

Resistance Dynamics of Gendered Subalterns in Yug Pathak's *Urgenکو Ghoda*

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Abstract

This paper explores how Mhendo resists the dominant culture and hegemonic ideology in Yug Pathak's "Urgenکو Ghoda", published in 2066 BS, using a perspective of resistance as a theoretical framework. The objectives of the study are to examine how marginalized people oppose the dominant culture by participating in the armed revolution. The central character, Mhendo in the novel has a firm belief in the glories of the Tamang history. She learns that the ruling class conquered the Tamang warriors and subjugated them. They have become victimized on their own land. She figures out the reasons behind the misrepresentation of the people and the community as she has grown up with the Tamang myth in Ichong. This provokes her ethnic consciousness and prepares her to resist in an attempt to regain the lost history. Her decision to recruit herself in the decade-long civil war is a form of resistance to cultural hegemony. The paper writer uses here the concepts of influential critics such as Margaret S Archer, Kasper Mase, Miguel Tamen, Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner and Gayatri Chokravorty Spivak as a theoretical framework. Spivak interrogates the concept of the colonial subject in postcolonial discourse and limits the ability to relate with diverse cultures, Similarly, Miguel Tamen believes that the attempt to critique and interpret is to express resistance.

Keywords: hegemony, resistance, ethnic consciousness, human agency, cultural identity

Introduction

The article explores the resistance dynamics of the marginalized people who continue combating the dominant power center and hegemonic culture in Yug Pathak's *Urgenکو Ghoda*. Resistance is the form of defiance from the oppressed class of people in an organized way and it is a way of defying the dominant culture. Resistance literature as one subfield deals with a socio-political activity to resist dominant ideologies in literary studies. Resistance, in some instances, means to challenge norms and defy cultural practices. In Barbara Harlow's *Resistance Literature*, literary engagement results in fresh ideas of political resistance. As Maase (2017) argues, the "supposed context of a clash of interests between 'the people' and 'the power bloc'" leads to resistance (p.45). The narrated events in this novel occur in the period

of a Maoist insurgency in Nepal. It has been an unresolved conflict that affects the nation and its population for a decade. In this respect, *Urgenka Ghoda* depicts a tale of Mhendo, who is struggling as a rebel after she gets the position of a devoted combatant. As the central character of the novel, she faces a lot of hurdles in life while fighting against the power bloc, struggles painfully and ultimately agrees to die bearing the responsibility of a dedicated combatant. When Party decides to send her to the Tamsaling, the ancestral homeland of the Tamang, she is very reluctant to forsake her duties. This is to mention how Mhendo and her community resist both as the rebels for a change. The text showcases the oppressed class of people fighting greatly for liberation and these people have made sacrifices while combating the armed forces. The article writer has the following research questions to the related literary texts: (i) who are the marginalized community that has been brought to the margin in power structure in the novel? (ii) What are the factors that instigate marginalized community to resist the ruling class? (iii) How does the marginalized community sustain the form of resistance against the power, high culture and domination? Similarly, the study has the following objectives: (i) to identify the marginalized community brought to the margin, (ii) to examine the factors instigating resistance, and (iii) to evaluate the form of resistance against the power, high culture and domination. The article aims at critiquing how the marginalized people resist the dominant high culture and the powerful authority for the sake of cultural identity of subalterns in the text. The article delimits the study of resistance of the oppressed group without including the other aspects. So, the present article argues resistance dynamics of gendered subalterns.

Literature Review

Critics have analyzed critically and commented on the text from different perspectives. After the reviews, similar views have been expressed thematically. *Urgenka Ghoda* is a depiction of the conflicts resulting from the oppressed class of people. The Tamang have lost their history and their identity. The novel deals with armed conflicts where the oppressed class of people's participation matters and the indigenous identity is sought by the indigenous community. But Khagendra Sangroula (2067 BS) agrees that Pathak's *Urgenka Ghoda* is a small narrative that depicts the battle fought for women's empowerment, and a tale of the self-sacrifice made for cultural identity and class liberation. It is a noble work of resistance literature. In the context of Nepal, it showcases Progressive or Marxist literature. He pinpoints that Pathak's *Urgenka Ghoda* emphasizes women's empowerment, cultural identity and class consciousness. It studies the Marxist ideology and class conflicts.

