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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/jodem.v13i1.47462>

**Creating the Discourse of Marginalized Limbu Community: A Foucauldian  
Analysis of Manglak's *Limbuni Gaaun* [*The Village of Limbu Woman*]\***

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**Abstract**

*This paper attempts to analyze the poems “Limbuni Gaaun” (“The Village of Limbu Women”), “Aadaangme” (“My Honor”), “Limbuni Maayaa” (“Limbu Woman’s Love”), and “Diplomyaat Devataa” (“Diplomat God”) which are selected from Raj Manglak’s Limbuni Gaaun [The Village of Limbu Woman], the collection of Nepali poems. The poet portrays the day-to-day life experiences and cultures of the marginalized Limbu people who live in the eastern region of Nepal, particularly in hilly districts of Taplejung and Panchthar. This paper aims to explore the same Limbu people’s world and cultures. This study discusses the articulation of the lifestyles, socio-cultural rituals, values, and traditions of the ethnic Limbu community that form a discourse of the marginality to claim the identity and defines the body of knowledge, e.i. the knowledge about the world and culture of Limbu community. Michel Foucault’s concept of discourse has been used as theoretical tool to interpret the selected poems, and achieve the set objectives of this study. Foucault argues that discourse is a systematic way of expression that produces and defines a body of knowledge. From this theoretical stand, the selected poems have been analysed as the discourse of the marginalized Limbu people and culture that exposes and expresses the outshined world of the same community and the distinctive body of knowledge. This study gives insights to understand the marginalized world and cultures of the Limbu community in Nepal.*

**Keywords:** Cultures, discourse of the marginality, Limbu community, marginalized.

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\* Received on June 30, 2022

Peer Reviewed on July 23, 2022

Accepted for Publication on August 7, 2022

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### **Making the Discourse of Marginality in Nepali Poetry**

The term ‘discourse’ refers to the expression of the ideas that is presented in a systematic way on specific subjects in a particular historical context. Such an organized expression constructs and articulates a specific body of knowledge. As Foucault argues, discourse comprises of signs and “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (*Archaeology* 49). Clarifying Foucault’s idea, Sabine Selchow defines discourse as “concrete historical formations of the production of knowledge and meaning” (72). In this sense, discourse is not an independent and autonomous object rather it is systematically constructed in a specific historical context to create and establish particular meanings in particular contexts.

The term marginality denotes the condition of particular social groups who do not have their access to the power structure as they are prevented from the equal participation in the mainstream political, social, cultural, and economic domain and mechanisms. In this regard, Bernt Matthias and Laura Colini define the term ‘marginality’ as “the lack of power, participation and integration experienced by a group, or a territory” (14). Following the same line, Philippa Williams, Bhaskar Vira and Deepta Chopra explain the term ‘marginality’ that “refers to disadvantageous social and spatial experiences within common fields of knowledge and power” (14). The phrase ‘discourse of the marginality’, thus, denotes the discourse that is constructed in favor to those marginalized social class or individuals who are denied in the participation and to the access of the state power. As Alakhunov et al argue, the word marginality refers to those marginalized “individuals and groups” who are prevented “from full participation in social, economic, and political life enjoyed by the wider society” (10). The literary artifact, which is written from the perspective or in favor of marginalized people representing their world and life experiences, turn into the literary discourse of marginality.

In the context of Nepali literature, particularly in poetry, only after the restoration of democracy in 1990 and historical People’s Revolution II in 2006, the poets intensely represented the marginalized people, their aspirations, problems, and their experience in their literary creations individually as well as in an organized way. As Prakash Subedi overviews, “during and after the Maoist war (1996-2006), the People’s Revolution II (2006) and the Madhesh Revolution (2007), there has been an

upsurge in writings from the margins . . . literature has been trendsetting in articulating the aspirations of marginalized communities and bringing them in the mainstream” (23-24). In a united way, literary movements like Uttarvarty Sonch [*Post-Oriented Thought*], and Shrijanshil Araajakataa [*Creative Anarchy*] emerged from the margin aiming to challenge the centralized and mono-cultural trend of writing literary works, and construct literatures of ethnic minorities from the margin. Connecting to this idea, Abhi Subedi expresses his view that the campaigners represent the achievement of the political changes of the 2000s such as racial and cultural consciousness of indigenous communities by exploring the issues of ethnic identity and quest of cultural diversity (4-5). The poets claim the self-existence of marginalized groups who are subjugated by the centralized political system (Subba 49). By writing from the margin, the movements break the centralized and mono-cultural norms of literary creations and bring the excluded world and lives of marginalized communities in the center.

