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Allegory of Impunity in Vijay Malla's Pattharko Katha

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Abstract

Written in 1971, the one-act play Pattharko Katha by Vijay Malla (1925-1999), staged by the student artists from Tribhuvan University, embodies the state of political helplessness that Nepalis had to go through right after the then King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev (1920-1972) dismissed the historically significant democratically elected government led by Prime Minister Bishweshworprasad Koirala (1914-1982) in 1961. This paper aims to read the play as the political allegory of the period when the Rana rulers and their cronies were left unpunished, and most of the victims of the autocratic regime had no choice but to swallow the bitter pills. It points out that the action taken by the King as part of installing a partyless Panchayat regime did pave the way for the state of helplessness among people. Malla, someone who had played an active role in the 1950 historical revolution that had brought the Rana regime to its end, found himself serving the recently established Royal Nepal Academy in an important position during the partyless Panchayat regime. Malla's Pattharko Katha employs political allegory by presenting the characters who find themselves turned into stone and realize the impossibility of taking revenge upon the culprit. This study concludes that the play allegorizes the pain and frustration of Nepalis bound to live through impunity rampant in Nepali society during the early years of the Panchayat regime.

Keywords: Impunity, land, political allegory, Panchayat regime, youths

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Introduction

Vijay Malla (1925-1999) wrote *Patharko Katha* for the special occasion, i.e., the sixth convocation of Tribhuvan University in 1971, to be performed by student artists at times when the Panchayat regime was supposed to have reached its heyday. Ideologically charged, Malla had actively participated in the political movement that had ended the Rana regime in 1950 and lived through the 1950s, the era of the multiparty political system, and experienced the 1960s introduction and institutionalization of the partyless Panchayat regime led by King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, who also wrote some poems and wanted to be recognized as a poet as well. Written and staged at times when the Panchayat regime banned liberal political expression, the play carries the worries of the time. As a creative talent as well as someone serving an important role in the Academy, Malla subtly uses political allegory to critique the issue that he was uncomfortable with. With the characters who are caught in helpless situations, the play functions like a message that Malla wants to share with the audience. As an intellectual and writer, he had lived through three different political eras, the Rana autocratic regime, the democratic era, and the partyless Panchayat system.

As a playwright, Malla has dramatized the psychosocial issues that the Nepali youths had lived through during the changes of the 1940s-1960s. For example, his Bahulakajiko Sapana (1947) dramatizes the pathetic situation that the Nepali subalterns had to live through during the autocratic Rana regime. School education alone was not going to bring any changes in the lives of the Nepali subalterns, mainly the Dalit children - is the message of the play. His second important play, Jiundo Las (1954) dramatizes the predicament of educated girls in the changing Nepali society still embroiled in age-old, outdated patriarchal values. Kohi Kina Barbad Hos (1958) celebrates the possible role that education in Nepal can play. Summing up the analysis of these plays, I remark: "By reading the plays with special attention to the shifts taking place in pedagogy, one comes to know that exposure to the world outside, to the modern world has made Nepali writers and artists to move within. Exposure to the world as these plays reveal was to realize the important preparation Nepalis needed to make in order to step into a new world" (Rijal n.p).

But written almost at the end of his literary career, Pattharko Katha (1971), on the other hand, provides a grim picture of a society that has lost hope for justice and order. Often celebrated as the one-act play par excellence, it has been taken as the example of Malla's dramaturgy by drama critics. With six characters on stage, the play tells the story of a landlord who has destroyed the lives of many. All the victims meet and know the kind of pain they were made to go through by the brute landlord, Bipinbabu. But the fact that all of them are dead now, and even if they meet, they cannot take any revenge. To their dismay, they realize that they have become stone. Left to live lifeless, sans mobility and consciousness, they are bound to carry the story. They cannot take revenge and feel at peace. The paper is particularly interested in exploring the dramatic situation in the play: Why does Malla turn the stone into characters and back again? The impunity that prevails in the play becomes very meaningful once the play is contextualized to the political context that Malla's generation belonged to.

