
Reflections of Political Changes in the Tharu Literary Writings

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Article Information : Received : May 19, 2025 Revised : June 02, 2025 Accepted : July 04, 2025

Abstract

The literature of every language reflects society, people, and time in various ways. Tharu-language literature reflects different dimensions of Tharu life across time, despite having a comparatively shorter history than the major languages of Nepal. One of the main reasons why Tharu literature developed later is that Tharu people were deprived of access to education due to political and social reasons. Additionally, economic and geographical factors also played a significant role in hindering the Tharu people's access to education. This research paper aims to explore how political changes in Nepal have been depicted in Tharu literature and how it has been influenced by the political shifts following the establishment of democracy in 1951 (2007 BS). The paper also examines whether political causes or changes have contributed to the development of Tharu literature. For this qualitative research, major Tharu literary works from the establishment of democracy to the present federal republic political system have been studied and analyzed. While the research primarily relies on library-based data analysis, consultations with prominent Tharu litterateurs were also conducted via available channels. The paper concludes that, although Tharu literature has not flourished to the same extent as literature in other languages, it does reflect political changes along with other pressing social and ethnic issues.

Keywords: discrimination, liberty, marginalized, political change, reflection, Tharuhat, Tharu literature,

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ISSN : 2091-2161

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Published by Autar Dei Chaudharain Research Centre (ADCRC), Mahendra Multiple Campus, Nepalgunj, Banke

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Literature has the power to depict society, country, and the entire world as well. Literature, in this sense, is also said to be reflecting society primarily, but at the same time, it embodies the power to distort reality as well according to the intention of the author. That is why many things are kept into consideration as the act of reflecting the society and people is accomplished by the authors. Amid the skepticism, if the literature presents the people and their society exactly as it was/is, it is still the most reliable medium of checking out the history of the past. Literary writings, like historical writings, also can show history from new perspectives. Thus, literary writing or literature naturally has reflections of the time in which it was composed, the concept of writing on the issue chosen, is directly or indirectly related to the events, their causes as well as consequences. The same is true in the case of writings in the Tharu language and literature too.

The Tharu language is spoken among the Tharu people residing mainly in the Terai belt of Nepal and some bordering states of India with Nepal. In both countries, the Tharu people have been categorized as indigenous or scheduled castes who seem to have progressed less compared with the people of other communities and castes. The Tharu in Nepal speaks several Tharu dialects like Dangaura, Desauri, Deukhuriya, Rana, and others. The Dangaura Tharu language is the most widely used language spoken in the Lumbini, and Sudur Pashchim provinces of Nepal. The Tharu people, who claim themselves to be *Bhumiputra* meaning the son of the land have been found living in the southern belt of Nepal since the time of *Dwapar Yuga* when Bhima had given refuge to a Tharu King Dangi Sharan of Dang valley in western Nepal. Lord Buddha who was born in the Lumbini is also said to be a Tharu guy according to some researchers. Such historical issues also occupy an important space in the Tharu literary writings. Regarding the reflections of various walks of life in the Tharu literature Raj Kumar Tharu in his research article entitled *Postmodernism in Tharu Literature* mentions: "the literature of Tharu language has also naturally depicted the history, culture, behaviours, traditions and many other aspects of the social, economic, political, spiritual, and religious dimensions of the Tharu caste in particular"(127). Despite having a glorious past, deep attachment to nature, and Nepalese civilization itself the literature in the Tharu language seems to have developed very late. Whatever the situation, when it began, like other language literature, it also started reflecting on the time, surroundings, and of course the political system and changes within it. The reflections of the political changes were depicted in the Tharu literature from various perspectives.

In the field of literary studies, the reflection theory tends to pose the question of to what extent society is reflected in literary production (Harvey). The idea of reflection theory, in this sense, seems to have represented the real world in which we spend our lives. The reflection theory is believed to have reached its climax at the hands of the Marxist philosopher George Lukacs (1885-1971), who argues that reflection is neither spontaneous nor photographic, but

deliberate and conscious. Lucas believes that realism is the foundation of literary genres, and it has a significant role in solving social problems (Al-Salam and Morsay, 26). So, in the opinion of Lukacs, as Al-Salam and Morsay mention in their paper entitled *Beyond Imitation: The Relationship Between Literature and Social Reality as Implied in Geroge Lukacs's Reflection Theory*, it's the realist literature that perfectly represents the reflection theory(26). This is how realism is connected with the reflection of the situations; even though, that reflection could be both intentional and planned. It is clear that the authors produce literary pieces that are based on the happening or on the writers' personal experiences too, but the act of reflection in their writings is deliberate. They seem to be reflecting the things of reality. Political incidents and developments are also things of reality. Thus the political reflection also embodies the reality of the people's lives and the times they have gone through.

