



Research Paper

## Reflection of Dalit Problems and Dalit Aesthetics in Prakash Tiwari's Novel *Niharika*

Rudra Bahadur Charmakar

PhD Scholar & Lecturer in English  
Patan Multiple Campus, TU, Nepal

### ABSTRACT

The article investigates the socio-economic and political problems of Dalits, Dalit aesthetics, consciousness and literary features and messages of Dalit literature. For this purpose, the novel *Niharika* by Prakash Tiwari is purposefully and critically studied from the Dalit aesthetics and consciousness perspectives. The concepts of Dalit aesthetics and consciousness on Dalit literature is developed by Sharankumar Limbale, Arjun Dangle, Laura R. Brueck, Judith Misrani-Barak, K. Satyanarayana and Nicole Thiara. The research article explores that the Dalit literature is not a common literature; rather, it is the literature of Dalit problems, pains, sorrows, revolts, protests and movements. It also discovers that the Dalit literature is the consequence of Dalit consciousness which has wider purposes to awaken the Dalits for their rights, equality, justice and social dignity. The literature has distinct literary characteristics, messages and style of presentation and expression. The researcher employs the qualitative approach with explorative method as critical discourse analysis.

**KEY WORDS:** Dalit literature, Consciousness, Aesthetics, Dalit Problems and Social Justice and Dignity

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### I. INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE:

Dalits are the most backward and vulnerable people in the Indian sub-continent including Nepal. They are backward in every sphere of the society. According to Prof. Dr. Bidhyanath Koirala, "Dalit is derived from *sanskrit* nomenclature and is used by the politicians and social scientists of Nepal to identify or categorize a group of people who are religiously, culturally, socially and economically oppressed" (19). The varna-based society and the state discriminated, exploited and oppressed to the Dalits for centuries; and, they could not raise their voices adequately for hundreds years. They have been fighting for their rights, equality, justice and social dignity because they are deprived and depressed even today. Prof. Koirala further states about Dalits that "[...]who are socially and culturally depressed and deprived of different development opportunities including education" (20). They were boycotted from various opportunities of socio-economic and political lives. In this scenario, Dalit community began to raise their voices for rights, equality and justice in mid-twentieth century from various corners of the society.

Dalit social movements through literature and writings also began at the same time when the Dalit movements began in Nepal. As a part of Dalit movements, Dalit literatures have been covering the various issues and subjects of Dalits and upholding for rights, equality and justice. A Dalit writer Ranendra Baraly remarks, "Nepali literary writings on Dalit issues and subjects have been started recently. The literary writings and trends of studying have been gearing up till the recent years" (59- 60). The writings on Dalit issues and subjects and Dalit literature have been published since in 1940s; however, most of literary writings could not present the Dalit issues and subjects properly or did not advocate for the rights, equality and justice properly; rather, they fabricated the issues of Dalits. Dalit literature and literary writings in recent years have been upholding the rights, equality and justice of Dalits perfectly. Though, there are sufficient works on the Dalits are published in Nepali literary writings; the comprehensive research from various theoretical perspectives are not conducted yet. Hence, the present article investigates and explores the Dalit problems, aesthetic characteristics and consciousness of Dalit literature based on Prakash Tiwari's novel *Niharika*.

## II. OBJECTIVES:

The main objectives of the research article are to investigate and explore the various socio-economic and political problems of Dalits; to examine the aesthetics characteristics and Dalit consciousness in the Dalit literature; and, also to examine the delivery of the social messages to eliminate the caste system from the society.

## III. METHODS AND METHODOLOGY:

The research article employs the qualitative approach with exploratory method. The research is based on the primary text *Niharika* by Prakash Tiwari. It is a type of content, context and critical discourse analysis from the perspectives of Dalit aesthetics and consciousness. The theoretical concept is based on the concepts of Dalit aesthetics and Dalit consciousness by Sharankumar Limbale, Arjun Dangle, Laura R. Brueck, Susie Tharu, Judith Misrahi-Barak, K. Satyanarayana and Nicole Thiara.

## IV. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE:

The trend of writing the literature on Dalit issues and subjects began with the Dalit movements in Nepal; and, it has been continuing to till date. Dalit literature basically upholds the rights, equality, justice and social dignity of the Dalits in the Hindu society. There are certain characteristics of Dalit literature as Indian scholar Niranjana Kumar states, "1. Equality, Freedom, Brotherhood and Justice; 2. Torture, Pain and Scatterbrained; 3. Rejection, Revolt and Protest; 4. Authenticity of the Experiences; 5. Ignorance; 6. Direct Presentation; and, 7. Outrages and Strike" (qtd. in Baraly and Adhikari 55). Dalit literature is regarded as a part of the Dalit social movements in the Indian sub-continent. The writings always depict the realistic picture of the Dalits in forefront and uphold for the complete liberation of the Dalits. It is true that the Dalit writers' feelings, emotions and experiences are more realistic in comparing to non-Dalit writers in the Dalit literature. Moreover, Dalit writers' own pain and traumatic experiences are embedded in the literature.