Basically, the campaigners intend to rewrite and redefine the mainstream Nepali literature by representing the surpassed worlds and experiences of the marginalized people. In this context, Tanka Prasad Neupane explains the necessity of addressing the issues of marginalized people that since all races and communities have not been accepted from the past to the present time. It is necessary to have autonomy and rights of self-determination in writings for the articulation of pluralistic politics or pains, sufferings and aspirations of all races and indigenous nationalities in Nepali literature (13). Raj Manglak, the poet of the selected *Limbuni Gaau*, himself is one of the campaigners of *Uttarvarty Sonch*. As a campaigner of this movement, he questions the mono-cultural Nepali literature: where have the indigenous people, Dalits, women and extinct groups got a chance to read their beautiful life and world in the pages of Nepali literature? Where is their presence (94)? These questions are raised to set new trend of regional writing and articulate life experiences of the marginalized people including diverse social and cultural groups. As Manglak himself belongs to the literary movement of *Uttarvarty Sonch*, his poetic work *Limbuni Gaaun* follows the same thematic pattern articulating the ethnic Limbu people, their socio-cultural traditions and values, cultural symbols and images, and experiences in the center.

Manglak’s *Limbuni Gaaun* can be taken as one of the literary creations from the margin that has attempted to break the norms of mainstream Nepali literature, i.e.

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representation of elite ruling class and their cultures. Manglak has depicted the ethnic Limbus and their cultures that have been always excluded from the mainstream Nepali literature. As Amar Giri argues, the contemporary Nepali poetry has represented culture of lower class, the exploited and indigenous nationalities groups (38). In the same line, Bairagi Kaila expresses his opinion that Manglak has used regional, geographical, religious, and cultural images of Limbu people in his poems (n. p.). He further adds that Manglak has raised the voice of the helpless marginalized groups who do not have their access to the power, and revolted against the racial and cultural discrimination (n. p.). Similarly, Sanjiv Uprety expresses his view saying that like the post-oriented poets, language and cultures of the eastern hilly regions, particularly Limbu language and cultural images are amply found in his poems (n. p.). Govinda Raj Bhattarai also comments that the poems are abundantly replete with Limbu words, images, cultural consciousness, ethnic culture, and history (n. p.). The views of the critics show that the poet has articulated the ethnic Limbu people, their cultural images, myths, and day-to-day life experiences as a whole. All these expressions form discourse of the marginality that discloses the excluded and hidden body of knowledge about Limbu people and asserts the voice for their inclusion and identity.

This paper aims to explore the socio-cultural values, cultural images, traditions, and lifestyles of Limbu people as a whole that are meticulously articulated in the selected poems, i.e. “Limbuni Gaaun”, “Aadaangme”, “Diplomat Devataa”, and “Limbuni Maayaa”. This study concentrates on the major argument: the poet has articulated the cultures, social values, and life experiences of the marginalized Limbu people that create the discourse of marginalized social groups, particularly ethnic Limbu community. The creation of such discourse unfolds the outshined realities, knowledge, and experiences of common people that are excluded in the mainstream writings. Through this discourse, the poet asserts the racial, cultural, lingual identity of ethnic Limbu community. Michel Foucault’s concept of discourse has been applied to substantiate the argument, do critical interpretation of the selected poems, and derive to the conclusion. The paper analyzes the qualitative textual analysis of the selected poems as discourses of the marginality that explores the distinct cultures, social values, and the world of the Limbu community with a claim of ethnic Limbu people’s cultural identity and for inclusion in the mainstream power structure of the state.

