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The Rhetoric of Sublime in LP Devkota's Works: A Critique of National Ethos

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Abstract

In his prose writings, Laxmi Prasad Devkota, popularly known as LP Devkota, makes subjective accounts of his embodied national sensibilities in the form of national ethos. He glorifies his land, people, language, and culture. Amidst the ongoing debates on the multiple characters of Nepali nationalism, this paper however aims to explore the rhetorical dynamics of evoking the national ethos in the eight selected essays from the anthology *Laxmi Nibandha Sangraha (Laxmi Essays Collection)* to explore how he intends to move his audience evoking in them a sense of love for the motherland, thereby evoking the national ethos. Instead of critiquing the historicity of Nepali nationalism, this paper explores how literary works are instrumental in evoking a sense of national consciousness in the readers. On the theoretical foundation of Longinus' rhetoric of sublime, the paper aims to investigate how activating the sublime, particularly the power to conceive great thoughts and strong and inspired emotions, Devkota renders Nepal the great, evoking a tremendous sense of national ethos. The paper concludes that his works are functional in evoking a sense of national ethos among the people in general.

Keywords: Sublime rhetoric, noble thoughts, national sensibilities, glorification, national ethos

Introduction

Popularly known as LP Devkota, Laxmi Prasad Devkota's *Laxmi Nibandha Sangraha (Laxmi Essays Collection)* is an anthology of essays on spectrum of ideas ranging from nation, nature, language, festivals, occupation to love and compassion. "Despite Devkota's lauded status as the Mahakavi ('Great Poet') of Nepali literature" (Hutt 128), this study focuses on his anthology of prose that manifests a tremendous sense of national ethos. In particular, "Ke Nepal Sano Cha?" ("Is Nepal Small?") evokes the national ethos in the most exclusive sense. However, it is manifested in several essays like "Pahadi Jiban" ("Hilly Life"), "Gaurishankar Yatra" ("Journey to

Gaurishankar”), “Nepali Shahitiya ko Itihasma Sarbashrestha Purus” (“A Great Person in the History of Nepali Literature”), “Birharu” (“The Braves”), “Pundit Lekhanath Poudyal ko Bisayema” (“About Pundit Lekhanath Poudyal”), “Hai Hai Angreji” (“Wow! Wow! English”) and “Asadha ko Pandhra” (“The Fifteenth of Asad”). The essay title, “Is Nepal Small?” itself forms a rhetorical question which presupposes the answer, NO. Nepal is not small. From the perspective of Longinus’ rhetoric of sublime, the researcher analyzes how Devkota evokes the national ethos in one way or other in the selected essays and justifies why Nepal is not small, on his subjective terms. He makes a super subtle and subjective accounts of its landscape, people, language, and festivals in evoking the national ethos.

Keeping the essay “Is Nepal Small?” at the center of this analysis, this paper equally draws evidences from the other selected essays to justify how Devkota evokes national sense and sensibilities through his perceptions on the elements associated with the nation and nationalism. The elements that he reiterates primarily fall into four categories: Nepal’s landscape, its people, language and festivals. “Is Nepal Small?” blends most of these elements into one to paint Nepal’s big picture however, “Hilly Life” and “Journey to Gaurishankar” bring landscape into account. “A Great Person in the History of Nepali Literature”, “The Braves”, and “About Pundit Lekhanath Poudyal” glorify people. “Wow! Wow! English” sheds light on how slavish copy of foreign language diminishes national pride and being predominantly an agricultural country, “The Fifteenth of Asad” captures a national festive mood of paddy plantation across the nation evoking the sense of national ethos.

To begin with “Is Nepal Small?” this rhetorical question bothers Devkota to his core. Since he is extremely obsessed by this bothering question, the essay develops into an extended answer to this rhetorical question. This obsession leads him in perceiving the problem in people’s mindset who could not perceive Nepal the way he perceives. He rigorously interrogates this mindset and thereby answers why Nepal is not small primarily glorifying nation’s landscape, people, language and festive mood in this as well as other selected essays.

Substantive researches on Devkota's prose work are meager. Since he is essentially regarded as the great poet of Nepal, the studies are mostly centered on his poetic works. Furthermore, the studies with an exclusive focus on the rhetorical dimension of national ethos in his prose writings in particular are rare. Michael Hutt credits Devkota for ushering typical Nepali musical quality *jhyaur*, in Nepali poetry (19). It is a kind of revolution in rendering Nepali character to the poetry. According to him, this is also a gesture “to break the stranglehold of classical conventions” (19) in Nepali literature. Furthermore, he claims that rendering Nepali common public's identity "could also be regarded as a literary manifestation of the Nepali nationalism that eventually toppled the Rana autocracy” (19). He argues how breaking the conventions helped to forge Nepali nationalism in general.