The manifold nature of experiences can be captured significantly by reflection which is a mode of knowledge involving epistemological pluralism. Literary writings have the ability of concrete portrayal; and they can move us from different possibilities, without literary reflection, the essential problematic character of human experience can only be superficially explored (Janik 81-82). Human life is essentially attached to the system of the government because the quality and condition of the lives of the general people are always determined by the kind of the government; and its treatment of the people. Political changes are prone to take place along with the changing time. The people's lives, in that sense, are directly attached to the political changes that the literature is bound to represent. In the context of Nepalese politics and political changes of different times, the literary writings in both the Tharu language and literature also have been reflected in different perspectives and styles. The sufferings, advantages, as well as dogmas of the political changes in Nepal, have affected the lives of the Tharu people from the beginning of the democracy in the kingdom. The literary writing of the Tharu language has reflected these major political changes in the country.

Literature Review

One of the most trustworthy channels of looking into the various dimensions of society, its people, time, and its effects is the literature or literary writings that possess the ability to reflect the lifestyles as well as thoughts of the people irrespective of the geographical, political, social as well as economical realities. The presence of the literature and literary writings of any language itself is a kind of reflection of the standard of education, wisdom, conscience, and the attitudes of the people using that language in a particular place and era as well. The history of the Tharu literature is supposed to have begun after the establishment of democracy in Nepal in the year 1951 (2007 BS) when *Badhakka Jorni* was published by Badhwa Tharu from Dang followed by the publication of *Hamra o Hamar Banwa* by Jibraj Acharya in 1955 (2011 BS). *Badhakka Jorni*, an anthology of songs, is the first published literary piece of the Tharu language. Author Jibraj was a non- Tharu despite that he was elected Mahatanwa of Lalaura

village in Dang, had good knowledge of the Tharu people, and wrote and published an anthology of poetry on the importance of saving forest (Sarbahari 31). The publication of the two literary pieces was possible only after the end of the Rana regime in the country. These two pieces are the reflection of the freedom of speech, reading-writing, and publication that was not possible as long as the despotic Rana rule was in existence. Nothing much has come into knowledge about *Badhakka Jorni* and *Hamra o Hamar Banwa*, so the further connotative interpretation on them is confined, even though regarding the writing of the latter, it can be said that the political changes of the 1950s in Nepal prioritized the conservation of the forests. During this period, the importance of the forests was recognized by the Government, the dangers of deforestation were recognized, and the role of the Forest Department was essentially to conserve the forests, which were already seen as threatened (Stewart). Acharya's *Hamra o Hamar Banwa* seems to have been published with the same appeal for saving the forests. The publication of this piece could also be considered as a support of the Tharu people for the forest policy of the newly introduced political system in the country.

Following some disagreement with the cabinet of B.P. Koirala, king Mahendra staged a coup on 15th December 1960 to assert his control, and thus the Panchayat system of the ruling was introduced in Nepal. He dissolved the National Assembly, abrogating the constitution, and political leaders were imprisoned. The direct rule by the Nepalese monarchy came into existence after the king promulgated the constitution in 1962 ("Mahendra"). Under this partyless regime, the Tharu writers, as well as intellectuals, seem to have remained silent in the initial years on the political issues; rather the editing, compiling, and publication of the masterpieces of the Tharu folk literature seems to have flourished for the simple reason that the king Mahendra himself was a lover of literature and the literary figure too. In the history of the Nepalese kings, he is the most renowned king so far. The compiling and publication of the great Tharu folk epics like *Dangi Sharan Ke Katha*, *Barki Mar*, *Gurbabak Jalmauti* took place approximately nine months back of the first royal coup. These books were brought to the public by Rup Lal Tharu and Yogi Narhari Nath from Dang in the month of Baishakh 2016 Bikram Sambat (23rd April 1959 AD) (Sarbahari 32). The ousted Prime Minister B.P. Koirala was also a more famous litterateur. The reign of these two literary persons, no matter what political thoughts they had, seems to have favoured the publication of the great books of the Tharu literature. The initial literary publications of the Tharu language from the advent of democracy to the end of the Panchayat reign do not seem to have been associated with the political philosophies (Sarbahari 29) even though it was the pioneering period of the development of the Tharu literature. The Tharu Welfare Society (TWS) established in 1949 to raise the status of the Tharus in response to increased contact with hill people and their cultures (Lam 24), published an anthology of Tharu folk songs *Sakhiya* in 1967, but the creative and fictitious writing of songs, stories, and poems was initiated with the publication of the first Tharu literary magazine *Gochali* in 1972 (2028 BS) under the editorship of Mahesh Chaudhary. The writings in this magazine are said

