a sexual partner as it appears as a character in the landscape of the

story. Giving a Marxist reading on Mandira Madhushree's "Budhanko Ghodi," Ghan Shyam Neupane states that Madhushree depicts the poverty of the Tandi region through the narrative of Budhan and his mare. Neupane engages with the story to explore the issues of the subalterns who make a living by using the horse as a resource. Komal Prasad Phuyal's study of the plight of the subaltern people reveals that Nayan Raj Pandey's *Ular* depicts the people continuously struggling to escape from the maze of politics. Phuyal critically observes,

Selling the land, he regains all he lost during his journey in the maze: horse, Tonga, and house. For one thing, he is further pushed to the margin from his central location at the bazaar since he buys a house and land away from his previous place. For the other, he is rewarded with the power of decision: he makes decision on his own now. Hence, he accepts and declares Draupadi his wife. Having been adequately acquainted with the world, he takes a bold decision by rejecting Rajendra Raj as his benefactor. (64)

Like Neupane, Phuyal also explores the plight of people who are dependent on horses for their livelihood. This type of critical scholarship treats the horse and the human as interconnected for each other's existence. The horse helps earn a living for the human, who in turn takes care of the animal. In psychoanalytical readings, the horse becomes a mere instrument for the satisfaction of the characters who suffer the absence of such pleasure in their lives.

As discussed above, Koirala, Madhushree, and Pandey's works have been approached either through a Freudian psychoanalytical or Marxist perspective. No critic has adequately responded to Dixit's short story. Critics have not contextually read the texts by focusing on the specific animal used in them. This paper departs from the previous interpretations of the text by bringing the horse in each text as a symbol to interpret the socio-political values of Nepali society. Each of the selected authors has employed a horse in the historical transition of Nepali society: Koirala views the changing political landscape of Nepal in the 1930s through the horse; Dixit rereads the transition of Birgunj in the 1980s through Lattu Miya's mare; Pandey critiques the power relations in Nepalgunj after the change in 1990 through Prem Lalwa's mare; and Madhushree's narrative seeks to explore the life and politics of the subaltern people in Tandi, Chitwan in and around 2006 through Budhan's horse. Each horse represents a unique historical period in Nepal's transition. This study specifically focuses on using the horse as a signifier through which the author reflects on the changing nature of the world, its social and political values, and its reconfigurations.

### **The Concept of Pharmakon: A Theoretical Perspective**

The horse has emerged as a modern pharmakon in Nepali fiction since it combines the opposites in one semiotic. In Nepali fiction, the horse has been treated as a modern semiotic that holds the contradictions together. French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) uses pharmakon as a Greek signifier of poison and remedy while interpreting Plato's text *Phaedrus*. In this regard, Matthew Sharpe critiques,

Derrida's interpretation of the *Phaedrus* then is centrally concerned with writing. And from the beginning, he stresses that writing is wittingly or unwittingly associated by Plato or by his Socrates with the pharmakon. This Greek signifier, as everyone knows after Derrida, can mean both poison and cure, also recipe, remedy, spell, and charm. (158)

Derrida's interpretation of Plato's text reveals that one signifier can have the possibility of holding together multiple opposite signifieds. As this study reads the selected fictional works from Nepali literature, Derrida's use of pharmakon has been treated as a critical

lens to understand and interpret the use of a horse in Nepali fiction. By deriving critical insights from Derrida's understanding of pharmakon and his interpretation of *Phaedrus*, this study has approached interpreting Nepali fiction in its context to examine the relationship between humans and horses.

After crises in Western modernity that excessively valued human-centric rationality, animal studies suggests that humans and animals are not the opposite. Instead, they complement and complete each other. As Annabelle Dufourcq argues, "As the human-animal dichotomy came in for radical criticism, with the so-called crisis of modernity, the consideration of the link between imagination and animal life, in human and non-human animals, made a comeback on the philosophical and scientific scene, although in a still understated and protean form" (2). This study applies the critical vocabulary and insights from animal studies to examine the relationship between humans and horses in the selected Nepali fiction. It approaches the horse as a modern pharmakon that embeds opposing values into a single signifier and unfolds specific meanings in a historical context.