David Rubin finds romantic attributes in Devkota’s writings. He further claims, “Faith in emotions and imagination, love of nature and the quest for transcendental significance without commitment to rigorous dogmatism- all are easily accommodated by the Indian traditionalist as by the Romantic poet” (26) like Devkota. Rubin designates him to be like an Indian traditionalist since his philosophy is based-on Hindu-Vedic tradition and his adherence to Romanticism. Similarly, D.B. Thapa’s reading is in consonance with Rubin’s. Thapa reads Devkota’s, *Muna Madan* from the perspective of romanticism and contends that the text “contains all the major characteristics like strong subjectivism, foregrounding of folk culture, privileging the common over the sophisticated and spiritualization of nature that a romantic poetry should possess” (103).

It means, with Romanticism in essence, the text represents common people's struggles, aspirations and fantasies articulated in a common language which could be recited based on the prevalent folk musical tradition. Common people's story expressed in plain language register makes it easy to understand.

Dahal argues that Devkota's texts have the tenets of state building effects. He argues that Devkota "has had formative influence on state building" (19). Instead of stressing upon a single text he makes a general implication of the fragments of eclectic texts from Devkota that demonstrate some sort of nation building effects in general. Rather than rhetorical, Dahal's argument sounds political.

Sushil Kumar Shahi examines Devkota's overall literary texts putting him in the national as well as global literary contexts and argues that it would create a platform "to lead discussion on great poet of Nepal into international intellectual community" (402). Instead of a special focus on particular essays, he analyzes whole anthology *Laxmi Essays Collection* and argues that the essays "celebrate romantic imagination, illuminate life experiences in broader social context in which a man [takes birth], grows and dies" (417). His primary focus is on the dimensions of Devkota's texts with romantic and modernist tilt.

Pawan Baral argues that literature can be an effective medium to inculcate civic education in citizens. He reads Devkota's poem "Lunatic" as a rich source of contents on fostering civic sense. He argues, while depicting the contemporary socio-political contradictions of the society, the poem questions the prevailing social norms and beliefs and discloses the irony inherent in the people's behaviors (69). Next, Komal Phuyal examines "Lunatic" and "The Swallow and Devkota" on how Devkota uses the underlying systemic social errors as the contents of his poem to navigate the socio-historical forces in work in the formation of contemporary political lifeworld. Baral raises civic issues that impacts large section of society with some sort of relation to national ethos whereas Phuyal observes the text with an emphasis on formative effect upon the contemporary political consciousness, however not the national ethos as such.

These reviews reveal that most of the studies on Devkota center around his poetic landmarks rather than the rhetorical dimensions of his prose writings on national sensibilities. His prose works are compact, profound and significant. They are worth exploring. However, adequate attention to this dimension of his works is yet to be made. These reviews revolve around his literary and philosophical inclination like reading him as a romantic and modernist based on the poetic works. The rhetorical dimensions of his works have not been adequately taken heed of. With Longinus' rhetoric of sublime, this study marks a point of departure to venture into the rhetorical significance of the selected essays with a focus on how he evokes national ethos in glorifying several national elements like nation's landscape, people, language and culture with the gap identified so far. There are ongoing debates on how to perceive Nepali nationalism historicizing it from the perspective of center and the margin however the essential tilt of this paper is to explore how Devkota's prose works can be instrumental in evoking the sense of nationalism as such either it be mainstream or of margin.

Despite several researches on Devkota's landmark poetic creations, a study on this aspect of his prose writings is virtually unnoticed. No genuine researches have been carried out keeping the rhetorical aspects of his prose works in terms of evoking national ethos in general. This paper fundamentally aims to explore his national sensibilities manifested in the selected essays through Longinus' concept of sublime keeping national ethos at the center to address the research gap identified hereof.

The study primarily revolves around why Devkota poses the rhetorical question to his intended audience in "Is Nepal Small?" that obsesses him and how he answers to

this question in glorifying the elements of nation and nationalism not only in this but also in other selected essays. What rhetoric he employs to justify his preconceived answer 'NO' to the rhetorical question is the key concern of this paper. Furthermore, the study centers around exploring his motif behind posing the question. To put it more precisely, the researcher seeks answer to what he achieves in justifying 'NO' answer for the question posed. The objective of this study is to explore the inherent implication of the selected essays to the readers in terms of literature's role in evoking the national ethos.