However, a political analyst cum columnist, Hari Rokka (2067BS) believes that the dismantling of the old power structure enters the new structure. People's war and its assessment in matters of political and dissent groups would be inadequate if the literature did not justify people's war. He argues that political transformations occur through people's revolt; it is the restructuring of the state power. Political and dissent groups jointly fight for liberation and

socio-cultural change. The post suggests that the novel between the trajectory of history and the present has observed and evaluated the plight of decade-long conflict. His style of writing has done justice to the narrative. His novel represents a tale of the Tamsaling area. Thus, a decade-long conflict is assessed in the trajectory of political history. Actually, resistance triggers opposition as the marginalized groups protest in an organized form with the help of the leaders and educated communities. Resistance starts after the indigenous people gain awareness with the teachings and literacy from intellectuals. In the above reviews, the critics have looked at the text from the perspectives of its theme and technique. In the text, The Tamang community attempts to seek identity by demanding the ancestral land_Tamsaling. In this context, this article tries to analyze the text from a resistance as a theoretical framework by examining the power structure and dominant ideology as sources of political power are almost always exercised by the elite groups.

Methods and Materials

The article adopts a qualitative method of research. It uses a critical perspective of resistance as a framework of interpretation. It draws upon the critical insights of some critics such as Kaspar Maase (Popular Culture, Resistance, Cultural Radicalism, and Self-Formation 2017), Miguel Tamen (Resistance and Interpretation 2012), and Hollander, Jocelyn A. and Rachel L. Einwohner (Conceptualizing Resistance 2004). In this article, the primary text is the novel *Urgenka Ghoda* and the critical insights of resistance have been drawn from the secondary and mythological texts. Pathak's *Urgenka Ghoda* portrays the battle which is fought for women empowerment, cultural identity and freedom. Kaspar Maase(2017) argues, "What forms of expression and behavior count as resistant in a society—and thereby have resistant potential—is primarily a result of reciprocal perception, and the object of practical negotiation"(p. 46). Practices of expression and behavior have resistant possibility and these aspects are resilient in our society. Similarly, resistance alludes to the interpretation of the inappropriate systems of the rule. In this case, Tamen argues, "Resistance to interpretation is said to be caused by a property of what is being interpreted" (p. 210). To interpret is to resist the dominant culture. Similarly, he writes, "Interpretation is the only possible expression of resistance" (p. 218). Resistance is expressed by interpretation. When we critique domination and the dominant culture of the state or the elite group, resistance begins as a struggle for self and social liberation. Jennifer A. Sandlin asserts, "Resistance consists of acts of opposition to a dominant culture that contain within them a critique of domination and a struggle for self and social emancipation. Resistance celebrates the power of human agency [...]" (p. 75). Acts of opposition to the dominant culture lead to freedom.

In some cases, social groups try to achieve changes within the political system through resistance but the behavior of the authority is that the change is denied to the oppressed class of people. Hollander and Einwohner contend:

Another source of diversity is the direction or goals of the resistance. While resistance is most frequently understood to be aimed at achieving some sort of change, in some cases, the behavior described as resistance aims to curtail change. For example, "cultural resistance" in minority communities attempts to preserve the minority culture against assimilation into the host culture. (p. 536)

Cultural resistance protects the minority culture from the dominant culture when the host culture greatly influences the culture of the minority groups. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues, "Intellectuals must attempt to disclose and know the discourse of society's Other" when she refers to the situation of the description of the oppressed (Maggio p. 420). For social change, the roles of the academics and intellectuals are effective and instrumental because the oppressed must take the assistance of the intellectuals to understand the discourse of othering.

Results and Discussion

Pathak's *Urgenko Ghoda*, a novel of conflicts, uncovers a tale of the Tamang people and their history where the people lose their identity and the battle treacherously tricked by the other community. As the Tamang myth shows, three centuries ago, Urgen, a Tamang warrior, was killed along with his king by the Khas rulers beside the Yabeng Khola. In this regard, Miguel Tamen (2012) validates, "It is not that there is any natural affinity between interpretation and resistance but that resistance to interpretation is expressed by interpretations" (p. 209). The critic argues that interpretations of the social and cultural issue are like forming resistance through the human agency. Pathak remarks, "Beside the Yabeng River was the whirlpool floating with the human blood. The severed heads of the king and Urgen were whirling, but could not sink. The heads were seeking revenge. Somebody may have thought of avenging the murder. However, the Tamang generations missed the mark" (Pathak p. 49, trans. is mine). When Mhendo sees an image of the bodies of Urgen and his white horse on the riverbank, and of the severed head turning in a whirlpool, this stimulates her to keep track of her lost Tamang history. About this, Tamen (2012) states, "[...] but there is a looser sense of the word *resistance*, widely employed by humanists and social scientists that connote something like a property of matter. Resistance to interpretation is said to be caused by a property of what is being interpreted" (p. 210). Thus, the people belonging to many ethnic communities tend to search for own history, but the facts are not identified.