Impunity in real life had prevailed in Nepali society, as no perpetrators of the Rana regime were brought to the court, and the peasants were left to suffer as the land reformation act favored the interests of the landlords.

Pattharko Katha has often been interpreted as one of the most read and discussed one-act plays in the public sphere of Nepali literature. Keshav Prasad Upadhyay, someone who has extensively written on representative Nepali one-act plays praises it for exposing the state of injustice rampant in the society, for also critiquing the existing Panchayat regime in a very veiled manner (74). Upadhyaya made this remark at the politically liberated times, i.e. Republic of Nepal after 2008. Writing an introduction to the collection of one-act plays in the 1960s, i.e. the decade of the rise of the partyless Panchayat regime, Churamani Bandu recognises Malla's power of articulating the complex social and psychological issues of the time (Introduction, xi). These two observations made by two established critics at two different political times or contexts reveal the fact that Nepali academia is engaged in discussing Malla's dramaturgy for several decades. Contemporary Nepali playwright, and also someone who had worked with Vijay Malla as well as performed the role, Raghubir Singh, the character from the play, on that historical occasion in the Naachghar stage, Abhi Subedi makes his critical observation on the dramaturgy of Malla: "Vijay Malla glibly moved from realism to magic realism in his dramatic imaginary". As a fellow dramatist, Subedi shares his discovery that Malla "uses the shadow and dream for his theatre which working closely with him I discovered as a major power in his plays" (132). With 'shadow' and 'dream' like dramatic techniques, Malla carved out a creative space to share political views in an allegorical manner. Extending the remarks made by Upadhyaya, Bandhu, and Subedi, I would like to read the one-act play as a political allegory of the time.

"Political allegory" is often taken as Fedrick Jameson's (1934-2024) area of contribution. Someone who grew up as a Marxist in the USA during the Cold War era, Jameson is known for his liberal Marxist thoughts. Jameson defines political allegory as a mode of thinking and sharing the message with the public and is employed by those people in power as well as those who question such power. Exploring political allegory in a literary text, he believed, enables one to know the dominant political order as well as the order of things that have remained dormant. He supports the view that exploring political allegory embedded in literary creations is sure to define writers or creators as politically conscious beings. In the contemporary, socially and politically liberated Nepali contexts, analyzing the play through Jameson's 'political allegory' is going to evoke not only the historicity but also the exigency of exploring the relationship between Nepali literature and polity in contemporary times.

Tracing the spirit of political allegory in a play, written during the heyday of the Panchayat regime, known for its control over freedom of expression in the present liberated Republic contexts, is going to highlight the creative space that a literary writer discovers to share the message on existing political order in a subtle yet powerful manner. To highlight this, the paper first provides a brief introduction to the context of the play. With it, it highlights the social forces that drove Malla to discover the political allegory in the play. The paper brings

the message home that the political message that Malla shares with his audiences can only be understood best by highlighting the existing social and political situations that he, as a literary and ideologically charged talent, had to bear.

Ironically, Malla discovers a mode of communicating political messages in an allegorical manner at times when the Panchayat regime was allegorizing itself as the most authentic and representative form of governance in the history of Nepal. Pointing out this nature of the Panchayat regime, Abhi Subedi points out that the supporters of the Panchayat regime wanted to prove the very base of the regime as utopian. Though autocratic, the regime was pointed to have a certain allegory of the nation: "The temporal dimension of utopia was claimed to be deep, but on the other hand, Panchayat utopia was a new vision that was being developed once again to cut avenues of progress and expansion of consciousness" (83). The point to be noted here is that the regime itself was promoting allegories to popularize itself. Based on Subedi's line of thought, the allegory of the time that the play aims to share with the audience can be taken as a counterpart to the allegory that the Panchayat regime itself was projecting during the years.