Moreover, as this is not a study on the historicity of Nepali nationalism as such, it does not necessarily make a critical observation on the evolution of the different trajectories of Nepali nationalism either from the mainstream or from the margin but is primarily based on the rhetorical analysis of the Devkota's use of elevated language in venerating his motherland with an inherent aim of evoking a sense of love towards the nation's landscape, people, culture and language among the intended readers. This is the library research and delimited to the textual evidences from the selected eight essays to justify that Devkota evokes national ethos with a recourse to Longinus' sublime rhetoric through the essays. Despite the apothegmatic nature and the compactness, the selected essays have profound rhetorical significance in terms of national ethos they evoke in the audience in general.

The Rhetoric of Sublime: A Theoretical Perspective

Sublime is as a state of 'loftiness', height or elevation that ignites awe, astonishment, grandeur, ecstasy, wonder, terror and admiration that one enters into after undergoing specific experiences (Doran 1). One can have such experience in enjoying a work of art or watching a movie or painting or reading a book or encountering any scene, object, event or situation. This paper however focuses on the way Devkota employs the rhetoric of sublime in glorifying the national sentiment through his prose works.

Devkota employs the rhetoric of sublime in epitomizing his national sensibilities, particularly, regarding his embodiment of these sensibilities and his personal perceptions towards them. This paper, therefore takes the key tenets of Longinus' rhetoric of sublime in analyzing the selected essays. Longinus's sublime is based on the capacity of the great poets who can touch the core of the emotional faculty of the audience provoking the great ideas and emotions in them through their art, primarily a poetry (Fyfe 179). R. Selden writes that "sublime poetry contained either great ideas or great emotion" (164). With the backdrop of sublime rhetoric, this paper examines Devkota's prose rather than poetry even in which he manifests the greatness of the poetic quality inherent in him.

Longinus' theory of sublime is the distillation of the ideas and thoughts articulated in his retrieved Greek manuscript found in the fragments titled '*Peri hypsous*'. Literal translation of this is "On the Sublime". This Greek philosophy and theory of sublime appeared in literature, art and aesthetic only from 16th century onwards to the present when it was first translated into French by Boileau and evolved through Kant, Burke and Lyotard. However, its roots dates back to the Greek classical period around the first century AD. The relevance of this concept in the domain of literature, art and aesthetics is profound till the present.

Critics have roughly divided the idea of sublime into two domains; 'rhetorical sublime' and 'aesthetic sublime'. Doran explains that "the largest hurdle to understanding the sublime as a coherent discourse is the gulf that supposedly separates the 'rhetorical sublime' of Longinus and Boileau from the 'aesthetic sublime' of Burke and Kant" (9). Regarding the two different aspects of Longinus's sublime, S. Guerlac argues that Longinus' text has emphasized the complimentary or for that matter reciprocal effects of both 'rhetorical sublime' and what he terms as 'natural sublime'.

Guerlac argues, "We begin to see how ironic it is that the Longinian sublime has been trivialized with reference to a distinction between a 'natural sublime' and a 'rhetorical sublime' when one of the most crucial features of the Longinian sublime (and of this text) is the neutralization of the opposition between nature and art and the enactment (or elaboration) of their reciprocity" (278).

It means Longinus lays equal emphasis to both natural genius as well as linguistic art to produce the sublime effect. There is a 'structuring effect' of Longinus' sublime in the subsequent theories of aesthetic that take sublime into account all the way from Kant to the modernist and even post-modernist critics (Doran 9). Thus, Longinus' sublime is seminal in terms of the theories and philosophies on sublime developed thereafter.

In terms of the rhetorical dimension of the sublime, the concern is about the intensity of the impact the artwork leaves upon the audience through the elevated thoughts and language use and the extent to which they are moved. The impact is assessed through the experience of sublimity the artwork exerts upon the audience. Doran defines Longinus' experience of sublimity "as overpowering astonishment and awe, and as an elevation of the mind above its normal state" (9). Devkota profoundly elevates his own mind and thereby moves the readers in glorifying Nepal's landscape, people, language and festivals in evoking Nepali sensibilities through the elevated language as per Longinus' rhetorical sublime. Shelden argues, "There is also a rhetorical strand in Longinus' theory, which treats grand emotions as the appropriate concomitant of great thoughts" (164). Rather than the mere persuasion as the conventional goal of the rhetoric, here the aim is to move the audience with a profound emotional impact. It is something like co-experiencing similar emotional state of mind by the reader as well as the writer to evoke shared emotions through the sublime effect. It means, not in a mere sense of persuading but in deeply moving the audience, the sublime has a profound rhetorical effect upon the readers. In terms of this rhetorical effect, Longinus argues in his original treaty, "On the Sublime" that reads:

For the effect of a genius is not to persuade the audience but rather to transport them out of themselves. Invariably what inspires wonder with its power of amazing us always prevails over what is merely convincing and pleasing. For our persuasion are usually under our control while these things exercise an irresistible power and mastery and get the better of every listener. (163)

The passage reveals how sublime works. As persuasion is itself in the control of the audience the sublime transcends beyond the personal control in terms of impact it exerts into them. It works in experiencing transcendence that arises in reading the text that has an overwhelming power of elevating audience into an emotional rapture. Moreover, the artist must be a genius for the power of producing such an effect. Genius poets are preeminent and blessed with what Longinus calls "consummate excellence and distinction of language" (163). The effect they produce through their art are immortal and everlasting. In this sense the impact of such art does not only remains in the level of persuading the reader but perplexing them and transporting them above than ordinary.

The sublime rhetoric works through the power of the use of language to the extent that audience are not only persuaded but moved. N. O'Gorman argues, "Longinus's treatise might as well have been entitled *Beyond Persuasion*, for its stated subject is not the available means of persuasion or the well-being of the public per se, but the road (*methodos*) to ecstasy (*ekstasis*) via 'height' or hypsos" (73). This is the rhetorical act in itself, however not in conventional sense of persuading but transcending beyond it to produce irresistible impact of moving the audience which Devkota does.

Doran summarizes five key sources of sublime as elaborated in Longinus' "On the Sublime". They are; power to conceive great thoughts, strong and inspired emotions, "proper construction of figures (both figures of speech and thoughts), nobility of language" and "dignified and elevated word arrangement" (59). Among the five, the first two are natural ability innate to an artist whereas the last three can be acquired since they are related with the techniques one can develop through drill.

Among the five key sources, this paper takes the first into account, i.e., natural ability to conceive great thoughts or the grandeur of thought that engenders the sublime. As per Longinus, the great thoughts further have three dimensions. According to Doran, "Longinus divides grandeur of thought/conception into three aspects: *megalophrosyne* (nobility of mind or soul), *zēlosis-mimesis* (zealous imitation or emulation), and *phantasia* (imagination or visualization)" (60). Particularly, this paper analyzes Devkota's essays from the perspective of his nobility of mind and powerful imagination to render Nepal the great. What follows is an analysis of how he embodies Nepali national sense and sensibilities in the selected essays and elevates his love for the motherland by ways of demonstrating the nobility of his thoughts and imagination and the ways he displays his regards and attachment towards these sensibilities through the rhetoric of sublime in the essays and aims to invoke the same in the audience.

Devkota's Prose Writings: A Critical Analysis

Devkota's Sources of the Sublime

Summarizing the essence of the sublime, Longinus claims that true sublime elevates our experience. It invigorates a sense of pride, exaltation and grandeur in us. It is an elevation of an ordinary experience to the superior one, that is engendered by the text or the artwork. He assures that "the true sublime naturally elevates us: uplifted with a sense of proud exaltation we are filled with joy and pride as if we had ourselves produced the very thing we had heard" (cited in Fyfe 179). As sublimity emanates from the grandeur of thought, Devkota renders Nepal the great in conceiving noble thoughts and imagination. This means, through the noble thoughts and imaginative representation of elements like landscape, people, language and festive mood he glorifies the ordinary things into noble invigorating a sense of national pride, exaltation and grandeur.

First, he conceives great thoughts and imagination advocating moral virtues and pro-nationalistic visions demonstrating himself a true son of his motherland. Second, his power to inspire strong emotions relates to the way he portrays the pure and divine thoughts on the motherland. Particularly, his remarks on the love of the motherland are significant as he mentions in "Is Nepal Small?" that he has unlimited desire to serve this land even when the death itself appears to him and ask what his ultimate desires in this life and beyond it are (Devkota 56). As per Longinus' notion, Devkota's propensity to noble thoughts and imagination are innate to him.

The three other sources of sublime are not innate but the crafts developed through drills as O'Gorman refers to Longinus, who "argues in his treatise that natural greatness of thought and a powerful pathetic faculty underlie the subject, whereas figures, diction, and word choice constitute the orderly way" (74) which are also equally powerful in Devkota since he is deft in deploying the language (figures of speech and thoughts, nobility of language and elevated word arrangement) to produce sublimity. Therefore, according to O'Gorman, "The originary sources for *hypsos* (sublime) are neither strictly artistic nor strictly inartistic: powers of thought and feeling, figures, diction, rhythm, and arrangement" (78). What follows now is how Devkota employs the rhetoric of conceiving great thoughts and imagination in terms of the national elements he deploys to evoke the sense of national pride.