### Unveiling the Cultures of Marginalized Limbu People in *Limbuni Gaaun*

Raj Manglak's *Limbuni Gaaun*, the collection of poems, has been divided into three parts that include thirty-one short poems. Among them, the four poems, "Limbuni Gaaun", "Aadaangme", "Diplomat Devataa", and "Limbuni Maayaa" have been selected from the first part of the collection. In these poems, the poet has portrayed the day-to-day life experiences, social values, cultural performances, and lifestyles of Limbu community. In "Limbuni Gaaun", the title poem of the collection, the poet acutely presents ethnic Limbu people, their cultural rituals, songs and performances. The poet expresses the pictorial scenes of the Limbu village and cultural acts that Limbu people do there: "*dhaan naachdai hunchhan taruni chhoriharu/jaandko dabuko raakhera haakpaare gaudai hunchhan budhaapaakaa/tangsing anusthaan gardai hunchhan phedaangmaaharu*" ("young daughters are busy dancing *Dhaan Naach*/ old men are busy singing *Haakpaare* keeping aside the booze bowls / The priests are doing *Tangsing Anusthaana*"; Manglak 19; English translation is mine). The articulation of the cultural songs and rituals like *Dhaan Naach* (cultural dance of the Limbu community), *Haakpaare* (typical Limbu song), *Tangsing Anusthaana* (cultural ritual performed for the good wishes), *Phedaangmaa* (the priest) and *Jaanda* (booze) construct a discourse of the marginalized Limbu community that unfolds the overshadowed world and distinct lifestyles of ethnic Limbu people. This discourse of the marginality, on the one hand, "constructs, defines and produces the objects of knowledge in an intelligible way" about the Limbu people and their life experiences (Barker 54). On the other hand, it claims distinct cultural identity and social values of the marginalized Limbu community bringing them in the mainstream literary writing.

Writing from the margin, the poet has uncovered the forgotten histories and civilizations of the marginalized Limbu people. In the poem "Limbuni Gaaun", the speaker asks the readers to visit the Limbu women's village where civilizations and histories of ancestors are found. The speaker describes the village of Limbu community, its people, and cultural objects that explore the civilizations and histories of Limbus: "*kupeeko ujaaloomaa dekhinchha/aafnai sabhyataa/falaichaama basera dekhinchha/purkhaako itihaasa*" ("own civilizations are seen in the light of a lamp/the ancestors' history is seen sitting on a shady platform"; Manglak 19; English translation is mine). The light of lamp itself symbolizes the knowledge that lightens and opens the

civilizations hidden or covered behind the darkness. As the lamp's light brightens the dark room, there appear the old mother, her attires, and ornaments, architect of the house, and traditional objects that show the civilizations of ethnic Limbu people. In the same way, 'the shady platform' reveals the forgotten histories of Limbus. In Limbu community, there is culture of erecting a shady platform (*Chautaro/Falaichaa*) in the name of the dead persons of the family, particularly the parents and grandparents, on which detail information of the person are inscribed. The poet may refer to the same *Falaichaa* or *Chautaro* (a shady platform) that provides the ancestors' histories as they are carved on it.

The poem "Limbuni Gaaun" as a discourse of the marginalized Limbu people and their world explores and expresses the land of Limbu village. It is the land of harmony and humanity which is saturated by heartiness and closeness. The speaker mentions this pure and innocent world: "*Tehi chha/haardiktaa ra aatmiyataale /chhapakka bhizeko maato*" ("there is the soil soaked by heartiness and closeness"; Manglak 20; English translation is mine). But, this world has been detached from the state power, and the Limbu people who dwell in it have been prevented from the participation in and wider joys of the state. Being excluded and discontent, they gather together and demand their space in the nation. The speaker describes the claim of the nation that they make: "*Hizaaza tehaa/chulo chheuchhaauma basera Limbu daazubhaaiharu /chumlung basiraahekaa hunchhan/yo desh haarmo pani ho bhanera*" ("These days, Limbu brothers are doing meetings near by the oven/claiming that this nation is ours, too"; Manglak 20; English translation is mine). The representation of the warm village and expression of the Limbu people's voice is a "discourse" or "a group of statements which provides a language for talking about a particular topic, one that constructs that topic in a particular way" (Lidchi 185). This representational discourse of the marginality not only defines the beauty, hospitality, and purity of the Limbu village, but also it claims the marginalized Limbu people's inclusion in and access to the state power.