Political Allegory and Historicization

As a liberal Marxist thinker, Fredric Jameson makes a point that people every time inculcate a certain power of perceiving their society and life in a certain allegorical format. As a US-born Marxist, someone trained to perceive human history in rational and scientific order, for that matter in dialectic form, he makes a liberal point that even the term called 'class consciousness,' a favorite or commonly used term among the Marxist worldwide, becomes graspable only with the help of certain allegorical tropes. Jameson puts it: "To become figural, that is to say, visible in the first place, accessible to our imaginations, the classes have to be able to become, in some sense, characters in their own right: this is the sense in which the term allegory in our title is to be taken as a working hypothesis" (845). Jameson makes it clear that allegory, as a literary trope or mode of thinking, is not something a product or style of literary writings practiced by writers in the past. Since medieval European literature is full of allegorical stories, it does not mean that communicating ideas through allegorical tropes was the creative and critical tool favorite of that time only. Tropes through which people allegorize their life and society differ from place to place and time to time, a point that Jameson seems to be sharing with his readers. He highlights the point that even the commercial movies often ignored in the academic discussion do pack certain "political content" and become a certain vehicle for "ideological manipulation" (846). Commercial movies too carry certain allegorical narratives to provide more and more space to their viewers and thereby make a profit, he demonstrates in his article.

Jameson suggests his readers to locate the text of their analysis in the very context that it is the product of. As a kind of communicational act, the text encompasses a certain message that its readers, fellow neighbors, and social members of its author across times and places can understand or become very happy to discover. "Always historicize!" is the term Jameson

begins the preface for his famous book. With this statement, he suggests his readers to regard literary texts almost in "an allegorical manner": "Interpretation is here constructed as an essentially allegorical act, which consists in rewriting a given text in terms of a particular interpretative master code" (1981). He refers to the collision as well as the confluence of interpretative practice of various origins involved in decoding the texts. While dealing with any literary text, readers also impose a certain kind of reflection of their impression of life and society: "The new cannot simply replace the old but must develop within it somehow, ultimately discarding the old ways like a husk or shell" (2016, 53). Readers therefore look at the references that connect them to the text. They prefer the 'allegorical' spirit of the text so that they see texts carrying issues that speak their concerns as well. To highlight such 'allegorical nature' of reading literary texts, he refers to Tiresias, the famous character from classical Greek mythology as well as literature. Tiresias as an 'allegorical trope' encompasses the spirit of the historicist involved in historicizing himself as well as a literary text; he argues: "Rather, the historicist act revives the dead and reenacts the essential mystery of the cultural past, which, like Tiresias drinking blood, is momentarily returned to life and warmth and allowed once more to speak its moral speech and to deliver its long-forgotten message in surroundings unfamiliar to it" (1988, 158). Since literary texts, for that matter, plays are written to be shared as a communication act with the audiences, they are "shared practices," as Stuart Hall, another influential Marxist cultural critic, opines. And as 'shared texts,' the plays act like a communicational act taking place between the producers and readers or audiences of the texts. Such aesthetic and communicative necessity make the writer develop a narrative in such a style that is bound to be allegorical, i.e., having the power to tell one in terms of the other so that people in another time and place too will be able to understand the message that he or she is trying to share.

Since 'historicize' is the call Jameson makes, much can be said about the allegorical nature of Pattharko Katha by exposing the social and political context that Malla himself belonged to. As a literary text meant to be performed and shared with the audience, the play dramatizes the 'land' issue that has permeated all sectors of Nepali society for ages. Looking back at history, one comes to discover that the unequal distribution of land has remained one of the major causes of economic disparity in Nepali society. Mahesh Chandra Regmi, someone who has studied the land-based economy, notes that the unification process led by Prithvi Narayan Shah (1723-1775) had paved the way for the late eighteenth century in Nepal. He regards the land issue as one of the major defining forces of Nepali society. He opines that with birta and other forms of ownership over land, the Gorkhali bhardars felt "economic security." They held this power not for a generation but for centuries. The land they acquired during the period "remained in the possession of their descendants" (1995, 57-58). Though such a policy had made a direct contribution to creating a strong network between the center and periphery of the newly formed nation, it created social and economic problems in the long run. In due course of time, the land became a metaphor for power in the new Nepal, i.e., the post-unification social and political context.

