

Deconstructing Nepali National Symbols: Contestation and Reconciliation in Indigenous Poetry

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Abstract

Indigenous poetry articulates Indigenous communities' voices deeply rooted in oral culture, mythic narratives, and traditions, reviewing the dominant national identity and culture. In this backdrop, the paper analyzes Shrawan Mukarung's "An Autography of 98" Bhupal Rai's "The Caste System of Water", Bhogen Ekle's "A Request", and Sushma Ranahma's "Adivasi" (Aborigine) poems to examine how they redefine Nepali national identity and symbols for an inclusive nationalism. In doing so, the study has employed the qualitative method, specifically a textual analysis based on the theories of Nationalism by Benedict Anderson, and David Stevens for theoretical tools and Cultural psychology by Kitayama, Cohen, and Shweder as the conceptual framework. The research unveils that national identity and nationalism framed by the dominant Hindu ideology marginalized the ethnic indigenous culture and tradition and the poetry voices for an inclusive approach to national identity and symbols. The study further concludes that Indigenous poetry not only challenges the mainstream national identity, symbols, and nationalism but also seeks to reconcile people-centric nationalism. Inclusive nationalism unites people and cultures from diverse socio-cultural and economic backgrounds to form an equitable and just society. The research has significant implications—bringing awareness to reframe the new national symbols and identities, aiding researchers and academicians for further study in the discipline, and paving the way for policy-makers and planners to see the potential of diversity from new perspectives.

Keywords: Indigenous poetry, national identity, symbols, inclusive nationalism

Introduction

Indigenous poetry chiefly focuses on the issues of reclamation of identity, and social critiques based on oral traditions, myths, and archetypes and celebrating humans and nature. Bradley (2023) argues, “Through the expression of grief, the indigenous poets highlight the emergence and endurance of a community and people who will continue to fight for survival and the right to live in peace and harmony outside of colonial gender and sexual binaries” (p. 115). What Bradley underscores is that Indigenous poetry expresses the spirit and struggle of the people living in the community to defy the power dynamics and restore harmony and co-existence. Heith (2023) states, “Intersections between eco-poetics, decolonization, and activism are found in diverse genres on the Sámi cultural scene, and poetry renewing the ancient oral genres of Yoik and story-telling remains a central genre” (p. 382). The poetry also renews oral tradition and narratives in a changing context to counter the mainstream culture. Lungeli (2023) claims, “The Limbu poets channelize ekphrastic rhetoric to visually render their indigenous body aesthetics supplied by the dimensions of *Mundhum* and thus maintain the Limbu ways of seeing and being” (p. 37). Indigenous poetry serves as a compelling tool to enunciate the voice of ethnically marginalized people to contest mainstream values for establishing social justice and equality.

The poetry written after the Peoples’ Movement II in 2006 by poets from Indigenous nationalities such as Kirant Rai, and Limbu in Nepal challenges the unitary nation and nationalism that the Shah Dynasty, Rana regime, and Panchayat formed through physical force and cultural intervention. In this relevance, the paper analyzes the four selected Indigenous poems composed by Shrawan Mukarung, Bhupal Rai, Bhogen Ekle, and Shusma Ranahma who challenge the dominant, unipolar view of the Nepali nation and nationalism. The study argues that the poems derived from The Itar Kavita¹, contest and negotiate simultaneously with the dominant nationalism for an inclusive nationalism that respects diverse perspectives, arts, and cultures regardless of caste, language, region, or religion.

Several researchers have researched Indigenous poetry composed by Kirant Rai poets to discover themes of resistance, history, politics, and culture. Pokhrel (2024) researches poems by Rai and Limbu poets—“Shrawan Mukarung, Bhupal Rai, Upendra Subba, Swapnil Smriti, Chandrabir Tumbapo, and Heman Yatri” (p. 14) to explore how they challenge ideas of national identity and nationalism in Nepal. Subedi, A. (2015) studies Rajan Mukarung’s poetry for his distinctive style that focuses on the everyday lives and experiences of ethnic communities

