

Cultural representation of Manjushree Thapa's *The Tutor Of History*.

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Abstract:

The concept of cultural representation was proposed by Stuart Hall and it is considered as a branch of cultural studies. The term employees that cultural expressions such as film and literature are representations of realities. Cultural representations are also the reflections of the cultural institutions such as; Language, religion, marriage, food and dress. Manjushree Thapa's *The Tutor of the History* is such a cultural text that examines the above mentioned institutions in Nepal.

This paper investigates how Manjushree Thapa depicts socio-cultural realities of Nepal. The paper employs the tools of humanistic studies to identify and analyse cultural representations. The paper employs the method of analytical research and deploys the tools derived from cultural studies. It explains how Thapa's novel enables the reader to experience the culture of Nepal.

Key terms: Cultural studies, Cultural experience, Cultural institutions.

Introduction:

Fiction can be considered as a literary form that imparts the cultural experience of a society or a community. It constructs within its plot and narrative, various cultural practices; such as religion, festivals, food habit and marriage conventions. A cultural practice refers to the manifestation of a culture with regard to the customary practice of a particular ethnic and cultural group. Cultural practices are also subjects of discussion in cultural studies. They change and involve as in when a culture undergoes transformation.

This paper is an investigation of the cultural reality reflected in Manjushree Thapa's *The Tutor of History*. It examines how Thapa represents social reality of a contemporary Nepal by mobilizing cultural realities. The paper also takes a close look at the cultural context of the novel, that provides cultural experience of Nepal for the readers.

Culture can be seen as a symbolic system as well as a field of experience and practical action,

it is too closely related to everyday life that it would be possible to transcend it. However, the word representation really means, to describe or depict something by description or portrayal or imagination and also it means to symbolize. Cultural studies is a cultural analysis which focuses upon the political dynamics of contemporary culture, its historical foundations, defining traits and conflicts. Cultural studies mainly deals with the investigation of cultural practices which is controlled by social phenomena, such as ideology, class structures, national formations, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender and generation. Ziauddin Sardar in his book, *Introducing Cultural Studies*, shows five characteristics of cultural studies as; Culture studies examine cultural practices and their relation to power, analyzing the social and political context in which culture manifests itself, analyse political actions, attempts to expose divisions of knowledge, and an ethnical evaluation of modern society and to a radical line of political action.

Richard Hoggart used the term Culture studies in 1964 in founding The Birmingham School, it became the world's first institutional home of Cultural studies. Then Stuart Hall, proposed cultural representation as the branch of Cultural studies. Culture studies deal with analysis of issues and concepts like race, gender, ideology and identity. Though Culture study's central focus is on practices and institutions of culture.

In the novel there are stories of idealism, alienation, human relationships and love in Thapa's novel *The Tutor of History*. It also captures the emerging cultural realities of Nepal. Paper is attempt to focus on the Cultural institutions, which this novel provides. Thapa can be considered, the changing literary voice of a country which is caught in the waves of cultural changes. Thapa deals with two types of cultures here in this novel, traditional culture and western culture. This novel divided into two thematic background of culture, political culture and individuals lifestyle culture. Characters are caught between these two cultures and it is difficult for them to act upon it. The novel represents cultural institutions and its effects on the character's movements are as thematic background. This

cultural institutions are categorised under following headings- Political institution of culture, language as representation of culture, rural life caught between tradition and western culture, and local color, dress, religion, caste.

The people who belong to the same culture, who share the same conceptual map and who speak or write the same language know that the arbitrary combination of letters and sounds that makes up the word, will represent the concept. Language share conceptual maps, language systems and the codes which gives the relationship of translation between signs. Different languages and different cultures shows different meanings. The contemporary Nepal has multi languages culture background. They speak Nepali, Hindi, English and othe regional languages. Language gives knowledge about characters.

" In the bazaar people could be heard speaking Nepali, Gurung, Hindi, Kumhale- and bursts of English: 'Tata, bye- bye, hello sir' ".

Language and its representation are such critical elements in the study of culture. Thapa discusses concepts and ideas translate into different languages, and language interprets to refer to or reference the world.

Political culture refers to the pattern of beliefs and assumptions which ordinary people have towards the world. Political culture not the same as ideology but more diffuse and less goal directed. It is relatively stable over time and reproduced by political socialization. Some critics claim that political culture causes democratic stability, but in reality the thing is, a stable and effective democratic government depends upon the orientationns that people have to the political process- upon the political culture. For instance; *The Tutor of History*, novel has recurrent theme of politics and also about the lives of number of people in Khaireni Tar, a small town. All of the main characters are connected in one way or other with a small political party trying to get just a few seats in the national parliament. Khaireni Tar is one of their best hopes because their candidate is famous film star, charismatic, courteous to all, and idealistic, if somewhat naive about democracy. He was born in the region and has relatives nearby. Most of the people are in his side, because he is star and familiar candidate. Nepal had only been holding elections since 1990 and novel set in 1990s therefore novel refers bittersweet experiences of character. 90s style election campaign in Nepal with depiction of warmly alive gossip town in the time of election, which, at the same time, contrasts with

the violent Maoist insurgency that has altered the life in country. It causes extreme chaos in characters' life. Politics in Nepal is full of corruption. Thapa gives us bits of speeches from the various parties to show the illusionary promises the make. The Congress and Communist parties are the major contenders, but village supporters of the people' s party are hopeful.

Thapa adapts the rural culture to describe the village itself and different ways of life that are meeting and changing there.

Khaireni Tar was a middling kind of town where it was common, while walking through the alley, to enter the twilight of cultures: to hear the screech of Nirvana on a transistor radio while passing a group of women carrying loads of freshly scoped dung ".