to have been anti-government, so the local administration of Dang district had a doubtful eye towards this magazine, because of which it was confined to three volumes only during the entire Panchayat regime. In the editorial of the 3rd Volume of *Gochali* published in the year 1975, the Panchayat system of the government has been condemned as a regressive reign that had attacked the popularity of the magazine like an eagle pouncing upon the chicken (Gyanendra et al. 2). Further, the editorial has forecasted the fall of the Panchayat like the falling of the castle made of the cards. That was the reason why the 3rd Volume was published under the fake names of the editors and management team. This is also an indication that the publication in any native language like that of the Tharu itself was a much more challenging job.

The Tharu literature, except the writings included in *Gochali* magazine, has remained indifferent to the political affairs both in the first democratic era and the Panchayat system of reign under the kings' direct rule even though some voices against the Panchayat were expressed indirectly through literary writings in the Tharu language. Hridaynarayan Chaudhary's anthology of the story *Kahali Sunli Bujhli* (1976) focused more on the awareness of the Tharu people for their responsibility and aimed at removing superstitions regarding the Tharus' dependency on the native doctors for treatment. The title of the anthology itself suggests 'the understanding of the things after they were told and heard', thus it might also be taken as a symbolic protest of the Panchayat system of the government. In the story *Man Ke Laddu*, the writer hypothesizes to have eaten sweets, and put on nice clothes. It's a kind of dream to get freedom from the then-ruling system. *Gurubabak Jalmauti* (1983), *Badki Mar* (1982), *Jhumra* (1982) published by Mahesh Chaudhary do not seem to have been concerned with the type of government; the books were purely literary based on the Tharu religion and culture. Chaudhary's *Kamaiyak Pukar* (1983) was more of an appeal for the bonded labour for their freedom and dreams that were somehow connected with the governance of the nation. But after the restoration of democracy in 1990, the Tharu literary writings seem to have started focusing more on politics and political affairs. "The colour of the 1990 People's Movement can be noticed significantly in the Tharu literature" (Sarbahari 30). This movement brought the multiparty democratic system of the government and freedom of speech and publication provided the Tharu writers to search their space in different walks of life. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 1990 (2047 BS) proclaimed Nepal as a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-lingual nation. This provision inspired the Tharu writers to create more literary writings. Moreover, the Tharu language was also declared to be one of the national languages. The majority of the Tharu litterateurs welcomed the multiparty democratic system of government with a constitutional monarch. Their literary pieces would always glorify the new system of government. One of those writers was Siya Ram Chaudhary from Siraha district of eastern Nepal. His anthology of poetry called *Poh Phat Gail* (1990) came with a much more optimistic tone that the restoration of democracy in the country would bring a drastic change in the lives of the common people too. In the poem *Samajke Karnadhar Sabse Apil* in the same anthology, Chaudhary expresses

his happiness on the overthrowing of the Panchayat and hope for a multiparty democracy:

The new morning has begun,

For making a new nation;

A new morning has arrived.

This will give a new life to society,

This will get us to participate in developing the country. (Sarbahari 48)

'New morning', 'new nation', 'new society' and so many words as such were used to show the litterateurs' hope in the new system of the government that was the result of the struggle and sacrifice of the people of all the caste, community, profession, sex, and geographical regions. Literary writings in the major languages of Nepal were thus speaking aloud that the new political change would indeed cause a favourable change in the lives of the people in general. This political change had to take place for the simple reason that people were deprived of much of their human rights too, and the time of awareness came when 'people's major question in politics revolved around substantive objectives and they wanted to feel their possession of the public sources of the nation' (Hays 487). The sharing of the power to the people in the local bodies and people as well is what the democratic system of the government always prioritizes. The Tharu people as well as other indigenous ones in Nepal have been demanding their possession of water, land, and jungles. The Tharu literary writings especially after the restoration of democracy have been constantly raising these issues of identity and possession as their natural rights. Sarah Webster in *NEWSLETTER 2007 The ILO and Indigenous and Tribal Peoples* mentions the reasons and objectives of the movements of the indigenous people like the Tharus of Nepal: "The indigenous peoples' movement in Nepal have been lobbying for a secular federal-state system, in which their rights to self-determination and ethnic and linguistic autonomy are ensured, and affirmative action measures are undertaken to secure them equality of opportunity" (17).