and examines how identity influences the way political consciousness is forged for social and cultural background (p. 23). He also comments on Bhupal Rai's poem recounting Kirant history and expresses the pain and agony experienced by the members of ethnic communities (p. 6). The poems explore the themes of resistance and a reminder of the Kirant community's struggles. Bhattarai (2064 B.S.) argues that writers and poets like Rajan Mukarung attempt to contest the old tradition and endeavor to form new fort of ideas, styles, and notions in writing (p. 413). Timilsina (2019) examines how ethnic culture in mainstream literature empowers marginalized groups to resist the dominant culture and political values in Rajan Mukarung's poetry (p. 75). Ethnic themes and styles in the poetry both challenge the prevailing power structure and offer a platform to represent the unique experiences and traditions of the marginalized group.

The critics and researchers center on a single poet approaching the common literary poetics while analyzing the poetry in context. They have argued that the Kirant poetry voices a counter-narrative against the Nepali nation and nationalism and creates a separate discourse for the resistance. Contrary to the previous research, the study examines the ways and techniques like the subversion of the Kirant myths, oral narrative, symbolism, and imagery are employed in the poems to explore how the poetry that vocalizes the theme of resistance, as well as reconciliation, integrates and strengthens new people-centric Nepali nationalism.

Methods and Materials

This research has employed the qualitative method under the interpretive paradigm since it focuses on subjective meanings the poets assign to the poetic texts. Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2018) state, "The interpretive paradigm holds that reality is constructed through subjective perceptions and interpretations" (29). Given the qualitative nature of poetry, interpretive methods would be meaningful insights into analysis and interpretation in multilayered ways. The paper has utilized the qualitative methods, particularly textual analysis for analyzing texts from the poems of Shrawan Mukarung's "An Autography of 98" in Bise Nagarchi Bayan [A Narrative Account of Bise Nagarchi] Bhupal Rai's "The Caste System of Water" in Yari, Bhogen Ekle's "Agraha" (A Request) and Sushma Ranahma's "Adivasi" (Aborigine) in The Itar Kavita (The Other Poetry). It examines how these poems redefine Nepali national identity and symbols for an inclusive nationalism. The poems in Nepali have been translated into English to analyze chiefly in two themes—resistance and reconciliation.

While studying the poems, the paper has embraced theories of nationalism by Benedict Anderson and Richard Stevens as major theoretical tools and insights into Cultural Psychology by Swedner and Dov Cohen as conceptual frameworks. Anderson (2015) points out, “Nation is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (p. 6). The nation as a collective group is based on a shared identity and collective belief in common history and future rather than explicit personal interests. Stevens (1997) argues, “Memories and stories of historic events and parades, remembrances... provide a strong community of history and destiny” (p. 256). In addition to theories of nationalism, the paper has used Cultural Psychology as a conceptual tool since Shweder asserts, “Cultural psychology is a field of psychology which contains the idea that the culture and mind are inseparable” (p. 821). The insights of Cultural Psychology examine the way one thinks and does suggesting that poetry reflects and shapes how the Kiranti understand culture evoking memories and history. The idea also helps to reveal how they draw on shared memories and experiences to create a sense of shared cultural identity.

Result and Discussion

The paper begins with the process of creating a national symbol by narrating the nation in totality rather than defining what it means as a national symbol. To be more specific, it underscores the literary attempt that cultivated the aspiration of the ruling leader and the role of literary figures that created a national symbol rather than recognizing it from the diverse community of the nation. It would be unfair to claim that the national symbol remained static over time because the unstable political history embarked on the transformation of the national recognition as the historical transmogrification took place. In other words, the changes that occurred in the regimental course of historicity from the nation-state formation of King Prithvi Narayan Shah to the Rana Regime preceded by the Panchayat Regime and the post-democratic 1990s have emphasized different assumptions as national symbols based on their interest.