### Modern Nepali Fiction: Critical Analysis

Modern Nepali fiction treats the horse as a character and a symbol of contradictions that have piled up during social development. As a pharmakon, the horse appears in Nepali fiction to refer to loss, assertion, and reinforcement of honor. Koirala's "Karnelko Ghoda," Dixit's "Lattu Miyako Ghodi," Pandey's *Ular*, and Madhushree's "Budhanko Ghodi" tell the stories of people that have the horse as a character. Koirala employs a horse so that the young wife can busy herself throughout the day, as her old husband fails to entertain her romantically. For Dixit's Lattu Miya, the horse serves him as a spiritual companion even though his wife misunderstands it as Lattu's sexual attraction towards the horse. Pandey's *Ular* pairs Prem Lawla with a horse in quest of his living. She is named Basanti that pulls his tonga and life alike. Similarly, Madhushree depicts Budhan's struggle in life in which the horse plays the role of a comrade and emerges as a symbol of hope for emancipation. Therefore, all characters seek a harmonious life through horse company in each case. The horse emerges as a symbol of the incomplete life, searching for an ideal world to reassert their human agency.

Koirala's short story depicts the uneven social setting through "Karnelko Ghoda" in the 1920s and 1930s. As the earliest example of modern Nepali fiction, it tells the unequal relationship between husband and wife in the most traditional society. The Colonel marries a very young wife who finds the company of a horse more rewarding than her husband and seeks refuge in the horse. The author pictures life in the late 1920s or early 1930s in the story as Michael Hutt writes, "The earliest examples of such innovative works are stories such as Koirala's 'The Colonel's Horse' (Karnelko Ghoda), published in the late 1930s, in which a young woman who is married to an elderly Colonel sublimates her sexual frustration in an infatuation with the Colonel's stallion" (175). Similarly, Dixit's "Lattu Miyako Ghodi" tells the story of a Tonga man serving his passengers in the Birgunj area. Lattu and the mare have a relationship that transcends the relationship of the horse and the Tonga man: Lattu's wife grows jealous of such a bond. Pandey's *Ular* writes the narrative of Prem Lalwa and Draupadi in Nepalgunj in the 1990s in the background of the feudal order maintained by local politicians like Rajendra Raj or Shanti Raja. Pandey tells the story of Prem's horse, Basanti, and Prem's beloved, Draupadi, who serves Prem as a faithful spiritual companion. After losing the horse, Prem sets out on a journey to reclaim the horse. However, he returns home with knowledge of the world and its ways. Madhushree's "Budhanko Ghodi" foregrounds Budhan as a Tonga man searching for a better future in the Tandi region of Chitwan after

the political change in Nepal in 2006. After his mare, Karishma, mates with Hariya's Salman accidentally, he dreams of emancipating from the present state after a foal is born in his family. However, Budhan and Karishma fall into the trap of a vicious circle of poverty: Karishma miscarries the foal one night. Koirala, Dixit, Pandey, and Madhushree treat the horse as a character in their fiction and weave the intricacies of life by depicting the inner soul of the horse. The central character in each story depends on the horse to complete himself/herself.

In their fiction, Koirala, Dixit, Pandey, and Madhushree work on the theme of loss of honor through the symbol of a horse. In the feudal order of the 1930s, a forty-five-year-old Colonel marries a nineteen-year-old girl and says he loves her dearly. Despite all the amenities at home, she cannot become happy with the Colonel; however, she cannot express her distress in his house (Koirala 29). Koirala pictures human beings as puppets in a repressive feudal order to show the system's decay in the 1930s. He presents the patrons of the order as decayed ones; still, they hold the political power. For instance, the Colonel has lost all the vitality. Here, Koirala writes:

Out of love, the Colonel said, "Why are you so much worried all the time? It's your time to enjoy. If you have any problem, do tell me."

The Colonel's wife thought it was unnecessary to answer this question. The Colonel would never understand her trouble. A forty-five-year-old bridegroom cannot comprehend the mental state of a young girl of nineteen. The Colonel lovingly picked her silent bride: she didn't forget the tormenting emotions that she had in her mind just now. Without minding about her bridegroom's age, she let the weight of her body rest on him. The Colonel could not hold her and he fell onto the ground. The string of the bride's dream got suddenly broken off. The bride hatefully looked at her groom, who had fallen down. He was sort of breath, panting due to the pressure to help his bride stand up. From that day, the bride had the greatest feeling of disrespect towards her groom in her heart. (30)

In Koirala's fiction, the young bride has lost her honor and dignity to stand independently as a human being. The overwhelming presence of the context helps readers understand the position of each character in the text.