The restoration of democracy in Nepal brought a vast platform for the Tharu litterateurs for their literary creation. With this opportunity had also come a big dream for equality and identity especially for the marginalized, oppressed and backward communities' people like the Tharus, who were by then, (and even now too), far away from the mainstream of the nation. Tragically the dream of equality and identity didn't come true and people started showing their dissatisfaction with the multiparty democratic system that had the provision of a constitutional monarch. The environment for the new movement was created in such a way that the Communist Party of Nepal Maoist (CPN- Maoist) started an armed revolution and appealed to the people for throwing the monarch. Initially, this political strategy was opposed by the other political parties but after almost a decade they agreed on doing a joint movement for the federal

republic system in Nepal. The violent Maoist movement and its effect- mental, physical, social, religious as well as cultural, on the lives of the people, became the central theme of the literary and non-literary writings significantly in the Nepali language, and also in the Tharu language to some extent. Despite the immense effect of the armed war on the Tharu people, and also huge participation by them, the Tharu literary writings do not seem to have made it the major content of their writings except for very few Tharu litterateurs. One of them is Naresh Lalkusumya who came up with his novel *Batya* based on the theme of Maoist-staged war. *Batya* means waiting. During the Maoist war period, people suffered from both sides: rebellion and the then Royal Nepal Army Side. The husband of the major character Sukni gets arrested by the army, and then he disappears without a trace. To her bad luck, Sukni is accused of being a witch, and tortured by her mother- in law. That's why she keeps crying day and night. To her greater shock, her son questions why she learned witchcraft to be called a witch by everyone in the village. The novel depicts how domestic female violence continued even when the Maoist rebels called it 'an era to fight for the end of all kinds of discrimination.' *Batya* is a representative story of all of those who waited for their missing family members during the insurgency period in Nepal (Sarbahari 78).

The Maoist uprising in Nepal from 1996 to 2006 caused the loss of lives of 13,246 people (as of May 2006) according to OHCHR- Nepal Conflict Report 2012 (2). The government side would arrest and torture suspecting the people in general to be the Maoists or their supporters whereas the rebellion would torture, abduct or even kill the people doubting them to have been the spy for the government. They would also torture people having different political ideologies. Like the literary writings in other languages, the Tharu language literary writings also caught this very situation as the content of their writings. Much of the literary creations appealed to ending the violent fighting to both sides, some would remain neutral whereas litterateurs would stand on either side. One of the human rights activists and renowned Tharu litterateurs Shushil Chaudhary in *Mor Maigar Astha* from his anthology of poetry *Birhul Basiya* (2072), vividly describes the commitment to stand firm on his ideologies despite huge pressure either from the state or the rebellions:

No matter how often the tempest blows,

No matter how often the gales howl,

Will not be shaken -

The wall of my faith.

Rather,

It will get firmer ever.

It will get tighter ever. (64)

Poet Chaudhary composed this poem in November 2000 when the Maoist armed revolution was at its peak. The rebellions were on a mission to change the political faith of the non-Maoists whereas the government side was also targeting at changing the peoples' 'positive perception' over the rebellions. In this sense, *Mor Maigar Ashtha* (My Deep Faith) reflects the changed political scenario in which the people were forcefully asked to favour any of the sides.

After the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) was signed on 21 November 2006 between the Maoists and the Government of Nepal, there was a feeling of peace among all the Nepalese. King Gyanendra had already handed over his inherent power to the people. So it was the time that people of every community sought their rights to be documented well in the new constitution. Seeking identity and space in a new changed political situation was the main theme of almost all kinds and languages of literary writings during that time. The Tharu literary writings naturally picked up this issue more cogitatively. Amit Dahit in his poem *O Sabhasad ji* questions his leader if they recollect what they promised during the election campaign: "You lectured to promise during the election/ Are you going to fulfil it?/ With a single caste identity/ Are you going to make New Nepal"(7)? The issue of *Tharuwan* or the Tharu- State was much popular and controversial topic for discussion from the time of the election for the Constituent Assembly to the making of the constitution to the naming of the states in Nepal. Later on, in the initiation of the Tharu political leaders from almost all the parties in Nepal jointly established the Tharuhat- Terai Party Nepal. The party raised the issue of the Tharu people with topmost priority but it managed to win only two seats on the proportional side in the 2013 Nepalese Constituent Assembly election. The Party could not prove the rationale of its formation in Nepalese politics but the Tharu litterateurs kept on raising the same issues as their core theme of writing. The questions of self-decision, rights on natural resources, freedom of the Tharu people, nationalism, Tharu identity, etc were raised more seriously. Krishanaraj Sarbahari's poem *Aakhir Kahiya Sam ?* (Ultimately How Long ?) beautifully describes the desire of the marginalized people to be equally treated in the mainstream of governance:

How long will only daura, suruwal, and topi

Remain our national dress?