Holding land on a large scale enabled the owners to remain in constant contact with the power center in the capital. It also enabled them to possess control over the locally available human and nonhuman resources. Importantly, almost the same family, mainly the elite landlord of the Khas Aryan linguistic community of Hill origin that the Shah and the Rana rulers belonged to, did possess the land for a long time. Highlighting it as a major cause of social and economic disparity in Nepal, historians' satirize such a nature of the regime controlled by the elites in the following manner: "In an agricultural society, the only way to increase the wealth of the elite was, ironically, to encourage farmers to increase their wealth" (Stiller, 45). Ironically, the land reform programs that the Panchayat regime promulgated in the mid-1960s did not bring much change to the state of peasants in Nepal. Such efforts rather helped the landlords to develop alternate mechanisms to keep on holding land. Pointing out this as a flaw at the policy level, Regmi admits that "the program has left the landholding system untouched (2002, 180). The important point to be noted here is that the then democratically elected Nepali government, led by Bishweshworprasad Koirala, was about to pass a bill on land reformation, and such reformation was supposed to have been 'revolutionary.'

Historians Joshi and Rose highlight the Koirala government's proposed land reformation program as very socialist by nature. They opine that Koirala was driven by the ideology of institutionalizing socialism in Nepal through managing land in a more scientific or socialist manner. For Koirala, "the concentration of ownership of land in the hands of a few" was "injustice and feudal exploitation" (309), and it was necessary to revamp the system to herald socialism in Nepal. And, such plans of Koirala, the Prime Minister of the government whose party had had a clear two-thirds majority in the parliament, did spark fear among Nepali landlords, who had enjoyed such resources for decades. They were not only irate elites, but also occupied important positions in political parties, the military, and bureaucracy. They formed a force and influenced King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev to topple the legitimate government. Such "vested interest groups" had "close ties to various cliques in the palace" and indirectly used the King as "the last effective barrier to the imposition of fundamental economic reforms" (Joshi and Rose, 388).

The 'land' issue was a major force that paved the way for the coup, the political historians point out. King Mahendra's political action is argued to have divided the nation into two: King Mahendra as "the father of the Panchayat utopia" and B. P. Koirala as the fighting liberal thinker. They were "treated as two semiotically important poles in the discourse between the Panchayat vision and the democratic vision of the future of Nepal" (Subedi, 78). Vijay Malla, as mentioned in the beginning, came from an elite background. Malla had resigned from the Nepali Congress, the party led by Koirala, and joined the Praja Parishad. In the changed political context of the 1960s, he joined the Royal Nepal Academy. Malla, as a creative writer, can be argued to have lived with certain conflicts within. Neither did he renounce his former political self, nor could he completely accept the new role he picked up in the changed political context. This could have driven him to discover a certain allegorical way of sharing the message with his audience.

Rochak Ghimire, a senior Nepali literary critic, and someone who had spent several decades with Malla, recalls his association with Malla, who had had some real understanding of the landlord and peasants in Terai. Vijay Malla's family owned some land at Sisuwa Beli village in the Saptari district, Terai. Ghimire further confesses that many of Malla's friends were not happy that he had joined the recently opened Royal Nepal Academy in the capacity of member. Ghimire remarks that Malla had had an important position in the Nepali Congress, the largest and most influential political party, before he joined the Praja Parishad, another politically influential party. Someone performing a prestigious social and political role while fighting for democracy as well as an already known literary figure, Malla should have rejected the offer made by the regime. Most of the friend circle of Malla were not happy, and Malla too had taken the post reluctantly (125). Ghimire puts his views. It was at this juncture of his personal life journey that Malla had written Pattharko Katha. As an intellectual as well as an ideologically charged person, he could neither affiliate with the Panchayat regime nor could he show his sympathy with the Nepali Congress-led government led by Koirala. Tanka Prasad Acharya, a visionary leader and also the party chair of the Praja Parishad, had almost gone into a state of incognito in the post-Panchayat years. Koirala, the most powerful leader, was put behind the bar. Malla's Pattharko Katha emerges from this ideological vacuum. This was also the time when impunity prevailed, as the perpetrators that had run the autocratic Rana regime lived freely in the changed social and political context, and the much-hyped land reformation did not bring many changes in society during the Panchayat regime. Bestowed with responsibility at the Royal Nepal Academy, and bearing the revolutionary ideas in his head, Malla can be argued to have developed a dramaturgy of political allegory to share the message.