Dixit treats the horse as a means to explore Lattu Miya's heart. For the author, the protagonist and the horse have become one long ago as he writes, "Nobody can know Lattu Miya except his mare" (107). Lattu's wife, Ramjaniya, misreads the spiritual bonding as physical attraction between her husband and the horse. For her, the horse stands as a co-wife. Dixit thus narrates:

Ramjaniya also did not recognize him. Many a time, she had complained, "You care for the lame mare more than you do to me. You love her. You have sweet talk to her. You feed her better things than you do to me. You decorate her with ornaments. You caress her, kiss her, and weep for her. You go and sleep with her. Why do you come to torture me? She is young. I have given you three children, haven't I?" And she had told these things to the women of the village also. (107)

Lattu attempts to convince his wife that the horse has helped him earn a living for his family and that he has to take care of the horse for the sake of the family. Lattu reveals himself through the horse, and as a character, the horse becomes the core of Lattu's heart as Bruce Boehrer argues that the problem of literary characters can be best approached through the standpoint of animal studies (542). Therefore, Lattu Miya and the mare talk to each other and understand each other's language. Lattu Miya asks the mare to take him and Sunil Babu to the office on time, and the mare seems to understand it (Dixit 108). On the one hand, Lattu's intimacy with the horse enhances his performance as a

Tonga man on the road; on the other, his wife has spread the message that Lattu has developed physical intimacy with the horse. Lattu's horse yolks together the uneven perceptions about her in a single symbol.

In Dixit's fiction, Lattu speaks about the horse and informs Sunil Babu about his interactions with the horse. The author depends on Lattu's version of reality, which can be questioned through the interpretive lens of animal studies. Carry Wolfe critically views animal studies as fundamentally challenging "the schema of knowing subject and its anthropocentric underpinnings" (568). When the approach focuses on Lattu's soul, one can see the scars of the loss of honor as he develops a certain degree of intimacy with the horse. In Pandey's *Ular*, the omniscient narrator pictures the social and political world: Prem Lalwa serves the city as a Tonga man in Nepalgunj. When he takes his Tonga to participate in Shanti Raja's victory rally, his horse, Basanti, cannot pull the overloaded Tonga. The complete confusion overpowers Prem Lalwa when he loses his horse. As Pandey narrates: "For a moment, Prem Lalwa stood dead-still, confused. Who died? Basanti or he? He or Basanti? At last, Prem Lalwa realized it was Basanti that died" (37). Though neglected by society, Prem Lalwa has cherished the company of Basanti and Draupadi: the former loves him like his mother, feeding him every day, and the latter is his beloved.

Even though Pandey does not state anything about Basanti, the readers can see a close connection between the Tonga man and his horse. In Dixit's fiction, Lattu and his horse develop a bond that the Tonga man himself reveals. Madhushree's Budhan drives his Tonga in the Tandi region. Hariya's stallion, Salman, impregnates Budhan's mare at the bank of the Rapti River against even Budhan's faint hope. Madhushree thus describes the scene:

He had freed the mare from Tonga to graze at the bank of the Rapti River after taking a group of tourists to Saurah Chowk from Tandi. Hariya's Salman was also grazing at a distance there. He had not freed Karishma with this specific purpose. He had not expected or doubted that such a thing would happen.

However, Salman and Karishma did the unexpected. (191-2)

Budhan had never experienced dignity in his life. Orphaned at an early age, he has lived a solitary life (200) after his grandfather's death. The union of Hariya's Salman and Budhan's Karishma elates his heart as he sees the possibility of his emancipation in it.

Humans have depended on animals for their strength and ability to reproduce and serve humans. However, literature has also depicted them as the spiritual companions of human beings. In Koirala, Dixit, Pandey, and Madhushree's fiction, the horse appears as the character who journeys with the protagonist in a quest for dignity. The animal also understands the complexity of human life. Literary representation of animals emerges as a way of viewing contemporary reality in a new light. Furthermore, Susan McHugh delves into the poststructuralist aesthetic accounts of contemporary animal representation and argues that humans can understand animals better by questioning themselves. Furthermore, she writes,

Poststructuralist aesthetic accounts of contemporary animal representation highlight the ways in which the mechanisms of representation confront the singularity or closure of meaning with forms that build in gaps, fissures, or ruptures. Contrived metaphoric breakdowns and other ostentatiously mismanaged animal representations invite critique as unequivocal formal failures, only to prompt queries about (and make efforts to respond to) the inadequacies or shortcomings built into representational processes concerning animals. (491)

Koirala's horse represents the feudal order's failure and the youth's protest. A rebellious voice of the youth was gaining shape in the 1930s in Nepal. Koirala's horse represents both the contradictions, implying the absence of honor in society. Dixit's horse helps to take the narrator into Lattu's misread heart, while Pandey's Prem Lalwa leaves home to claim compensation for his horse from Shanti Raja. Similarly, Madhushree's horse symbolizes hope for emancipation for Budhan, who has lived without dignity. As a symbol, the horse serves as a means to refer to loss and assertion of human dignity in Nepali fiction.