The Poetry: A Critical Analysis

Since the state fertilized the dominant Hindu ideology and values in the nation-building process, they nationalized their religious symbol and coercively forced the folks to embody the meaning that they encouraged. National symbols are

unarguably the nationalization of the Hindu mythological elements or those who advocate for the Hindu way of representing the society in Nepal. Thakuri (2023) alludes to the mythological hero of Nepal in his article “Role of Mythical Heroic Narratives in Parenting of Nepal” in the following ways:

There are many mythical hero/s in Nepali folklore, ancient thoughts, religious texts, and Dharma-Sanskriti (Dharma translated as duty-responsibility with empathy and Sanskriti as culture). Some of them include Shakti, Brahma, Bishnu, Shiva, Dikpala, Ganesha, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Durga, Saraswati, Laxmi, Indra, Azima, Bhairava, Naga, Matsyendranath, Gorakhanath, Siddha, Manjushree, Mohani, Sikhandi, Brihannala, Daitya/Asura or Devata or God in many local reincarnate forms. (p. 4)

Thakuri lists the mythological heroes who played a significant role in constructing and narrating the nation. In doing so, he claims, “Their heroic and chivalrous role has affected the social-cultural behavior of Nepali from immemorial time to the present” (p. 4). The nation-state formed by the Shah, and Rana muted the ethnic voices and presence. Thus, Mukarung manifests the loss and downfall of Kirant nation and identity in “The Autobiography of 98” through mythic narratives and symbols:

*This is how our ancestor
left Hatuwagadhi!²
Treading Arun and Tamor River
Boiling water
This is how our ancestor
arrived at Memeng, Panther
Hurting on the tree of Bohori³,
and Banana and walking along
the spirit of my forefather blocked the way
promising to return one day
he himself became the way. (My Trans.; Lines 17-27)*

In the lines, Mukarung reflects the vivacious ancestral journey of Kirant who underwent defeat, displacement, and promise to reclaim the lost identity. The historical and mythical events and allusions—“Hatuwagadhi, Banana, and Mundhum⁴ reveal how the Kirant lost the land, and power and were forced to desert the homeland. Despite the loss and escape, the father/the speaker refers to myths and ancient culture to challenge to dominant rulers to restore lost identity and existence, leading to optimism and a better future. In this respect, Anderson (2015) further states, “The cultural products of nationalism - poetry, prose fiction, music, plastic

arts - show this love very clearly in thousands of different forms and styles. On the other hand, how truly rare it is to find analogous nationalist products expressing fear and loathing” (p.141-42). Anderson posits that myths narratives, ancestral past, and shared culture form group and national identity based on the power dynamics of the nation-state and dominant national culture. The socio-cultural system the Kirant rulers had formed, however, got disrupted with the arrival of the dominant Hindu practices and it is the symbolic commitment Mukarung refers to by ‘promising to return one, he became the way. P.A. McAllister (1991) in this instance, argues, “Resistance by subordinated peoples, using earlier cultural forms in new ways, or adapting them to suit changed conditions, has been widespread in Africa (p.130). McAllister asserts that the act of defiance by marginalized groups to the dominant through utilizing cultural forms has been a common strategy across the world, including Africa as Mukarung defies the dominant regime through myths, history, and culture of the Kirant Rai in the poetry. Similarly, Bhupal Rai recounts how the caste system of water created a culture of untouchability and hierarchy:

*Slowly
brought their new-new weapon,
bang a sword of an unknown language on the chest
explore the gun power of heterogeneous science on the head
the gun of a new mantra in the soil,
a new God in the place of a man
and lastly
they brought
a caste system of water. (My Trans.; Lines 20- 28)*

Referencing the historical narratives on how the dominant Hindu culture erased the ethnic and cultural values, Rai opposes the dominant cultural identity, and symbols, and analyzes the intrusion of outsiders into the society. The imagery of war and conquest symbolizes the imposition of a caste system that ignores human values. In line with Rai, Uzoechi (2009) insists, “Intellectually militant literature or discourse, the one that Tanure Ojaide, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and Ngozi Adichie, inter alia write, is a veritable instrument for conquering State violence and postcolonial contradictions (p. 138). Uzoechi asserts that literature and culture by literary writers play a crucial role in resisting state violence and intervention even in the complexities of postcolonial societies.