Khaireni Tar is traditional village but because of the foreign influence people of This village caught between western and traditional. For example one character describes the village,

" The city had come here to meet the villages, he thought. Nepal' s wandering populations had gathered by the highway to make neighbors of farmers and businessmen, of squatters and landlords, of Hindu, Buddhists, Christians, Musalman, and the godless like him, and of Gurungs, Magars, Chettris, Bahuns, Kumals, and indescribable half- breeds... The faces that passed by were hewn by ambitions no longer met by local means" .

when the village change in the novel, Kathmandu is like foreign territory, as another character tries to unnderstand.

" The problem was the bigness of this city, its indifference, its people pushing against each other not knowing the background of those they talked to its assumptions, its way of controlling the talk, iits colors, its crowds, its disguises, its secret wives of communication, its whispers and its hidden power" .

Setting of novel is village and Thapa highlights men characters mostly in this novel. They are village men who bring their own needs and dreams to politics. In traditional stereotype or conventional Nepal, men dominance and patriarchal society represents women are suppressed by men. And politics is mainly for men and women play supportive role. Men characters belong to rural culture, shows how they act with political problems and how they just want to complete their own needs. A former banker, deeply addicted to alcohol, who thinks he is the authority on how the region works. His friend is a kind and

hoplessly optimistic man who served as British Gurkha. A wealthy contractor is inspired by the words of the candidate to shift his life from the pursuit of money to seek redemption by helping those he had formerly cheated. He is extremely conservative Hindu seeks to gain financially from the party. There is one more character from Kathmandu comes a disillusioned Communist who was sent to spy on the local village party and to use them to draw votes away from the Congress party. Thapa ironically deals with each male character in the novel. All of them are caught between their own desires and cultural background of the village, hence they become less passionate and passive about their dreams.

On another hand village women are not that much involved in political campaign, local women are just "too busy learning letters" to take care about politics. In their literacy class, they are not only learning to read, but are hearing challenges to ideas like, "A woman isn't a woman without a baby". However, Thapa shows contrast culture in one single village, that is men are busy with unreachable political goals and women are busy to make themselves literate and involved in idiosyncratic movements. Traditional women do not feel to pay attention towards outer world politics, but the western thinker women feel to rebel for their rights. Thapa perfectly deals with these two cultures.

Urban cultured and literate person accepts what is moralistic and idiosyncratic thinking is. Urban culture represents free thinking, human rights and beyond the caste and religious systems. Caste is not formally given in this novel but it affects how individuals regard each other. For example; Binita, the sister-in-law of candidate, who runs teashop where he stays. She is being viewed as a respectable widow,

"Alone woman, still young, draped in a widows' sari, a woman unloosed from the control of men: she tried to ward off criticism by subduing herself".

She is not like other village women, she had attended college and eloped with her teacher, a man from a different caste. When he died, his family rejected her and she was extremely vulnerable. She is bold enough to blame herself for having given herself to a man who is dying had deserted her. Candidate gives her respectful treatment gives her a place she could enjoy.

"He had given her people, and protection from them".

At first she resistant to joining the mothers club, because she feels, she is not like other village women, she is not needing it. To rebel against something and politics and all are nothing for her. This is a bright side of contemporary Nepali culture.

"Was this her place? Among unsure and insecure women, among women defeated, crushed and bound, among women easily ridiculed for their clumsy attempts at freedom; was this where she belonged?".

Probably, the answer is 'no'. It is not easy to accept the culture where one can not find place for herself or himself. Binita, also caught between these two cultures but slowly slowly she finds a place for herself among these women, but it was difficult task. However, trusting on man for love is even more difficult for her.

Relationship among food and culture in culture studies looks at people's relationships with food and reveals an abundance of information about them. Food choices expose a group or person's beliefs, passions, background knowledge, assumptions and personalities. What one eats defines who one is and is not. For example; Milk, tea, rice, vegetables, daal these foods are usually used in this novel. It reflects South Asian cultural food.

Much of Nepal's Culture remains term of folklore and belief systems followed by traditional Nepalis. A mixture of Hindu and Buddhist festivals- Dashyan in Autumn, Tihar in late Autumn, Maha Pooja to celebrate new year day along with martyrs day- are the major celebrations. Food is another component in Nepali culture, which includes Daal- Bhat, Tarkari, Achars and Chatani. The traditional delicacies in Nepal are the reflection of the cultural past and they also reveal the confluence of different cultural influences.

Traditional clothing in Nepal greatly varies across different parts of the country and influenced by local culture. Popular style of dresses include in the novel are;

"Some of the newly arrived party workers were young and urbane, wearing dandyish slacks, shirts, windbreakers and skirts. Older workers wore traditional bhotos, homespun saris or pajamas tailored in their village".

Marriage is another Cultural institution, marriage is the tradition in Nepali society. Even today love marriages are not officially allowed in Nepal. In this novel Binita marries her teacher who is from different caste.

Conclusion:

The paper draws following conclusion from the analysis of text *The Tutor of History*, that it is focuses on Nepali Culture. This novel can be considered as cultural records of Nepali life. Manjushree Thapa writes about political and social changes, the village life and individual characters. Thapa provides sharp, precise descriptions. Her book has its light, humorous moments, but underneath them she shows her care for people, their joys and their pain. Thus, countries adapt the changes but larger challenge is of individuals. Its difficult to individuals to make their own decisions. Novel deals with Culture in Nepal; traditional, western, political and individuals encountering change and about the interaction of the personal and the political.

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