Devkota apotheosizes the landscape, nature and climate and lionizes Nepali people in justifying them the great. He evokes national ethos in conceiving great thoughts and inspired emotions and in the way he portrays and personally perceives the landscape, atmosphere, people and a general festive mood. Henceforth, his key sources of sublime have been roughly categorized into four categories; his dealings on Nepal's landscape, its people, the mother tongue and the festive mood.

Nation's Landscape

In depicting the mother nature, he glorifies the nation's landscape. In terms of the relationship between the nature and Longinus sublime, O'Gorman argues that there is a reciprocal relationship. One complements the other as he argues, "The relationship between nature and *hypsos* in Longinus is not hierarchical. Rather, the relationship is reciprocal: *hypsos* has its source and inspiration in nature, and nature its fulfillment in *hypsos*" (79). With this note, Devkota renders Nepal the great and the perfect place in the world where he profoundly feels at home by way of its natural grandeur. He opens "Is Nepal Small?" with a remark; "Nepal! Beautiful, peaceful [and] great!" (my trans.; 52). He justifies Nepal the great, not in terms of her sheer physical presence in the globe but by her virtues that Devkota could not find in others. Devkota subjectivizes his experience and assures that Nepal repels crowd and chaos and loves tranquility and peace, meditateness and knowledge. Though it is inquisitive to the modernity, it however worships the worth of the ancients and foresees the golden future. He stresses that Nepal is "small but heaven, tiny but prominent, small but a world in itself, remote but divine magic of the remoteness" (my trans.; 52). This way he valorizes Nepal's landscape with the noble attributes.

Devkota argues on the notion of smallness and bigness. He opines that they are contextual and relative. He argues that diamond, pearl and gem are small, sweet sounding innocent child is small and retina of our eye is small and the beat of the heart is small. If we say stars are big, they appear like small fireflies in the limitless cosmos. Christopher T. Holmes brings the Longinus' idea of "petty and servile mind" (43) which is opposite to noble mind. It means only such a servile mind does not see greatness in things according to Devkota. He brings these analogies and metaphors to discuss the paradox of smallness and bigness. He further claims that the perceptual difference owes to either physical or metaphysical dimensions of the things. This after all means that Nepal is great in terms of spiritual and metaphysical dimensions from his worldview.

Devkota pays a deep reverence to the bucolic and pristine nature and landscape of his motherland. He is lulled by the magical sound of the fountains and sweet hilly breeze. He is lulled by the soothing music of the cuckoo and the sound of Nepali fiddle *sarangi*. As per Holmes the impressive ideas that Longinus refers to are "known by their intensity" (45). Devkota adds intensity of his impressive ideas as he is mesmerized by the sunrise in Kantipur, freedom of the bird fly, dew in the bosom of rose petals, the purity of Aryan soul, his humanistic ethos and divine tradition that could see gods in the stones and flow of the holy Bagmati. He begins with the physics and gradually transcends to the metaphysic. He enters from the tangible and transcends to intangible. He begins by the reverence of homeland and ends in lionizing the Nepali soul. This is how he deploys noble thoughts to transcend from here to hereafter.

He picturizes Nepal as a miniature world in terms of the topographic, bio and climatic diversity that engenders all sorts of diversities. Holmes argues in terms of Longinus sublime that "author's own inspired vision in turn results in the vivid presentation of the image before the eyes of the audience, which has a stirring effect on the audience" (46). In terms of Devkota's imagination, he claims that every thing of

beauty that we find or may not find in the world, is available in Nepal. And regarding the picturesque images he paints Nepal's landscape in his imagination and expresses in the words as the pure magic of Himalayas, home for almost all types of flora and fauna, polar to equatorial climate, hanging gardens of Babylon, three hundred Niagara Falls and dazzling slivery Gaurishankar (55). He interrogates, "What is not available here?" (my trans. 55). He answers, "[T]he heaven is upon it and hell beneath it" (my trans.; 55). He imagines that Nepal furnishes a middle space upon which gods and human spirits dance together like fireflies. Nepal offers both miracle of the heaven and completeness of the earth, he answers.