Visions of the figure of white horse symbolizes the Tamangs' historical consciousness and longing for liberation. Once the campaign of educating the local Tamangs about the need to struggle for Tamsaling begins, a ceasefire breaks down. Once, the party leadership chooses the

protesters to seize Yambu, Mhendo returns to the battlefield out of duty, requesting her neighbourly sister to take care of her infant in her absence. Jennifer A. Sandlin (2007) asserts, “Resistance consists of acts of opposition to a dominant culture that contain within them a critique of domination and a struggle for self and social emancipation. Resistance celebrates the power of human agency [...]” (p. 75). Resistance refers to an act of opposition but it can be mediated through human agency. An act of critiquing dominant ideology is evident in the following lines. Mhendo, a warrior, seems to resist the power center in the nation by joining the social movement. Pathak writes, “Our community cannot have become helpless, fugitive and coward. Fight fearlessly. May you gain a stature of martyrdom after creating history! But never feel timid. Capture the Yambu palace. Fight together along with your entire community and make a glorious history for all community” (Pathak p. 146, trans. is mine). Hence, she eventually loses her life despite the great bravery. She appears to embrace death for liberation. Armed struggle takes the form of resistance with much gallantry among the Tamang rebels.

The form of social organization can be marked through social change. For example, all the people from different quarters tend to organize themselves to consolidate the force of power because such an organization is instrumental in ensuring the social transformation of the community or group. Subsequently, a unified association carries the voices from the margin and resists the power center for massive transformations at a personal or collective level. In the same manner, Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner (2004) believe that resistance talks about social movements and combative politics that include numerous activities such as “marches, picketing, and the formation of organizations” (p. 535). Here, the authors argue that social movements concern politics of benefits and changes, and logically lead to various disruptions through protests and strikes for the creation of civil society and common good though they are not peaceful and desirable. In such cases, in the text, the Dalits and indigenous fight together to bring about political changes. Pathak writes, “The Tamangs are such a race that seems to have fought continuously against the powerful rulers since antiquity. Even so, the rulers have tricked the Tamangs and oppressed them, imposing different regulations. Equally, these rulers have conspired to end the Tamang history. Therefore, the Tamangs including the other indigenous group, the Dalits and the women must organize on their own and be prepared to fight people’s war” (Pathak p. 185, trans. is mine). The author maintains that not only the indigenous groups but the scheduled-caste group and women also have been hegemonized greatly. They struggle for equality, equity and liberation against the power blocs. Another critic Spivak (2007) contests, “The subaltern is silenced even when attempting to speak. The subaltern is always framed as a quisling or as a resistant. Its own voice is never heard” (As cited in J. Maggio p. 425). She articulates that the oppressed lack strong agency in post-colonial discourse. Thus, power constructs truth so powerless people have to claim their voices

in the form of social movement. The rebels in the text are powerless people so they take part in the movement.

Oppression and exploitation result in the division of the populations. Power decides a major role in the act of exploitation and oppression. Walter D. Mignolo (2005) writes, “The colonial matrix of power structures the colonial world, and colonial matrix of power devises racism and not classism because the key concept justifies oppression and exploitation” (p. 383). Power corrupts absolutely. Exploitation and coercion result from an imperialist perspective. As per the order of the rebel commander, Mhendo must work out a plan and engage the Tamangs to create Tamsaling – the land for Tamang community. For that reason, she walks through the villages explaining Tamang history and the need to claim ancestral territory of Tamsaling after abandoning the infant in Silikmo’s care. The extracts from the text justify her claim of ancestral land—Tamasaling. Pathak expresses, “Sister! I leave my daughter to your responsibility. It is uncertain that nobody returns alive from the battlefield. In case I die, tell her when she grows up to maturity, will you? Tell her that your mother has sacrificed life for the country and its people” (Pathak p. 147, trans.is mine). The mother prefers her duty to her loving daughter and is prepared to pay every cost for her ancestral land. This daunting act of hers cannot be underestimated. It is this historical consciousness that drives her to even sacrifice their life for a good cause. For that reason, the battle becomes a powerful tool for the community to resist the imposing power.