Can't jama, chaubandi, angauchha, lahanga, and kurtha

Become a national dress? (13-14)

Sarbahari's rhetorical question as raised in this poem is directly related to giving equal importance to the dresses of the indigenous people like the Tharus instead of prioritizing the dresses of the Brahmins and Chhetris. Sarbahari seems to have been concerned with ethnic issues in the above lines. The 'ethnic question' has been a crucial issue for development since the 1980s, and this idea of indigeneity has empowered both ethnic elites and peasants. Moreover, in Nepalese politics, 'identity issue' has become a significant theoretical force that

has unravelled the entire course of radical political developments in Nepal " (Paudel 548). The Tharu litterateurs' tendency of raising the ethical and identity issue as the subject of their literary writing can also be taken as a political reflection of the country importantly in the sense that each of the marginalized castes and tribes was desperately trying their position to be mentioned fairly in the new constitution of the country.

The question of identity was the most highlighted issue during the period of the constitution- drafting. Much of the Tharu literary writings belonged to the poetry genre. Prakriti Puja shows her rage in her poem *Pahichan* (the identity) for the Tharus were also categorized as the Madheshis. All the Tharus opposed this categorization of the government at that time. Puja writes: "We lost our existence and identity now/ For they have declared the indigenous Tharus the Madheshi/ What was our mistake that they demoted us/ Someone tell us who is seizing our identity" (28)? The question of identity and seeking political and administrative space in the mainstream of the ruling system was at its peak when there was huge preparation for drafting the new constitution. Many traditionally marginalized groups had a fear that the new constitution might not work fairly for them because it was rushed through the established parties which were dominated by so-called "high-caste " leaders; the ethnic communities like the Tharus were dissatisfied with the proposed boundaries of the new provinces that mixed the districts with the majority of the Tharus with the hill districts that the Tharus thought would predominate them (Haviland). That is why the Tharus stood against Akhand Sudur Pashchim and the general strike was called upon in the Mid and Far Western Nepal from 12th August 2015 demanding an autonomous Tharu province within federal Nepal (Sarbahari). Resham Chaudhary was one of the Tharu leaders of the movement. To the bad luck of the Tharu movement, on 24th August 2015, the Kailali carnage took place that claimed the lives of seven police personnel and a toddler. Chaudhary was suspected to have had a role in carrying out the massacre (Shah). Following this incident, he went into exile in India where he wrote an autobiography entitled *Tikapur Ghatanako Chirphar* (The Anatomy of the Tikapur Incident) trying to verify that he was not guilty of the killing of the people in the incident. The autobiography that reflects how the author was victimized in the incident is written in the Nepali language. But, in the same book, he has written only a very short poem in his Tharu native language throwing satire on two Tharu leaders Bijay Gachchhedhar and Ram Janam Chaudhary for remaining reluctant in proving him innocent:

Eat up Ram Janam and Gachchhedhar,

As long as you do not die.

Eat as many days as you wish

The day your stomachs burst,

You will be taken to the riverside. (287)

Had the autobiography of Resham Chaudhary been written in the Tharu language too, it could have been good literary writing reflecting the politics of hatred and revenge as far as the issue of caste is concerned.

Even after the promulgation of the constitution of Nepal 2072, the majority of the Tharu leaders from various sectors have not been found content with the fact that the constitution didn't assure them much claimed Tharuhat Pradesh or State with the majority of the Tharu populace. This very issue is being raised in Tharu literary writing even today's date. One of the reasons why they still advocate for the caste-based state is the discrimination they have been tolerating for ages; they have a big hope that their condition will be improved if they are given the rights of self-decision in the state they would run by themselves. Many of the litterateurs of the Tharu language are found taking this issue most prominently. The new system of Federal Republic Nepal has sprinkled lots of rays of hope for equality and opportunities among the indigenous Tharu people too. They have a big dream in the new system of government that they believe will let them flourish unbiased. In one of his poems *Lauwa Nepal* (New Nepal) Pradeshu Tharu, a new poet from Bardia, Nepal expresses his faith in the federal democracy for the upliftment of the people of the Tharu community:

Listen carefully-

You have to call my dad 'lord'

In response to his 'lord' to you.

Never finger him out with 'thau'

Call my house a temple, not a hut

Call my children *Raja* not 'puppies'

How about making Nepal a federal republic with equality like this?