With the portrayal of how the nation-state formation imposed the physical and cultural values of the rulers on the ethnic minorities, Rai resists the existing nation and nationalism for the reformation. In this connection, the development of

the sociocultural aspect of Nepal strongly relies on Hindu mythological heroes and they are not merely heroes of a particular sect or religious group, rather they have attained national recognition, and over time, they have become national symbols. Thus, Poudel (2023) argues, “The primary contest in Nepal has long been ethnic rather than religious, though the differentiation between the two is not black and white. Many ethnic groups have been marginalized, and ‘lower-caste’ people have been discriminated against” (p. 5). In this context, the contemporary ethnic poet, Bhogen Ekle in his poem “A Request,” questions dominant narratives of historicizing the national symbols and shows their monolithic approach to constructing a national narrative, omitting the aspiration of minorities in the following ways:

*You have already written all
of Rama, Sita,
Sakuni⁵, Gita
or not?
You have written an entire era alone
Now give me the pen
I will write
I will write my oral Vedas⁶,
Draft into the cliff of the cave,
write the epic of Wabu⁷, Washo⁸, and three-pronged hearth, Dhol⁹,
Jyampta¹⁰, and Sakela¹¹’s narrative
piling the Ngamuri¹² into layers by layers. (My Trans.; Lines 1-12)*

Ekle reveals the single-handed domination of transcribing Hindu mythological heroes in national history. He illustrates that the dominant group has not only created their religious character as national symbols but also refused to record the heroes of other cultural and religious groups. In this sense, Ekle significantly hints at two specific natures of the dominants: Hindu superiority in historicizing their religious heroes as national symbols and negating non-Hindus to transcribe their heroes in historical development. To shed light on the first issue, Hachhethu (2007) argues, “Prithvi Narayan Shah, the unifier of Nepal, established the Shah regime based on the rule of the sword. The Shah monarchy, as a hereditary institution, was reinforced by the traditional Hindu view of nobility of birth, the accepted tradition all through ancient and medieval times” (p. 1828). Whether it be the state of integrity by King Prithivi Narayan Shah or the dictatorial system of Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana, the locus of the government and state policy was to consolidate the Hindu belief system, nationalizing the religious doctrine.

This system became the governing apparatus of every regime that regulated Nepal single-handedly. As is well known, King Mahendra perpetuated the continuation of Hindu narratives during the Panchayat regime. In the words of Khadka (1986), “The ‘innovative’ panchayat system was just an attempt to idealize the concept of a Hindu monarch by combining it with certain features of other political systems” (p. 432). In doing so, “The ancient role of the monarch as absolute ruler was asserted by King Mahendra when he mentioned that the special conditions prevailing in Nepal that the idea of democracy could be sold to the people only through institutions that were familiar” (p. 433). The declaration of the Hindu state constitutionally in 1961 brought about a certain legacy into national symbols officially. With this, the Nepali language, *Khas Kura*, became the official language of Nepal, the Cow, a religious marker of the Hindu community became the national animal, and *Daura Suruwal*, a cultural costume of Khas Aryan people, became the national attire. In this relevance, to overturn this historical dominance, Ekle seems to make a reconciliatory attempt by requesting pen symbolically for rewriting history from a marginalized perspective in the following lines:

*I need to write everything
Give me the pen now
Do not be afraid at all
Do not think I am sharpening the edge
This chest does not have the tusk
Nor a knife in my armpit
I promise you. (My Trans.; Lines 13-19)*

Ekle underscores the importance of writing history and significantly the history of those who are left behind. Remarkably, Ekle underpins that the new writing does not harm the history of the dominant. He ensures that the history newly written undergoes parallel with the existing history and in doing so, he also requests the majoritarian that there is no necessity to be intimidated while allowing others in historical participation. For Ekle, a request for historical involvement in no sense a strategy to rupture the historical repository of the majoritarian but is to enrich the history of Nepal inclusively.