Allegory of Stone

Occupying a central focus in the play are the stone statues. As the light falls on them, they become mobile, come back to life, and start to gain the memories that matter most in their lives. As the light fades out at the end of the play, these characters turn into statues again. In between they recall their painful story; they know who the culprit is and who the innocents are, but they cannot act out justice. To their shock and dismay, they find that they have already died, and punishing the culprit or providing justice for the needy is beyond their capacity. Malla shares the story with his audiences at times when the Panchayat regime, still led by King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, was being projected as a much-suited utopia to Nepalis, as Subedi points out. By writing a play about a society that is void of justice, Malla is indirectly making a political allegory of counter-narrative order. The landlord, Bipinbabu, instead of pleading for being guilty, is very confident that nobody is going to punish him since all are dead and have become stones. A playwright, known for his political activity, creates a world where both the victims and the perpetrators would become stone statues. This speaks volumes about the allegory Malla might have picked.

Born and brought up during the Rana regime, Malla had gone through challenging times. Living through the years when the four friends he knew were hanged for inspiring people to go against the Rana regime, Malla recalls the 1941 famous hanging of four politically vocal Nepali youths Ganga Lal, Shukraraj Shastri, Dashrath Chanda, and Dharmabhakta Mathema in the following manner: "Kathmandu looked like a cremation ground. One needed some powerful mantras to sprinkle life here. For this, one needed to sacrifice oneself for the land. This was the pain and frustration that me and my friends had been living through. Some of us landed at Banaras, and others reached Calcutta. We were determined to keep the revolution going" (412). Malla was a revolutionary at the core and also an aspiring writer at the time the four youths were hanged. As a boy brought up in the center of the capital city, he was aware not only of the rise of new political voices and the injustice that the Rana regime had caused in the society but also of the exploitation the elites made of national resources and peasants across the nation. He was arrested for taking part in the anti-Rana campaign and was jailed for a couple of years at the end of the 1940s. Actively involved in multi-party democratic politics, he sought some influential positions as he resigned from the Nepali Congress and joined the Pragya Parishad before the king banned the political parties.

Malla represented the community of writers and intellectuals who were politically charged but had to live through the partyless Panchayat regime that discouraged as well as humiliated youths and thinkers from expressing liberal ideology. Statues turning into characters and then getting back into, in many senses, allegorize Nepalis fighting against the Rana autocracy and gaining freedom in 1950, and who later found themselves living through the partyless Panchayat regime. Malla makes the stone statues as allegorical tropes to represent the frustration of the youths and intellectuals. Elaborating on the nature of political allegory, Jacques Lezra comments: "Political representation and the object of allegory are things wrought; they enter into circulation, acquire value, are consumed, transformed, and traded together" (88). Stone statues become both poetic tropes as well as political messages in the play. As a poetic trope, it makes the 'political representation' of Nepalis who had already lived through the hard-earned ten years-long, i.e., 1950-1960, democratic political era and found themselves bereft of freedom with the coup. Their condition during the Panchayat regime did more or less evoke a similar situation they had been through before the 1950s change, i.e., the autocratic Rana regime.

As the object of allegory, the stone statues make a strong critique of the existing Panchayati political order. Stone statues become both the medium as well as the message. Malla belonged to the generation of intellectuals who had gone through the pain of losing the hard-earned freedom of expression in Nepal. Left without hope, upward mobility, and justice, people had no option but to expect the gods to intervene. The stone image becomes a very vocal, political narrative of the time. The one-act play begins with characters trying to comprehend their dream like existence. Among them, the second to speak, named as 'Another person', speaks: I don't know what has happened to me; I have a feeling that I see things moving. Am I alive? (A woman runs towards him.) Who are you?" (1). The woman character named as 'Nari' too is in the state of terror. She has a hunch that she is being chased. She too is struggling with her murky state of mind. Malla's setting grips the mood of the audience in such a way that one