Devkota compares the vitality of the hills and mountains with the flatness of the plains. He demonstrates his extra propensity to the hills and mountain in "Hilly Life" and "A Journey to Gaurishankar". In a deeper imaginative fantasy, Devkota epitomizes hills and mountains in the "Hilly Life" in which he imagines that "Nepali souls would swing in perceiving the sweetness of truth and beauty, understand human obligations, art would take birth, life would become purposeful and the great Nepal would caress" (my trans.; 9). He further wishes, may Nepali hills turn into the center of Vedic civilization incorporating the sense of the modern civilization and may it turn out to be a tiny heaven where the ideal of simple living and high thinking would flourish (Devkota 9). Similarly, Devkota glorifies Himalayas in "A Journey to Gaurishankar" as he sets his journey to golden Himalayas, he writes, "I would feel as if I am in pursuit of heaven" (my trans.; 177). He personifies Himalayas and claims that they speak amazing language always radiating beautiful golden spell of truth. He finds Nepali language in the golden rays of sun that reflect from the Himalayas where the golden robed God always emits everyday Nepali ideals ((Devkota 179). Boileau who brought Longinus into a limelight wrote, "The sublime is not strictly speaking something which is proven or demonstrated, but a marvel, which seizes one, strikes one, and makes one feel" (qtd. in Lyotard, 97) as Devkota perceives mountains as majestic.

Nepal's mountains link the heaven. They are full of deep colors, forms, trajectories and golden smiles of the dawn that inspire an exaltation. Plains are dull and monotonous lacking the vitality. Mountains offer a package of spectacle at a single point, when one moves around, one could see the sun, shadow, shower and the clouds. A mountain is also a complete and an alive world in itself. It harbors birds, deer and tigers that inspire an awe in a human heart (Devkota 55). Here the nature demonstrates its skills through colorful spectacles where wild creepers wave like national flag against the natural walls and where myriad flowers adorn the highest mountain that governs everything around. Devkota transcends from nature to the human, particularly mountain. He insists, "most of the poets take birth to the proximity of the gardens and the great men near the mountains" (my trans.; 56). Taking a point of departure from the physical nature, he enters into the human heart and soul and then transcends beyond even from there to the divinity. This is how sublime works in him.

Devkota's sense of the greatness of the motherland lies in the core Nepali sensibilities that he embodies and inspires. Even in the prose writing he is overwhelmed by what Holmes calls poetic imagination which is more powerful than the ordinary one since its "purpose is to enthrall or disturb the audience" (46). Overwhelmed by the sublime poetic imagination, Devkota claims that the feeling of the greatness has stemmed from the breath of Himalayas, from the color of the deep blue hills, from the profuse magnanimity of the nature and from the divine singing of the birds. The intuition of the greatness of the motherland comes in him when he rests under the singing *pipal* tree in the hills as gentle breeze passes by it and while stuck in the pleasure of silence

that he gets in the wilderness of Bankali forest (Devkota 55). He confirms that nothing in the world can emulate the greatness of one's own motherland.

Regarding the experience of the sublime, Longinus argues that human drive is fundamentally and intuitively inclined to the things and ideas in the nature which are great. Devkota rhetorically galvanizes this human instinct in the audience, in epitomizing the nature of his motherland. Longinus argues, "it is by some natural instinct that we admire not the small stream, clear and useful as they are but the Nile, the Danube and the Rhine and overall, the Ocean" (277). One is not fascinated by the local stream as he/she does by the Nile. He prominently articulates the idea of the greatness of Himalayas, the generosity of nature, awe that nature inspires and slowly percolates to the human heart in apotheosizing the greatness of Nepali soul. He achieves the sublime through such an act of transcendence.

Nepali Souls

One of the most recurring elements in Devkota's essays is the glorification of Nepali people. First, he glorifies the people as the true representative of Aryan civilization in "Hilly Life" that "Nepali showcases the specimen of Aryan civilization being a true son of the hills and mountains" (my trans.; 14). He further picturizes typical hilly Brahmins as the specimen of the Gods of the heaven. (Devkota 14). In epitomizing the people, he elevates them to the status of the Gods. Not only the people in general but he lionizes two historical literary figures Bhanubhakta Acharya, Lekhanath Poudyal and the known and unknown martyrs in the separate essays in "A Great Person in the History of Nepali Literature", "About Pundit Lekhanath Poudyal" and "The Braves" respectively.

As Longinus claims that sublime rhetoric comes into play "not to persuade the audience but rather to transport them out of themselves" (163) from ordinary thinking. With recourse to sublime thinking, Devkota glorifies Bhanubhakta in declaring that he wrote self-inspired from the core of Nepali soul to inspire fellow Nepali souls. He claims that Bhanubhakta wrote from the mountain like blue ink to tread into the heart core of Nepal (Devkota 23). With a noble thought, he declares Bhanubhakta the superhuman of Nepali literature who is able to "reside intensively in the soul of the nation" (my trans.; 24). According to him, being a great soul in himself, Bhanubhakata contributed in unifying Nepali souls together through translating the famous Hindu epic *The Ramayan* from Sanskrit to Nepali.