The text’s narrative connects Rupchand Bista, the politician and social activist in Makawanpur with the “Know Campaign” and public awareness. He teaches the Tamang people how to liberate themselves from oppression. He tells them that knowledge can free the community from the shackles of domination and oppression. He admonishes Phurba, who is a member of the Tamang community, about marginalization. In light of power and knowledge, Kasper(2017) observes, “Does one see the bastions of dominance located fundamentally in the private control of the means of production and in state authority or in the cultural structures of everyday life, lifestyles, and amusement imperceptibly oriented towards active integration into the dominance of the ‘power bloc’?” (p. 57). Always the power blocs hold hegemonic dominance over those without knowledge. In the text, Bista stimulates the Tamang Phurba to know and search his history. Spivak argues, “The subaltern remains an inaccessible blackness” (Maggio p. 427). The subaltern representation does not stay in the political space. Pathak critiques, “Search your history of your past ancestors, you scoundrel! Your community or race had not certainly been backward. How is it that such an artist would have taken birth? Discover the reason behind your backwardness. Search your Tamang civilization” (Pathak, p. 64 trans.is mine). History is biased because it is written by the people in power. Therefore the Tamang history remains obscure. Historical consciousness is rooted in Mhendo.

It logically follows that the Tamangs are misrepresented in history. However, the author argues, “The task of radical educators must be organized around establishing the ideological and material conditions that would enable men and women from oppressed classes to claim their own voices” (Giroux, 1983, p. 116). Giroux believes that the role of the intellectuals is instrumental so that the oppressed people can assert their voices. Thus, a character like Rupchan Bista becomes a form of agency by which the Tamang community becomes emboldened and Mhendo and her community is involved in the revolutionary activity.

Giroux theorizes the theoretical groundwork for a more viable and radical view of the dialectical relation between agency and structure. Instances of agency are found in the text. For example, the villager’s campaign for education for the local Tamangs about the necessity to struggle for Tamsaling. A copy of a banned magazine is distributed. Dalsingh Tamang receives prejudiced mistreatment from senior officers and feelings of rebellion arise out of exploitation. The Tamang people are engaged collectively in the creation of Tamsaling.

Embarking on the ideas from Althusser and Bowles, Giroux (1983) states that hegemony suggests a dialectical connection among “power, ideology, and resistance”. In contrast, as he claims, it offers a framework for developing a practical mode of fundamental training (p. 86). Power, ideology; and resistance show a close connectedness and become a framework for education. In the same vein, the communities are hegemonized. Pathak says:

We are fighting I replied proudly. His interest and curiosity on the conversation increased-can we bring back the Tamsaling with the battle. An independent nation would not be formed. Our own state exists on its own across the nation. This is to safeguard the language, culture, identity and pride of the Tamang. The monarch is the leader of the clever. What’s the use of substituting the old ruler by another one? (p. 137 trans. is mine)

The Tamangs question the validity of substituting the ruler. Instead, they must enlighten themselves through knowledge of cultural artefacts. Thus, educating the community is forming the voices of the marginal groups by which these marginalized communities might invite transformations.

At the start of the novel, the editor and the local poets have a conversation in connection with the restricted publication. The editor distributes copy of a banned magazine. As Stephen Duncombe (2002) states, cultural resistance integrates political resistance and compares politics with a cultural discourse (p. 6). Resistance is a politics-guided discourse that attempts to review the culturally hegemonic practices in contemporary times and society. The given lines in the text suggest glorious history of the indigenous group and their warfare. The protagonist of the novel says, “Urgen! I protected pride of the ancestral homeland—Tamsaling, watching the army of the bright white horses. Look! I fought with bravery. I accepted death

bravely. The Tamangs are warlike, brave fighters” (Pathak p. 238, trans. is mine). It is a valorization of the brave people, and the ethnic group has been depicted as warlike, brave fighters. The past generations of Mhendo have fought for others for ages, and now they are prepared to struggle for their own identity. Thus, the Tamang community wants to struggle for identity. If culturally conscious, they can resist injustice and misrepresentation.