gradually starts 'exchanging' the world of the play with the society he or she lives. Another focus in the play is Bipinbabu, who carries the old political and social order of Nepal. He holds power because of the land he owns. A womanizer by nature, he is a brute to all. A master of loyal servants, he orders his servants to slaughter the persons he does not like. He kills his first wife, commits infanticide, and murders the second wife and also the liberal thinkers of the society. In a sense, he represents the landlords who had enjoyed unlimited decision-making authority during the Rana autocracy (1846-1950). Though subject to punishment, he is above the law. He represents the Nepali elites who inculcated feudal patriarchal values and practiced 'multiple' marriages as if it were a very natural lifestyle for them. Rishikesh Shah, someone coming from the elite class and a pioneer modern Nepali historian, points out, "The Rana practice of marrying several wives and having concubines to boot resulted in oversized families with a large number of progeny and descendants" (246). This paved the way for family feuds and rifts. Family members and servants become the agents as well as recipients of conspiracy. Bipinbabu in the play dies as he happens to take the poisoned food prepared by one of the servants. He carries the 'order of things' the Rana elites had lived by. Left without punishment, Bipinbabu is a mere statue now. Standing next to him are also the statues of the innocent people, the former victims. Since the dead are the people who were supposed to be provided justice and whom he should be afraid of, coming across them does not make any difference to him. He definitely represents a class of elites who had enjoyed economic, military, and bureaucratic power during the Rana regime. Subject to punishment, they should have been brought to the court. But they are left to run free. On top of that, they intervened in the ongoing day-to-day democratic politics.

Raghubir Singh, someone who was hired to kill innocent people, wakes up with a plan to finish Bipinbabu. He remained blindfolded at times when he needed to acquire or develop political zeal and carry out justice. As a servant, he carried out orders without using his personal conscience. Possessed with power and the ability to execute plans of all types, he could have discovered creativity within. Now left to regret, he plans to take revenge but in vain. He represents the youths who had not bothered to be politically mature and wise at times when they were expected to be, i.e., during the 1950s' multiparty democracy. For the same youths, fighting against impunity during the Panchayat regime, the partyless system was like trying to accomplish the mission impossible. Shrikant Master, a teacher by profession, is killed for spreading the political consciousness, something not liked by Bipinbabu. Once he is finished, he is left to recall the incident that happened in his past life. Shrikant, in many senses, represents the intellectuals, who had to compromise with the regime. Without any ability left, he cannot do anything but tell the story. Together these characters in the play tell more than their personal life story. They carry the society, for that matter, the nation in their story. They become Nepalis of multiple sections or walks of life of the era. Jameson highlights such allegorical features that literary texts embody within in the following manner: "We may then also draw the provisional consequence that genuine allegory does not seek the 'meaning" of a work, but rather functions to reveal its structure of multiple meanings, and thereby to modify the very meaning of the word 'meaning" (28). Bipinbabu, Raghubir, Jwala, Shrikanta, and Shatrughan project a social order that goes

beyond the canvas of the play. They become the 'meaning,' not mere dramatic characters. Together, they create a discord and project an image of the society that has been passing through a number of fundamental errors. At the root of this society is the impurity that has gone rampant. Ironically, the play becomes much more vocal at times when the Panchayat regime under the leadership of King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev was claiming to have created almost a utopia and reached its peak.

Statelessness is definitely a trope that Malla employs to allegorize the nation. These characters are Nepalis and evoke a society where impunity has prevailed and feudalism is still the dominant social force. These characters gather in a location, a netherworld that is beyond the subject of rule for a nation. It carries the spirit of old Nepal that failed to regulate law and order among people. Denied justice, the women, servants, rebels, and helpless people vent out their anger but in vain. Beyond law and order, the culprit is still adamant that he is mighty and no one can cause any harm to him. The fact that there are no police to arrest the culprit, no court to pass the verdict, and no prison for the culprits to be sent becomes very vocal for the audience. Devoid of state apparatus, the dramatic location in the play becomes the most powerful political allegory of the nation/Nepal.