In the next poem entitled "Aadaangme", the poet expresses Limbu people's lifestyles, traditions, social values, and everyday life experiences. Particularly, the socio-cultural events and activities that are conducted in the wedding ceremony are foregrounded. For instance, *Dhaan Naach*, pinching the fingers with love while

dancing, sweet talking under the room of leafy branches, and asking excuse keeping a bottle of wine are some typical activities that occur in the social functions like wedding program in Limbu community. The speaker mentions these events acutely:

*dhaan naachdaa, aulaa chimotnu bhaako maayaa*  
*daajuko bihemaa syaale deraamuniko nyaano gafa*  
*chyaabrunng naachdaanaachdai khuttaale laagigaera*  
*ek botal raksi baraabarako maafī* (love of pinching my finger while dancing  
*Dhaan Naach/a warm conversation under the room of leafy branches in the*  
*brother's marriage/touched by my leg while dancing Chyaabrunng/asking excuse*  
*with a bottle of wine; Manglak 24, English translation is mine).*

The portrayal of the rituals and events that take place on the occasion of the speaker's brother's wedding program constructs a discourse of the marginality which produces "specific fields of culturally and historically located meanings" (Brooker 78). Specifically, this discourse unfolds the overshadowed world and cultures of the marginalized Limbu community.

Similarly, discourse of the marginalized Limbus is constructed by articulating the cultural rituals and events in the wedding. The speaker memorizes some pleasant events that he experienced in the wedding of his own brother such as taking a whole body of a pig keeping upside down with a flower on its snout in *Duraan* or *Dulan* (ceremony of the bride's return to her father's house accompanied by her bridegroom), giving the flower (the flower kept on the snout of the pig) to the beloved, and burning chilies to the bridegroom's friends while they are having their meal (Manglak 24). This discourse exposes the distinct ethnic world and day-to-day practices of Limbu community. This discursive articulation, as a discourse of the marginality, on the one hand, "presents the world in such a way that we can understand" plainly how the Limbu people really live (Nayar 20). On the other hand, it "transmits and produces power" that helps mainstream the marginalized cultures and experiences of the Limbu people (*History*, Foucault 101). The poet reveals the overshadowed world and body of knowledge about ethnic community in order to mainstream the marginalized cultures and claim the identity of Limbu people.

Likewise, the poet presents distinct cultural rituals that are performed in the social function like wedding ceremony. The speaker who involves himself in the

wedding of his brother expresses his pleasant memories: the attendees of the wedding procession were given the cocktail of booze and local wine. They carried a pot of water on the way back to groom's house thinking that it was wine. The friends of bride pulled quilt off at night and let them not to sleep (Manglak 24). The same social happenings are depicted in the poem "Aadangme" in which young Limbu boys and girls meet at the local fairs *Satasi mela* and *Pachami bazaar* where they dance *Dhaan Naach* and exchange net-scarf as a sign of love. The speaker recapitulates the joyful moments that he experiences: "*Sataasi melaamaa arkaisanga Dhaan naanchdaa/kastari thuskiera arkailaai angaalo maareko swaadilo mazaak/panchami bajaaramaa disieko snehamaya zaalirumaal*" ("while dancing *Dhaan Naach* with other person in *Satasi Fair*/ the sweet fun of being discontent and hugging other person/the loving net-scarf given to me at *Panchami bazaar*"; Manglak 25; English translation is mine). The depiction of the local fairs, innocent love affair of Limbu boy and girl, and pretends of being discontent is the discursive representation of Limbu community that "produces knowledge" about the social life and activities of Limbus (Hall 62). Creating such a discourse of the marginality, the poet expresses distinct lifestyles and experiences of the marginalized Limbu people that are denied in the mainstream literary creations.

In the poem "Aadangme", the speaker has expressed all those memories that he enjoyed in the different occasions and festivals in the Limbu community with his beloved. Collecting all these sweet remembrances, he has sent to his beloved, but the postman failed to take it to her. Consequently, they could not unite and so were finally separated. The speaker expresses this tragic situation: "*Tara, afasos/ hulaakile - /tehaasamma lyaaunai sakenachha, tyo /aadaangme/yehibaata/haamro kinaara shuru bhayo holaa*" ("But, Alas! The postman could not bring that there/my honor, our margin might have begun from this point"; Manglak 26; English translation is mine). The world and life experiences of Limbu community have been marginalized as they are not included in the mainstream literary art. Thus, through this articulation of day-to-day experiences, the poet claims the space and recognition of the marginalized Limbu people and their cultures.