What about making a New Nepal with equality like this? (31)

This is how the marginalized groups of people like the Tharus have taken the federal republic system of the government as a better platform for their advancement in all walks of lives for the simple reason that thousands of the Tharu people have sacrificed their lives right from the time of revolution against the Rana regime to the time of the mass movement of 2062/63 BS. The caste system in Nepal is an illegal practice, despite that, a large number of so-called high caste people are still found discriminating the ethnic people like the Tharus. The federal republic democratic system was supposed to do away with this 'concept of the caste system, the most suppressive force in their lives that had stopped them from having an opportunity to change'(Colato 14). Calling *Raja* to the Tharu kids, calling *temple* to their homes, and calling the *lord* to them in response to their same polite words to those people of high caste is the representative voice of the Tharu people for equality, especially in the time of the federal republic of Nepal.

Methodology

This research paper has assimilated the qualitative methods of research for the reason that it's an attempt to examine and explore the reflections of political changes in the Tharu literature, especially after the establishment of democracy in Nepal. Major literary writings from the arrival of democracy to the implementation of federalism have been used as secondary sources of data for the historical analysis of the linkage between these two things. Moreover, scholars and researchers on the Tharu language and literature have been consulted in all possible ways. Authentic and reliable online sources have been used abundantly to collect information and analyze them keeping in mind the theory of reflection, which is an essential part of literature writing realistically. Literature is undoubtedly, the reflection of society in different times and ways; peoples' lives are directly affected by the political systems and changes in them. That's why politics and political changes are a part of the reality of the people elsewhere. Thus the concept of realism has also been applied while interpreting the effects of political changes in the Tharu literature. This research paper also seeks to explore inherent reasons for the selection of the issues of the Tharu literature so far. The paper also aims at studying the psychology of writing of the Tharu litterateurs not only in political affairs but also in social, educational, and economic aspects which are ultimately affected by the politics of the nation. This research paper has presented a kind of critical analysis of the reflection of the political changes in Nepal in The Tharu literature, especially after 2007 BS. This research could be a reliable source of study for the upcoming researchers interested in working on the Tharu people of Nepal in the context of political reflection in the Tharu literature and their lifestyles.

Results and Findings

The research paper has found that the Tharu literary writings have been travelling within a certain territory of subject matters and themes right from the time of its sprouting to the present time as well. Literary writing in the Tharu language can be categorized into two kinds as far as its history so far is concerned. One category of literary writing falls into folk literary writing and another one is the creative kinds of literary writing. The literary writings that include folk stories and great epics seem more subtle, powerful, and interesting too in their philosophical as well as practical perspectives. The publication of the Tharu religiously literal texts like *Gubabak Jalmaulti*, *Barki Mar*, and *Dangi Sharanke Katha* fall into the first category. But the second kind of Tharu literary writings are generally supposed to have begun with the publication of the first Tharu literary magazine *Gochali* in 2028 BS. Moreover, the publication of *Gochali* was an attempt to reflect the social-political demands and necessities of the Tharu folks in particular. The publication of such literary journals and magazines has played a significant role in bringing forth the issues that the Tharu folks, in particular, are having as hindrances in different walks of life. But there is an irregularity in this act in the case of almost all the Tharu literary magazines although the literary fairs held occasionally have initiated an intellectual discussion over the

depiction of the writings in the Tharu language (Sarbahari 124). The research also comes to the point that the Tharu literary writings are not sufficient enough to reflect the effect of politics in their lives and the community, even though they have played vital roles in different political movements. Most of the renowned Tharu litterateurs seem to have spent much of their time raising issues related to ethnicity, culture, awareness for moving ahead, etc. Their focus on the issues like political partiality and manipulation of the Tharu people has also been a significant theme of literary writings. But very few literary writings reflecting the political changes in the Tharu language have been published so far; although the Tharu writers have written in the Nepali language portraying so well the political effects in their lives. Resham Chaudhary, and Chhabi Lal Kopila who have written more in Nepali, are few examples raising the issues of political changes and their effects on the lives of the Tharu people. Most of the works of Shushil Chaudhary and Krishanaraj Sarbahari have been found to have depicted more rhetorically the political effects in the lives of the indigenous subaltern people like the Tharus.

Discussion

Politics is a phenomenon that revolves around the lives of the people even though they might try to stay away from it. So, when it comes to talking about the relationship of politics with the lifestyles of the people, they must be studied as inseparable elements of social life. In this sense, it can be said that 'the study of politics cannot afford to stray too far from the study of society' (Hays 499). The political events and the changes brought by them undoubtedly shape the way people think and live their lives. That is to say that the reflection of society is, in a sense, the reflection of political affairs as well. The history of the social life of the Tharu people of the western part (now named Lumbini Province and Sudur Pashchim Province) of Nepal has also been shaped by political events and their consequences. These historical and social changes in the lives of the Tharu people could be better studied and analyzed through the Tharu literary writings to a greater extent even though they are not sufficient enough to present the exact picture.