The characters reinforce their honor through the horse in Koirala, Dixit, Pandey, and Madhushree. Since animals become vehicles for unfolding a particular social reality, Nepali fiction employs horses as a symbol to critically assess the social context and make a political claim about the people. As Christine Ivanovic also argues,

Animal tales constructed as exempla illustrate basic problems of social organization that every society must face and overcome. The given example concerns the coexistence of various species, some of which may be the prey/food of others. The living space is divided according to the species' respective needs and abilities and clearly separated (such as when one flies while the other walks on the ground). (714)

In Koirala's short story, the wife strengthens her dignity and honor by challenging the authority of the Colonel, who represents the decaying feudal order of the 1930s. The horse gives her company and sacrifices himself to reinforce his mistress's honor and dignity.

Koirala treats the horse humanely when he depicts the intimacy between the horse and the Colonel's wife. After knowing she cannot enjoy the bliss of conjugal life with the Colonel, she begins spending time with the horse in the stable. The author shows the intimacy: "The Colonel's wife placed her hand on the horse's body as it was munching grains. The body of the horse would shiver at her touch. The horse would take its muzzle, eat grains out, and neigh for a while. Then, it would keep itself busy, munching the grains again" (31-32). The intimacy causes problems in their conjugal life as the husband reclaims his wife for himself only. Koirala further narrates the tension between the husband and wife, thus:

'What troubles do you have to tell me such things? What troubles your heart that you get peace by serving the horse? You do have a certain duty towards me, too. Have you ever thought of me as much as you have thought of the horse? To tell you the truth, I envy the horse when I see you so intimate with it,' the Colonel was almost in tears as he completed it. (32)

The Colonel competes with the horse: he wants to control the horse. The horse retaliates by throwing him off his back. The Colonel falls to the ground. His wife rides the horse after the Colonel is thrown off its back. The horse happily trots around the compound, and the ride elates the wife. She had never experienced such bliss. The Colonel cannot tolerate it and shoots the horse dead (34), ending the life of the horse. The decaying old order does not allow the people to have the bliss of life.

Dixit's fiction treats the horse as a window to delve into the heart of Lattu Miya. The horse can function as a critical lens for Koirala to examine the balance of power under the Rana Oligarchy; on the other hand, Dixit employs it as a kaleidoscope to see through the narrator and his narration to reach Lattu's heart and his attachment with his mare. The narrator examines the man's purity and finds an immense love for humanity. Dixit uses animals to explore humanism in his protagonist. As he describes,

Lattu is a simple farmer and Tonga driver. He is poor; yet, he has a pure heart. The mare is the source of happiness and bliss in his life; so, he takes care of her.

In his care, there is hearty, unknown and pure love and affection that children show to their playthings. In this sense, Lattu is also a humanist. One doesn't need to be a great philanthropist, scholar and altruist. Despite being ignorant and uneducated, the so-called lower-class people are the greatest humanists – Lattu has more affection for animals than the organizations and movements established for the cause of animals. (110)

Lattu openly tells Sunil that his wife envies the mare. Lattu takes care of the horse more than his wife. Once, his wife told him to go and sleep with the horse when there were people around him. Lattu Miya knows the difference between the love that one does for his wife and his horse. He tells Sunil: "What is it that you say, Sir? Man loves his wife and his children, but the love is not the same. Love for the wife and love for the mare are not the same, Sir. Ramjaniya understands it all; still, she turns adamant at times..." (110). He tries to convince his grieving wife that the mare has helped him earn a living for the family. By depicting the intimacy between the Tonga man and the horse, Dixit explores the inner strengths of Lattu Miya, who knows how to balance his wife and the horse. He treats both of them equally by differentiating their love for each other.

Like Dixit, Pandey's *Ular* also telescopes the nexus between humans and horses. Prem Lalwa solely depends on the horse to live in a corner of Nepalgunj. His horse, Basanti, is a source of income for him. After Basanti dies, he leaves home to claim for the compensation. As Prem Lalwa does not have money to go to Kathmandu, Draupadi gives him her ornament (50). As Annabelle Durfuorcq writes, "Animal subjectivities, in the framework of this ethical task, represent a most crucial challenge, with significant consequences for the shape the world(s) will take. Indeed, animal subjectivities refer us to processes of meaning-making and world-making beyond the false sense of security granted within the realm of *logos*" (223). The presence of the horse makes his life meaningful by helping the Tonga man earn a living. On the other hand, the death of the horse unfolds a different kind of reality: firstly, Prem Lalwa goes away from his place in search of justice and understanding of the ways of the world; and secondly, he realizes that one has to live with his beloved. Finally, he sells the plot of land and pushes himself to a further margin to settle himself by marrying Draupadi (79). In the end, Prem Lalwa buys a new horse to continue to work as a Tonga man. Prem understands the nature of life only after the death of the horse.