In the poem "Diplomyaat Devata", the poet presents unheard Limbu people and their marginalized condition. As they are subordinate being kept at the periphery of the state power, they have to offer and fulfill the desires of the 'Diplomat God' which may



stand for the rulers or dominant social class, but they always remained unsatisfied. They are offered flowers on their feet, he-goat in front of them, and a matured rooster having with strong trust and faith over them (Manglak 22). However, neither they tell what they want more nor they ask what the marginalized people need. The speaker expresses difficult situation of the marginalized people: “*ajha ke pugena/tyo teemi bhandaibhandainau/malaai ke ke chaahoyo/tyo teemi soddhai soddhainau*” (“what is needed more/you do not tell/what I need/that you never ask me”; Manglak 22; English translation is mine). The speaker’s expression exposes the real situation of the marginalized people who are ignored and unheard. Through this expression, the poet asserts his voice for the inclusion of the marginalized Limbu people’s life and world in the mainstream mechanisms of the state power.

In the poem “Limbuni Maayaa”, the poet presents the world of Limbu community where Limbu people have their own lifestyles and cultures of making relations. In the village, the young boy and girl gather together in the local bazaar and fairs. They do dance Dhaan Naach and play a rotary swing. The speaker remembers an exciting moment that he enjoyed in the Sherma village: “*Shermaa gaaunko rotepingmaa/dhaan nanchdaanachdai/timro haata chimotera/maile bhane/ priya/yo juni ta timrai laagi ta honi*” (“in the rotary swing of Sherma village/while dancing Dhaan Naach/having pinched your hand/I said/my beloved, this life is just for you”; Manglak 13; English translation is mine). The depiction of the Limbu village and innocent love affair of Limbu youths form a discourse of the marginality to “construct the social world” of ethnic Limbu community (Spencer 100). The poet, by constructing discourse of the marginalized people, expresses and exposes the social and cultural world of ethnic Limbu people that is hidden behind the mainstream literary discourses.

The use of typical Limbu words in the poem give the aesthetics of Limbu community and cultural flavor. The words like *naamsu* (stinking) and *yaamsing* (disgusting) are used in the poem “Limbuni Maya”. In the Sherma village, as the young Limbu boy and girl are dancing *Dhaan Naach*, the boy offers his life saying that his life is only for his beloved. The girl tells him *naamsu*, a typical Limbu word that means ‘stinking’. In the same way, when the boy adds saying that he cannot even breathe without her, she replies saying that *yaamsing*, which means ‘disgusting’ (Manglak 13). Though these words are used in negative terms, in this context, they express the

feelings of love, intimacy, and heartiness in the social and cultural contexts of the Limbu community. The poet uses such words to show the Limbu community, lifestyles, and cultures as real as they are found in the Limbu village. Unveiling the social world of ethnic Limbus, the poet creates discourse of the marginality that asserts the voice of the marginalized people for their inclusion, identity and access to the power structures of the state.

### **Conclusion**

The poet has articulated the overshadowed world, lifestyles, and experiences of the marginalized Limbu people, particularly the ethnic Limbus who live in the eastern region of Nepal. The typical socio-cultural rituals, traditions, and day-to-day activities such as wedding ceremony, visiting local fairs and bazars, singing of *Paalam* and *Haakpaare*, romance of Limbu youths, and *Phedangma's* recitation of *Mundhum*, and worshipping of the nature are depicted in the poems. All these representations form a discourse of the marginality to unfold the overshadowed marginalized Limbu community, their world, and cultures that have always remained in the margin of the mainstream literary writings. Through the creation of such discourse, the poet claims the inclusion, recognition, and access of the marginalized groups in general, and the ethnic Limbu people in particular. This discourse of the marginality mainstreams the ethnic worlds and their life experiences that have been kept at the periphery of the mainstream Nepali literature. The exploration of the ethnic Limbu people and their cultures provides insights to understand the lifestyles, traditions and cultures of ethnic Limbu people, one of the social groups in the multiracial, multilingual, multi-religious, and multicultural nation. Due to the limitations of the study and time constraints, this study could not explore and analyze the issues such as the use of indigenous cultural myths, symbols, and images, and the resistance of globalization depicted in the anthology. Moreover, the text *Limbuni Gaaun* can be analyzed from the perspectives of local color, sociological study, and ethnic studies.

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