The persistence of inequality in power is one of the major drawbacks of politics; this leads to the enduring elements of political history (Hays 488), that is why the main intention of political involvement is focused on possessing some sort of power; no matter if they are the politicians or the people in general. For attaining power in the Nepalese social-political context the Tharu people seem to have engaged in almost all the major Nepalese political parties besides establishing their caste-based Tharuhat Terai Party Nepal, which was later merged with a couple of other non-Tharu political parties. The Tharu literary writings, agreeing with the voice of the Tharu leaders, are also focused on drawing the attention of the authorities and big-headed political leaders for strengthening the Tharu folks by giving them special provisions by the state. Right from the time of the publication of the initial volumes of *Gochali* (1972), the voices of the Tharu writers seem to have been expressed in their writings. The magazine

fearlessly spoke against the then Panchayat reign and advocated for the democratic system of the government that would also strengthen the Tharu people too. The editorial of the first Volume of *Gochali* itself highlights what the Tharu people in general want; it mentions that they want the end of every kind of exploitation done in the name of casteism but would never want any particular caste to be developed under the slogan of so-called casteism(3). During the Panchayat reign amid the declaration of the Back to the Village National Campaign from 1967 to 1975, the Tharus' social and eco-political life remained as pitiable as before as Tek Bahadur Chaudhary opines in his poem *Gaun Pharka Aail* in the same Volume of the magazine that they had to undergo the same hardship in their lives despite King Mahendra's good intention of developing the village by getting the educated people of the village returned to their home-village from the cities (58).

The Tharu people in Nepal are getting educated and more civilized in a significant number, and have identified themselves as honest and laborious people even though the ruling clusters of the non-Tharu people are hesitant to accept this fact (S. Chaudhary) because of a kind of invisible duel of the Tharu people with the state or the ruling clusters since a long time. The *Kamaiya* system or the system of bonded labor was purely a social problem but the role of the ruling system cannot be ruled out. That is why the movement for the freedom of the Kamaiyas became one of the defining political struggles for western Tharu in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (Guneratne 19). The Tharu litterateurs have massively used the issue of *Kamaiya* as the main subject matter of their writing in all genres of literature. Resham Chaudhary's movie *Kamaiya*, Chhabi Lal Kopila's short novel *Muktike Khoj* (2059 BS) and *Churiniya* (2069 BS), Krishnaraj Sarbahari's novel *Gantabya* (2059 BS) are some examples of writing on Kamaiyas. The sufferings of Kamaiyas and the problems of their livelihood are still good topics of literary writing in Tharu literature. The government of Nepal declared the freedom of Kamaiyas on 2nd Shavan 2057 BS (17 July 2007), but the declaration proved to be just a political stunt of the then-Deuba-led government. Kamaiyas then turned into part-time labourers who had vital roles in the armed and underground war staged by the Maoists. The Tharu literary writings do not seem to have given more priority to the literary productions even though some occasional pieces of the Tharu literary writings on the theme of Maoist insurgency can be found: *Batya* (2068 BS) by Naresh Lalkusumya is one of them. But the story of the Tharus' involvement in the same is addressed well in many of the literary writings of the non-Tharu texts. As the Tharu elites had started serving the state before the 1950s with a necessary cadre of lower-level administrators like revenue collectors, and minor judicial officials, still the majority of the Tharu populace remained marginalized since the 1950s via the democratic era, Panchayat era, and up to the time of multiparty democratic era in the country. The consequent marginalization of the caste was an important factor that shaped ethnic consciousness in the Tharu people (Guneratne 19); this emotion was cashed by the Maoists, and the Tharu people including more of them Kamaiyas, seem to have engaged in the armed revolution of the Maoist

Party. Despite that, the trust in the democracy of the Tharu people seems to have been prevalent as Shushil Chaudhary writes in his poem *Prajatantra Jogai* (Let's Save the Democracy) that they have to work in unity to preserve the democracy so that it would function in the way they desire (Gochali, Vol 28, 61).

The Tharu literature has been neglected by researchers from Nepal as 'the Nepali literature has been treated in the same way from the researchers outside Nepal' (Hutt 135), but the Tharu people in general and the litterateurs, in particular, tend to consider their literature as an important part of their identity. The Tharu literary writings can represent the mainstream intellectual, political as well as social culture of the Tharu community that has undoubtedly played a significant role in almost all the political changes. Sadly the political change that should be much grateful to the Tharu community doesn't seem to have taken their demands seriously. The Tharu literary writings of the republic era in Nepal are focused more on their rage and frustrations over the failure of the governments of different times to fulfil their political demands. A couple of Tharuhat movements in the country over the last decade are the consequences of the Tharu people's dissatisfaction with the mainstream politics of Nepal. Such counterproductive movements of the malaria-insistentt tribe have isolated them even more instead of getting them closer to the mainstream of the state. In two of his books *Tikapur Ghatanako Chirphar* and *Parivand* (2077), written in Nepali with the theme of the Tharus' quest for equality and identity, Resham Chaudhary tries to justify why the Tharus are always misunderstood by the authorities – mostly the non-Tharus.