In this sense, Ekle believes in inclusivity rather than deforming the existing system. His assumption is similar to what Lawoti contends for inclusivity: “Members of different groups cannot become equal if groups are treated unequally by the state. A person whose language is discriminated against and whose religion is not equally recognized cannot compete on an equal footing with a member of the dominant group whose religion, language, and culture are promoted by the state” (p. 121). The social

structure is hierarchically organized and the pattern of governance is furnished with a single religious doctrine. Thus, “In such circumstances, the declaration of formal individual equality, discriminates because it does not recognize ethos and norms that are different than the one that undergirds formal equality” (p. 121). Henceforth, for this categorical dispute, as a resolution, Ekle writes:

*I promise, witnessing Ninama Henkhama¹³
 Invoking Mundhum, I promise you
 Let it be, promising your Ram
 I will write only mine
 I do not erase yours at all
 Sketching my own face stitch separately,
 I will not cover yours
 Now give me the pen. (My Trans.; Lines 20-27)*

Interestingly, Ekle does not believe in contestation nor does he accept monopoly. He wants to write history, taking consent from the majoritarian, and yet he believes that the Indigenous people must be validated and authorized by the dominant while establishing their values. However, along the same lines what is also palpable is the rigidity of the majoritarian who hardly gives a chance to inscribe their history, if not refuses to grant them an opportunity. Moreover, Ekle reveals the untrustworthiness hidden underneath the belief of the majoritarian in the ethnic community while juxtaposing their facts.

Indeed, Ekle rightly points out what has been done to the indigenous and ethnic groups while showing the importance of the history and historical present. The structural dominance of the Hindu ideology and the perpetual exercise of power has undoubtedly effaced the minorities from their real location. As the International Crisis Group (1998) suggests “Members of hill ethnic groups who are economically relatively strong, such as Gurung, Rai, or Limbu, may face mostly symbolic exclusion” (p. 3), they are boycotted from the national history, which not only erased their presence in the national building process but also consolidated the foundation of societal hierarchy. In doing so, the minorities are discarded from their position and blurred their identity. In other words, “Prejudices such as that of the quarrelsome drunkards, ever quick to draw their khukuri, and fit for serving in the army but not for education and qualified employment, may not injure but do insult. Discrimination is more tangible for other groups” (p. 3). The indigenous people are aware that they have been marginalized and they are also informed that the consolidation of the majoritarian is weakening of the indigenous. Thus, in this context, Sushma Ranahma in her poem “Adivasi” writes:

*Who is trying to break the thread of Mundhum
and who is trying to tear the Fenga ¹⁴woven by Boju?
Who is trying to erase my Mundhum
and who is trying to kill my rhythmic language?
Oh! My Sakela
-my Sili
-My three-pronged stone hearth
-My Mundhum. (My Trans.; Lines 14-21)*

Ranahma's interrogation in her poem suggests that despite being the aboriginal tribe of the nation, indigenous people are discarded from their recognition. Their cultural symbols like Mundhum, language, and Fenga are being destroyed. She believes that because as Adhikari (2013) contends: "Many Janajatis resent the dominance of the upper-caste state-elite over territories that they consider their historic homelands. They claim that the state has dispossessed them of their languages and cultures" (p. 147). In other words, Ranahma is aware that their cultural symbols are overridden by the symbols of majoritarianism, which destroyed their symbols. The proliferation of Veda and Gita may be a matter of pride for Khas Aryan but when it is nationalized and the state favors this religious text and language they adhere to, consequently the text like Mundhum is sidelined; when the clothes like *Daura Suruwal* becomes the national attire as a symbol, "Fenga woven by Boju" is tattered. Thus, Ranahma alerts the majoritarian to pay attention to the indigenous symbols so that it could dwindle the possibility of contestation because nobody wants to lose identity when cultural identity itself becomes the marker to show the presence in the national space.