Decentering the subject, self-formation, and the ambiguity of the social sphere constructs the formation of knowledge, power and truth. For instance, in the narrative, various characters such as a poet and his wife, a police officer, and a group of women escaping from jail, senior army officers trying to track down the progressive author and two students are involved in the period of the nation’s war and seem to struggle for a political change. In the armed force, his senior officers abuse Dalsingh Tamang and mistreat him violently and their misbehaviours fill his thoughts with rebellion. The students complain about the glorification of violence, and destruction of the magazine due to the annoyance. The poet and his wife read *Lal Paila* (Red Footprint) secretly and develop consciousness. An influential critic’s view:

The focus lay on subject forms, subject cultures, and subject formations that were regulated by hegemonic discourses. This perspective confronted the basic principle of the liberal worldview, the concept of the autonomous subject which is competent and able to make *his or her own* rational decisions. (Kasper, 2017 p. 59)

He believes that hegemonic discourse regulates the subject forms, cultures and formation. Its insight assists them to make rational decisions, forming a liberal worldview. In the novel, the marginalized group including Mhendo participate in the social movement and receive insightful information about liberty and equality. The editor of Sumeru Post, for example, is an autonomous subject which, in some ways, tries forming revolutionary voices to contest the power blocs. Archer (2004) argues:

[...] the emergence of our human properties and powers. They are relational: stemming from the way our species is constituted, the way the world is and the necessity of their mutual interaction. The relations between the two, being universal, supply the anchor which moors our elaborated human forms as Selves, Persons, Agents and Actors, and thus sets limits to their variability. (p. 17)

Human species and mutual interaction establish the interpersonal growth of our human assets and rules in the world. Their relations create human forms as agents. In this text, poets, editors, educated community and activists are directly or indirectly associated with the organization and they create the discourse for a change.

However, the oppressed in society are the marginalized people who search for ethnic identity. They fight for liberation. Mhendo, a representative of her Tamang community,

struggles to gain the lost glory of her own history and becomes a rebel. Revolt is necessary for her, and it is a form of resistance against the dominant culture. Pathak writes:

Those who are oppressed search for their identity. When the Tamangs are bullied and looked down upon by using a diminutive word such as ‘Bhote’, will they not seek their rights? If the American blacks fight for racial identity and the Red Indians struggle for cultural identity, it is not an offensive act. But still, will this act offend you if somebody seeks identity in their own country? Damn your intellectuality!” (Pathak, p. 241, trans. is mine)

Mhendo’s attempt to search for knowledge and truth leads to the form of resistance in the way the blacks and the Red Indians resisted the whites for racial and cultural identity in the USA many years ago. Mhendo’s active involvement in the social movement is a form of resistance through armed struggle. In this respect, the subalterns struggle on the topic of liberation and identity. Thus, trying to seek one’s existence is like exploring the truthful history of the past, indigenous culture and civilization. Arguably, Archer (2004) sees humanity as the “linchpin of agency” in order to conceptualize the difficulty of “structure and agency” (p.17). Humanity and agency are essential structures for resistance. Mhendo’s cultural consciousness regains knowledge that in turn gives power and efficacy in the cultural transformations. The form of resistance is achieved through human agency.

Conclusion

This paper examines Pathak’s *Urgenka Ghoda* from the concept of resistance of the marginalized community, discussing the difficulty of the oppressed people and their participation in the social movement. Resistance to interpretation is expressed by interpretations. It is a process of formation of the voices at the margin. Unlike the privileged class of people, Urgen is a Tamang warrior but he and his king are slain treacherously. The creation of resistance is made conceivable through the human agency, which comprises the active participation of radical intellectuals. In the narrative of the text, persons such as the editor, the author, social activists and teachers spread the revolutionary waves. They are equally important figures because they keep fanning the sentiment of the protest. On the contrary, Tamangs’ historical consciousness and desire for liberation stimulate the central character Mhendo with the spirit of rebellion against the hegemonic dominance. Mhendo’s images of the magical figure of Urgen’s white horse spark the passion for reclaiming the suppressed voices. Recruiting Tamangs is instrumental in the creation of Tamsaling through a distant dream. Some critics view that the self and social liberation begin from resistance and organized struggle. However, it is argued that colonial power plays a key role to develop the ideological conditions in the state so that the oppressed classes claim the voices. Arguably, contradictions in society begin right from the existing notion of hierarchy in society. This is why, people work day and night for others, believing that they are less of a person than those

above them. The state authority essentially controls dominance. Hence Rupchan's argument is that the Tamangs must know and search for their own history. A human power emerges through humanity and agency that sustains resistance. Similarly, lack of vision, power and knowledge whether in men or women cannot effectively substantiate any form of resistance. Resistance continues until a charismatic leader emerges and commands the movement. Finally, the article examines the form of resistance dynamics. Pathak's *Urgenka Ghoda* has opened up an avenue for resistance literature as a new domain of research in Nepali literature. It tries to highlight the voices of the marginalized people and the subaltern characters whose voices are silenced by strong authority. It offers a small amount of insight for those interested in the cultural resistance of marginalized groups or voices. Furthermore, cultural hegemony can be another field of further research.

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