By the same token, these characters are the Nepalis who had lived through injustices during the Rana regime and had had a great hope that the new governments would provide justice to them in the changed political situation. Shattered by the royal coup, Nepalis watched the same elites coming into power back in the post-1960 political context. Their struggle for democracy and expectations in life and nation simply evaporated into thin air, as it were. They had to surrender to new circumstances that did not favor freedom of expression. Not being able to bring changes in the political circumstances, not being able to reap the harvest of struggle people had made for democracy, and not being able to save the new generation from possible impunity is the loud message that the play shares with the audience. The fact that death becomes the only almighty force in society mocks the audience and their social order. The modern nation-state as such does not exist; even if it exists, it does support the ongoing feudal regime. Attached with the supernatural-looking setting and experience are the grand serious issues that Nepalis live more or less a similar political life in their real life.

Performed by the student artists of Tribhuvan University to be watched by students and academics and written by someone who lived a politically and ideologically charged life and played an important role in laying the foundation for a democratic society, the play shares the message that there is something wrong with the society that does not arrest culprits and also cannot provide security to the innocent people. The audience themselves feel like being turned into stone, left without any power to bring intervention in the order of things; they too feel helpless in real life. Pointing out such power of allegorical narrative to take the audience or readers to another level, Jameson states, "...namely that narrative is a ghostly allegory into which a given set of events is reorganized, a shadowy second-degree structure imposed on what Henry Ford memorably called 'one damned thing after another" (247). Almost at the end of the play, Shrikant, a former teacher and ideologue, sums up the situation they have

gone through: "We call become stone now, shilakhanda, do we become now. Sans memory, sans name, and sans existence" (18). It is important that someone who had spoken for the change, Shrikant, and lost his life for the sake of doing so, now realizes the helplessness. Soon the characters become statues; the audience realizes a similar psychological state within. With this 'second-degree structure' in mind, the audience feels a certain thrill of the narrative.

As a creative writer bestowed with responsibility in the Academy, Malla definitely could neither criticize the government nor support the agenda put forward by the Koirala-led government openly. On top of that, as a landlord, he too benefited from the policy that the regime had brought in. This means that Malla, someone who had earned the soul of a political being, put his life at risk for the sake of democracy and celebrated the hard-earned freedom during the 1950s, is sure to have realized the cost of losing freedom of expression. Jameson points out that allegory is a mode of political thinking or mode of expression that is universal. This means to say that both the regime and the opposing voices do project their vision of society with their favorite allegory at the same time. Interpreting Pattharko Katha as a counter-discourse to the Panchayati brand of political allegory in detail is sure to take the reading to a further level. Similarly, including the responses that the audiences had provided after watching the play too would have provided the discussion another dimension. But given the limit of the paper, what can be said is that the play employs allegorical images in such a way that it communicates the message to the audience without troubling the authority that Malla himself was working for at the time he wrote the play.

Conclusion

Pattharko Katha with its dramatic structure and characters thus becomes a narration of the nation under the Panchayat regime that had come to exist by replacing the democratic and social voices. Bipinbabu and Raghubir Singh in the play evoke the continuation of age-old Nepali autocratic political culture. Under the leadership of King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev and supported by the elites of the same cultural and linguistic background possessing political, economic, and military power for centuries managed to come into power again. People had great expectations that the end of the autocratic Rana regime would pave the way for law and order in the society. The democratically elected government was about to develop a more socialist script for the nation to speak to its people. But the rise of Panchayat, the partyless regime did devastate people's hopes and expectations. Reading the play as a political allegory of the frustration that people had lived with during the Panchayat era first liberates the very reading of the play from genre-based drama criticism or academic practice and defines the play as a powerful literary document helpful to understand the psychosocial world that the Nepalis had to live through during the partless autocratic regime. With the 'political allegory' approach, this reading also paves the way for a similar interpretation of Nepali literary texts. Finally, reading at post-2005 politically liberated Republic Nepal's social context, one becomes aware of the dialogue that literary writers make with the authority at the allegorical level.

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