He glorifies Lekhanath Poudyal in picturizing him as the person who grew old in feeling the heartbeat of Nepali words. The devotion and the service that Poudyal demonstrates in Nepali literature from the very core of his Nepali character brings him close to the nation's soul. He claims that Nepal never can forget "that sweetness which is inherent in the great poet Lekhanath" (my trans.; 157) that flows spontaneously in his magics.

He glorifies the brave martyrs in "The Braves" as he picturizes them as having extraordinary spirit with ethereal wings to fly and electricity in their soul. They are selfless, magnanimous and the true sons of the nation. He claims that they "sow rosy redness of life in Nepali soil that air spreads the fragrances far allover which inspires others to flourish" (my trans.; 60). In glorifying the brave heroes, Devkota is overwhelmed by their sacrifice made for the nation in dying to let others live.

According to Doran, Longinus' believes that "the greatness of the writer's words and works is indicative of the dignity and nobility of his or her character" (62). It is manifested in the most climatic and the most referred section in "Is Nepal Small?" that

demonstrates Devkota's rhetoric of sublimity in epitomizing Nepali people and soul as follows:

Small, sweet, peaceful, aromatic and distinct! That is Nepal for me! Here Wagner is digging a spade, Shakespeare might be ploughing a plough, Titian and Turner might be herding the sheep, Socrates might be contemplating in a cave, Kalidas might be incessantly singing songs in the fifteenth of Asadha, Sando fetches the firewood in my land, Helen Keller sings songs in my forests, here is an enormous literature which is yet to be written and never would be. (my trans.; 53-52)

Devkota compares Nepali people with the great artists, philosophers and writers of the human world history. He implies two important ideas from these lines. The first is obviously the idea of the greatness of Nepali soul, their inner strength and wisdom that could emulate and even excel anybody the great in the world. Next is the idea that Nepali people have not been exposed to the global competition of excellence so as to showcase who they are. He signals in the very first paragraph of the essay that Nepal is not interested in the fierce competition for any gain in the global mob. The emphasis lies in nothing but the nature of his perception of the nation's greatness that he renders through the rhetoric of the sublime, powerfully.

Love for the Mother Tongue

Devkota rigorously questions the way Nepali education system slavishly imitates and translates English language in the opening essay of the anthology. He is skeptical on the tendency which deprives people from their own Aryan civilization. However, except from "Is Nepal Small?", he exclusively devotes a separate essay "Wow! Wow! English" to question the tendency of valorizing English over Nepali language especially by the so-called graduates. According to Hutt "Wow! Wow! English" is an account of Kathmandu intellectual's encounter with English language in early twentieth century (128).

In the essay, Devkota alleges the graduates that the tendency of taking pride in English and turning blind eyes towards our own belongings (48) undermines the whole Eastern tradition and despising Nepali tradition. According to him English graduates are those "who aim to transform one's own races to the foreign pattern" (my trans.; 48). As per Doran, sublime "is a matter of the nature of the self: the raising of the self to a feeling of its own elevation, the self's vocation to outstrip itself" (41). In the sense of elevation of the self through the elevation of one's own language, Devkota not only venerates his motherland, the landscape and people but he also glorifies his mother tongue. He claims in "Is Nepal Small?" that Nepali language is the great and pure in itself that stems from the divine sound of the pristine nature itself. Our natural music inspiring mouth and the uniqueness of our nasal sound is such a distinct and exclusive one that nobody can emulate it. He claims that the simple nature poem of Nepali hills written in our language is far great than the epics and poems of Shakespeare, Milton and Gete (52). He particularly abhors the people who despise the mother tongue in the name of the pride that they assume in speaking broken English. He uses the word hypocrisy to characterize these people.

Devkota concludes with the note that one who does not truly embody the pure sensibilities of Nepal cannot write Nepali literature. He cannot be a true Nepali writer. Therefore, he reiterates that he has genuinely embodied genuine Nepali sensibilities that the motherland necessitates in her true son. He concludes that the immortal essence of his existence is nothing other than Nepal's sensibilities, her sights and sounds. His prime duty is to walk on the pathway paved for the motherland's service. Thus, the researcher

claims that the service he implies here is to evoke national ethos through his rhetoric of sublime in every other Nepali.