When Ekle and Ranahma are warning about the consequences of the subordination, people may disagree with such a hypothesis because as Subedi, S. P. argues, "Despite the numeric Hindu majority, there has been no major religious conflict in the modern history of the country" (p. 128). Indeed, it is partly true that "There is no history of major ethnic conflict in this country. All ethnic groups are united under the banner of Nepalese nationhood. They all have a shared history of unbroken independence since time immemorial" (p.129). Interestingly, Subedi shows his audacity to narrate a blurred history of Nepal. He forgets that the first king of the Kirant dynasty is Yalamber and the Kirant history comes prior to the history of Lichhavi, Malla, and Shah. Lichhavi dethroned Kirant, which is a significant example of ethnic conflict in Nepal. In this sense, it would not be wrong to say that the history of Nepal begins with the history of ethnic conflict. Importantly, Subedi's epistemological acknowledgment is the resemblance of the psychic problem of the majoritarian, who is suffering from historical amnesia and happens to believe in partial history that begins from the middle.

Moreover, people also may falsify the fundamental ground of the Indigenous belief that their ideologies are motivated by conventional ways of development. For instance, Toffin (2009) in “The Janajati/Adivasi Movement in Nepal: Myths and Realities of Indigeneity,” argues, “From an anthropological viewpoint, the ideology of the Janajati Movement relies, however, on obsolete essentialist conceptions. The leaders of these associations contend that everyone belongs to one and only one ethnic or caste group, is born into that group, and cannot change groups during their lifetime” (p. 30). Moreover, he emphasizes:

According to these notions, cultures, and societies are strictly delineated units, each with its own distinctiveness and sense of belonging. They are viewed as self-contained and unchanging entities, closely associated with a particular tract of land. These ideas nullify the hierarchy and the cultural differences existing within an ethnic group. They are related to an early age of anthropology and do not correspond to the newer approaches that highlight the fluidity of ethnic boundaries, their construction over time, and the hybridity of various cultures throughout the world. (p. 30)

He brings an anthropological stand into account to blunt the sharpness of Indigenous claims. He thinks Indigenous people in Nepal hold a conventional way of democratization, which demands for stagnant way of understanding human society that is fluid and always drifting. He also accuses Indigenous people of being incapable of flowing with the pace of the modern way of national mobility in terms of comprehending the people and fluid social atmosphere. Interestingly, Tiffin fails to grasp the essence of indigeneity and the episteme of ethnic valore. His offensive remarks—as he points out Indigenous people are judged as “self-contained and unchanging entities”—upon the indigenous groups shows his inability to penetrate the indigenous psyche.

However, what he has to understand is majoritarians have always defined Nepal from a one-dimensional perspective, from Khas Aryan’s way of life and they ever tried to valorize their cultural values while defining the nation be it the Shah dynasty, the Rana Regime or Panchayat Regime or the democratic monarchal system ruled by King Birendra and Gyanendra. In other words, they dismembered the unity of the ethnic community and dictated them through their cultural authority. In the words of Hayes (1975) “The government actively suppresses efforts to organize groups to pursue political goals and the class organizations have not proved an effective substitute for politically conscious groups. As a result, politicization has no effective outlet” (p. 626-27). Even the late King Gyanendra, as Shah, S. (2008) claims, “started with began dissipating with his choice of symbols, style, and personnel. For example, most of the people in the new cabinet formed under the

king's chairmanship were stalwarts of the thirty-year party-less Panchayat system that ended in 1990" (p. 13). Furthermore, Shah illustrates:

The zonal administration structure, a core feature of the Panchayat system, was reinstated. The music, songs, and images identified with the Panchayat period began to be aired on state television and radio. Royal opponents were able to present this as the king's intention to end the multiparty system and return the country to Panchayat rule. The crown's nostalgia for Panchayati bric-a-brac might have been forgiven had the government begun to deliver on the key peace promise that had been made when it assumed direct rule. (p. 13-14)

The restriction for the common folks to participate in any party and to continue the legacy of the panchayat regime is not only to sustain cultural dominance over ethnic minorities but also to elongate the process of nationalizing the cultural symbols of the Hindus. It is because, as Lawoti affirms, "The Panchayat-era slogan 'One language, one religion, one form of dress, one country' reflected the state's efforts to create cultural uniformity" (p. 14). In this sense, it is, in fact, the majoritarian and the ruling leaders of Nepal who are advocating for the homogeneity of the nation vis-a-vis indigenous people who celebrate the heterogeneity. Hence, when the Indigenous people do not attain what they desire, as Ranahma points out:

*I have a fresh memory of my venerable ancestors
More importantly,
whole flowers are hanging on the loom
my mother was weaving
There is a high freedom
because –
I was born in the same Indigenous soil
I was born where my mother was weaving loom
I grew up playing with the snow of Chomalungma¹⁵
I am a tribal daughter. (My Trans.; Lines 28-37)*

Indigenous people might have been undermined for ages, and their histories have been ruptured; however, those unforgettable memories are carefully preserved in the repository of the Indigenous psyche. They are indestructible from the experience of the tribal groups; they are indispensable in their life. More importantly, although the nation failed to inculcate a sense of wholeness in Indigenous people and ratify their cultural symbol, their markers are permanently everywhere because they are entangled with the soil, air, rocks, peaks, and snow. Their symbols will persist until these elements perish that define nation and nationhood. Dar (2022)

emphasizes the multifaceted nature of nation and nationalism, specifically validating subjectivity and relativity arguing, “Deep contestation constitutes a source of power and strength for nations and nationalism” (p. 1). Dar contends that disputes and disagreement can strengthen nations and nationalism as the poetry by Mukaurng, Ekle, Rai, and Ranahama, a form of deep contestation to the dominant culture seeks to foster national integrity and inclusive nationalism.

Conclusion

In summary, the paper contends that Nepali national symbols have been largely by the dominant Khas Aryan community and with their historical and cultural influence. While these symbols have been instrumental in unifying the nation, they have also marginalized other ethnic and religious groups, particularly the indigenous people. In this light, the study has analyzed the poems of Shrawan Mukarung, Bhupal Rai, Bhogen Ekle, and Sushma Ranahma through the lens of theories of nationalism and cultural psychology. The study has found that the poems serve as powerful critiques of the dominant narrative, highlighting the erasure of indigenous socio-cultural values and the need for a more inclusive approach to nation and nationalism. The poetry underscores the importance of recognizing and celebrating the diverse cultural heritage of Nepal and warns of the potential consequences of continued marginalization. Nepali national symbols and narratives must evolve to reflect the country’s changing socio-cultural and ideological landscape. Having recognized the diversity of culture, language, religion, and ethnicity, Nepal can build a stronger, more united nation. Bhogen Ekle’s poem “A Request” serves as a powerful critique of the dominant narrative, urging for a rewriting of history that includes the voices and experiences of marginalized communities. His call for a more inclusive national identity echoes the sentiments of many Nepalis who seek a more equitable and just society.

In this way, the research’s analysis highlights the significance of recognizing the historical and cultural context in which national identities and symbols are framed and maintained. The study’s findings retain some implications highlighting the importance of recognizing the historical and cultural context in which national symbols are formed and maintained. The first is that it has challenged the dominant national narratives and symbols, which have largely been shaped by Hindu ideology. Second, it has emphasized the need to include diverse voices and perspectives in building an inclusive national identity for peace and harmony. As people-centric nationalism advocates for recognizing and celebrating the cultural heritage of all ethnic and religious groups. The final implication is that the findings provide invaluable insights for policymakers to develop more inclusive policies and initiatives for an equitable and just society.

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End Notes

1. The other or marginalized poetry
2. The rural municipality in the southern of Bhojpur at present. It was the state/principality ruled Atal Singh Khambu of the Kirant Rai/Khambu before the unification of the King Prithvi Narayan Shah
3. A kind of tree found in the hilly region of Nepal
4. The oral philosophical tradition in the Kirant
5. Shakuni is one of the antagonists in the Hindu epic Mahabharata and known for cunning, intelligent and devious character.
6. Religious text to guide for moral and ethical aspects of life
7. The vessel made out of the gourd
8. Long tail of the cock, which is offered to Mang (worshipping to ancestral deities in Kirant Rai) ritual
9. The wooden drum made out of covering with animal hides
10. The brass cymbal
11. The cultural dance performance observed twice in a year
12. Abundant and pervasive
13. The sky and the earth
14. The fabric for clothing
15. The Mt. Everest in Bantawa Rai language

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