Conclusion

People can stay away from politics but it never lets them remain away from politics in the sense that the effect of politics on the lives of the people is unavoidable. The same theory is applicable to the lives of the Tharu people of Nepal. Various historical and social surveys have revealed that much of the Tharu populace have stayed indifferent towards politics since the ending period of the Rana regime to the present time of the federal republic system of the government. The major cause of the Tharus' negligence towards politics is their hard-working nature, innocence, honesty, and fairness in thoughts and actions that keep them away from the so-called 'dirty game' of politics. But quite in contrast to this, the lives of the Tharu people have always been affected by the political condition in the country from the time of the establishment of democracy to the assimilations of the federal republic system in Nepal. Despite their comparatively poor functionality and foundation, the Tharu literary writings have been found to have attempted their best to resemble all these stories of the political phenomenon and their effects on the lives of the Tharu people. The Tharu literary writings are soft, similar to the very nature of the caste, because of which they seem to have gone into consent with the changing political system or scenario, even though the Tharu literary writings have raised the voices against all the tyrannical type of government.

The initial literary writings in the Tharu language were vividly untouched by the political phenomenon and the types of government in the country; they were rather focused more on their primary objectives of saving their cultural history, folk literature, religion, traditions, philosophy, and distinct dimensions of their lives. The Tharu classical texts like *Gurubabak Janmanti*, *the Barki Mar*, *the Barka Naach*, *Sakhiya*, *Ram Bihagra*, *Siruwa Pawan*, *Jatajatin*, *Phulwar*, *Sadiyo Dhami* were far away from having the political reflection in them. But the political concern started to be reflected significantly in the Tharu literature with the publication of the first Tharu literary magazine *Gochali* in 2028 BS in Nepal. Most of the writings in the earlier Volumes of the magazines have criticized the thenparty-less Panchayat regime. The authors in those volumes have strongly appealed for the freedom and re-establishment of democracy in the country. The multiparty democratic system started in the year 2046 BS. The system was admired so much in the Tharu literary world as well because they hoped a drastic change to be brought into their lives by the new system of governance. The Tharu writers like Siya Ram Chaudhary, Krishna Raj Sarbahari, Shushil Chaudhary, Bam Bahadur Tharu, etc spent a good amount of words in the appraisal of the new political systems; but as their hopes were not fulfilled, they showed their rage through their literary writings. They raised the issues of *Kamaiyas*, one of the major subjects of Tharu literary writings, to be addressed by the government. This issue has always been connected with the political system of the government in the Tharu writings. Similarly, some of the Tharu literary writings have reflected the Maoist insurgency period, and the federal republic of Nepal as well. But no Tharu literary writings on these recent issues have drawn the attention of non-Tharu audiences for the simple reason that their writings are found to have been revolving around ethnic issues, caste discrimination, and exploitation that seem to have made the non-Tharus suspicious in some perspectives. That's why the Tharu literary writings need to initiate a new trend in selecting the subject matter for writings to get a wider attraction inside and outside the community and country as well as far as the political and other reflections are concerned.

Mahendra Sapkota (2014) argues that the power structure shapes the identity which is determined by the local context and social setting where the movement occurs and develops. That is why the Tharu movements have been focusing on ethnicity primarily with the collective voices for regional autonomy; land rights and the freedom of bonded labour (18). The Tharu literary writings have reflected the same thing in different times- beginning from 1951 to the present time (2021) too. Just after the restoration of democracy in 1990, Siya Ram Tharu published his anthology of poetry *Poh Phat Gail* which had a revolutionary consciousness (Sarbahari 54). In 2006, Sushil Chaudhary came up with mixed feelings of revolution and patriotism to publish *Lauwa Chalan- 2*, after the successful mass movement of 2062/62. Later in 2016 (2072BS), he published *Birhul Basiya* with the theme of inclusiveness, equality, and self-identity around the crucial time of the declaration of the constitution of federal Nepal. Following the movement of the Tharuhat Autonomous State and its consequences like the

Tikapur Incident, so many Tharu literary writings have been produced in miscellaneous forms that reflect the ups and down in the Tharu political scenario.

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