The Fifteenth of Asadha: A National Festival

Finally, Devkota glorifies "The Fifteenth of Asadha" as the agricultural festive in which the monsoon brings rain that marks the high time for paddy plantation across the nation evoking a national mood. Nepal being a predominantly an agrarian economy and paddy being one of the staple crops, this is a vibrant time when the nation as a whole is engaged in a vital task of sowing the rice seedlings. This turns out to be a celebration in a national scale. At present, the day has been officially declared as a national festival for paddy plantation justifying its national significance.

With the advent of monsoon, Devkota captures the specific mood of the moment that emanates with rain, in a descriptive detail when people intensely engage themselves in the paddy fields across the nation. Personifying the country, on the day, he writes, "Today sweet ripples are on play in the heart of Nepal" (my trans.; 70). With these remarks, he aims to reveal the national mood. It is vibrant, full of pleasure and vitality. He further reports, "Today is the fifteenth of Asadha, happiness is being planted in Nepal today" (my trans.; 70). According to Manfred G. Treu, Asadha fifteenth marks the activities like collective labor, dancing, singing and eating together as prominently visible which "seem to generate a mood of general happiness all over the country" (151). Treu's remarks also justify how this day engenders a national collective mood. It is not the physical world of the country as such that is happy but the people across the nation together feel happy since they are together engaged in a staple production. In agricultural country like Nepal this day marks a mega national festival that Devkota aims to picturize.

As according to Doran, sublime "is associated with a noble and high-minded disposition" (39), Devkota in connection with the present, glorifies the ancestors' toil who used to till Nepal's land on this day and onwards. He estimates that this tendency of pleasure in toil must have been inherited from our agrarian ancestors that has been infiltrated in our hearts as a principle of mutual impact (Devkota 71). The ancestors' reference and the principal of mutual impact have a direct connection with Nepal's inherent national ethos based on mutual agricultural activities we are engaged in, which has sustained our national economy till the date. Finally, he elevates diligent Nepali farmers and their offspring and writes, "They were the Greek Gods of Olympus in the form of Nepali hills" (my trans.; 74). This relates to how Holmes summarizes sublime rhetoric as he writes, "Sublime rhetoric seeks to uplift the soul; it allows its authors and hearers to contemplate divine things; and, it is intended to lift its authors up to mind of God" (55). Glorifying Nepali farmers to the extent of imagining them to the status of Greek Gods is possible through Devkota's noble thoughts. This is how he cultivates the sublime, elevating as ordinary people as farmers to the divine status of Gods.

Devkota's power of deploying the idea of sublime to evoke a tremendous sense of national ethos does not necessarily mean that Devkota's rhetoric is not flawless regarding its binding effects upon the public in terms of unifying national ethos. Representing so called mainstream Nepali nationalism based on Hindu, hilly Brahman and Chhetri's heroic nationalism, Devkota extremely valorizes the hills in the expense of the plains as he portrays the plains as dull, monotonous and flat. Nepal is an integrated whole of the hills and the plains. He valorizes Aryan civilization and Brahmins with an extra propensity towards them in the essays. Being a poet of such a significant stature, his views on such issues are ever debatable. His sense of comparison and outright rejection of the certain region on the basis of his subjective preference on landscape, race

and faith and their stark comparison with the others can have a reverse effect upon the diverse audience rather than the binding effect. There can be number of such counterarguments which are yet to be explored in the future research. However, the rhetoric of sublime in evoking a national ethos is rampant in the selected essays despite these limitations.

Conclusion

The role of literature in general is paramount in evoking the sense of national ethos among the contemporary readership and thereby among the general public. This paper examined how Devkota's selected essays rhetorically aim to scintillate a powerful sense of national ethos among the audience. Particularly the paper illustrated the elements that he employs to evoke the national ethos and concludes that he deploys Longinus' rhetoric of sublime to meet his end. Among the five key sources of Longinus' sublime, this essay examined his power to conceive great thoughts in making Nepal the great. He laid special emphasis in evoking national ethos through his attachment with the land, particularly hills and mountains, his love for the people, mother tongue and national festivals.

Adequate study on his essays keeping the rhetoric at the center of gravity are yet to be conducted. There are lots of topics including festivals, occupation, morality, ethics and compassion which are yet to be explored. While keeping the rhetoric at the center, its study, in exploring texts' implications is of paramount importance. There is a big prospect of research on each essay in his anthology from the rhetorical perspective as implied in the present research in order to understand the profound larger sociopolitical milieu of contemporary Nepal.

The study of this kind is significant in measuring the impact of national literature that directly appeals to the general public in terms of common ethos they evoke that may either bind the public for good cause in some cases or at times it may prove disastrous provoking the public for larger sociopolitical upheavals, revolution, violence and fragmentation transforming the society in a massive level.

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