Madhushree envisions a world with her protagonist from the subaltern class. She implants hope in poor Budhan through the horse. Though Budhan's dream of a good life is never realized in the story, the author fixes the semiotic of a horse to kindle of a good life through it. Budhan's world depends on the horse as he envisions achieving a world for himself after his horse, Karishma, produces further horses. Here, Madhushree narrates:

Budhan had a dream right after buying Karishma –a reliable dream. He dreamed of rearing its foal and selling another horse. He hoped to construct a house for himself with the money. Then, he would marry.

"Would that Karishma conceive that day! It would take just a few years for the dream to come true!" He was happy at this prospect. (193)

Budhan expects to achieve a world of his own through the horse, though he does not have two thousand and five hundred rupees as the fees for the mating that the owner of Salman, Hariya, charges from the owners of the mare. Susan McHugh also concludes that animal studies explore the possibilities by breaking the limitations of human agencies and understanding new scopes in the world of animals (489). Budhan knows the limitations of earning money to settle in his present station. He begins to explore the opportunity to generate wealth by taming the reproduction of the horse that he has with



him. He forces pregnant Karishma harder to pay the charges for mating; however, the horse cannot tolerate the pressure, and she falls sick at the stable. Budhan also sleeps there with her. She gives birth to a dead foal. As Madhushree tellingly presents, "After continuously feeling restless for half an hour, Karishma shrank to herself. She shrieked. With the sound, a foal came out. There was a flood of blood. Immediately after this, Budhan saw that Karishma had given birth to a black but not yet developed foal; but, it was dead" (207). The fiction ends as a tragedy, showing Budhan's dream and inability to realize it in the present condition. Still, his search for dignity and honor, which he had never enjoyed in his life, is revealed through his interaction with the horse.

Koirala's horse embodies the multifaceted reality of the 1930s as it politically denotes the fall of the traditional, orthodox social order through the horse. The Colonel kills the horse because he happens to realize that he cannot compete with it. Dixit travels into the world of Lattu through his mare and understands his worldview. Lattu and his mare depend on each other, serve, and complete each other. Pandey and Madhushree project the possibility of a good life for the downtrodden people through the use of horses in their fiction. Modern Nepali fiction treats the horse as a symbol that can mean different things in different contexts. It has been treated as a semiotic to refer to the power imbalance and the rulers' fall. On the other hand, it has equally served to refer to the complex social reality in the 1970s as in Dixit's fiction, in the 1990s (in Pandey's fiction), and in the first decade of the twenty-first century (in Madhushree's short story). Across the vast landscape of modern Nepali fiction, horses have constantly appeared and reappeared to embed the divergent spirit of society.

### Conclusion

The horse has emerged as the modern pharmakon in Nepali fiction in that it synthesizes the opposing aspects into one. In the Derridian reading of *Phaedrus*, the pharmakon is the Greek signifier of poison and remedy. By extension, the horse can reread a modern pharmakon in Nepali fiction as it refers to loss, assertion, and reinforcement of dignity and honor of the people. Koirala's "Karnelko Ghoda" employs a horse to refer to the decay of vitality in the feudal order in the 1930s and to raise the rebellious voice for change through the Colonel's wife. Similarly, Dixit's "Lattu Miyako Ghoda" shows the protagonist exploring his inner sketch: he treats the horse as his spiritual companion, helping him in spiritual awakening. However, his wife and society see only physical attraction between the man and the horse. Pandey's Prem Lalwa and his horse, Basanti, share an exceptional bond: Prem Lalwa feels utterly helpless after Basanti dies. He leaves his house searching for justice in the world, goes to Kathmandu, gathers adequate courage to accept Draupadi, the local prostitute, as his wife, and finally settles himself with Draupadi. Basanti's death is a unique point of departure in Prem Lalwa's life to understand the world's ways. Finally, Madhushree's "Budhanko Ghodi" pictures are tragic at the margin. Budhan dreams of emancipation through the reproduction of the horse, and his dream collapses as his mare undergoes a miscarriage. Nepali fiction treats the horse as a modern pharmakon that brings together loss and assertion of human dignity and honor into one signifier by weaving the narratives of the nexus of humans and animals, exploring multifarious possibilities for human beings to complete themselves by accepting animals as part of their life.

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