Literature is a powerful advocacy tool for the Dalits. Dalit fictions have captured the contemporary society and fictionalized the issues and stories in them. Basically, the protagonists from Dalit community in the fictions were being presented as weak and subordinate in recent few years back. First-ever, Nepali novel in Dalit subject is *Ko Achhut? (Who is Untouchable)* by Muktinath which was banned in the early days of the publication due to its subject matter and message delivered to readers. Ninu Chapagain, regarding the novel remarks "how important the novel was; the novel clearly shows that of banning it after the first publication" (69). The novel clearly portrays the social boycott, hatred and discrimination faced by the Dalits but its main objective is to show how and why the borderlines are drawn between touchable and untouchables.

Writing the literature by Dalit writers express the pains and sorrows and want to liberate them from the centuries' long discrimination and exploitation. Popular Dalit poet M. L. Nepali expresses in a poem as:

Dalit is also the human being, flows the red blood within him  
He cannot have full stomach but his body is wet with sweat  
He works throughout year in landlord  
He survives with one basket of corn and ten *pathi*<sup>1</sup> rice as *Balighare*<sup>2</sup> system  
He pays the cost and has tea, but he cannot enter the hotel; he has to wash the cups  
He is Hindu and wants to enter the temple but he is chased by the agents of the religion  
He wants a piece of land for shelter but he can't get  
He is compelled to live a nomadic life! ("Dalit Muktika Ghosanaharu" 27)

In this assertion, the poet as speaker expresses the terrible pain and problems of the Dalits. Dalits are exploited in every sphere of social lives. Most of them are living a life without foods, clothes and shelters. Most of them do not have land on their own. The poem reflects the miserable socio-economic condition of the Dalits of the society.

Popular writer, Sharad Poudel's novel *Likhe* depicts the socio-political consciousness of the Dalits. The characters of the novel work for the Dalit community, society and the nation. The protagonist Likhe (Likhat) speaks, "I have understood the issue of so-called upper-castes; and, so far the upper-castes remain in the power of the society; nobody knows the reality of the Dalits. They hide the social reality about the Dalits. I speak many times that there are only two castes- the rich (bourgeoisie) and the poor (proletariat) in the society. The rich caste-people do not let to raise the heads to poor ones" ("Likhe" Poudel 74). The protagonist Likhe is conscious on the caste/class issues. In the novel, the characters- Namrata, a Brahmin girl and Likhe, a Dalit get married and work in local politics together to change the socio-political system.

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<sup>1</sup> The traditional measuring scale for grains in Nepali society

<sup>2</sup> The egalitarian slavery system prevailed in Nepali society where the Dalits would support with their traditional occupations such as by sewing the clothes, making the domestic weapons and instruments, and making the shoes etc.; instead of those supports, they would get grains and cereals once a year.

Dalit literature also reflects a miserable condition of the Dalits due to their socio-economic problems. Bibek Ojha's novel *Ailani* portrays the realistic socio-economic life-story of Badi women and girls of far-western parts of Nepal. Badi women and girls are compelled to sell their bodies for survival. Moreover, the caste-based discrimination and untouchability seem rampant against them in their society. A Badi woman's body is used by upper-caste-males but water touched by her is not accepted in the society. In the novel, unfortunately, a Badi male touches the water unknowingly; as a result, he is killed. The plot of the novel *Ailani* reveals that:

*sabaika lagi tyo kathor drishya thiyo. Kammanko huliya herna malai pani sakas paryo. dhunga lamera usko tauko futeko thiyo. seto gidi angurko jhuppojhai jhulliyoo. katakata ragatko chhita parera raato dekhiyo. ragat urlidai bagekole usale lagayako seto kapada raktamme bhayeko thiyo. usako khutta oripariko jaminbhar ragatko aahal jamyoo* [It was severed and painful for all. I could not see the face of Kamman. His head was broken due to the hitting with the stones. The white part of his head was hanging like a bunch of grapes. It was mixed with blood. His clothes were reddish due to over-bleeding. His legs were sunk in the lake of blood]. (trans. Ojha 122)

The assertion of the novel presents the pathetic situation of Badi community who are being killed on the accusation of touching the water taps and sources. Dalits and Badi people are compelled to live measurable lives due to their caste and social position.

Nepali Dalit literature and writings are adequately available by both Dalits and non-Dalit writers in the literary arena. However, the comprehensive researches are not conducted with theoretical framework and application. Hence, to fulfill the gaps of research, the present article investigates and analyses the novel *Niharika (The Nebula)* by Prakash Tiwari from the perspective of Dalit aesthetics and consciousness.

## V. DALIT PROBLEMS, DALIT AESTHETICS AND CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE NOVEL *NIHARIKA*

The novel *Niharika (The Nebula)* by Prakash Tiwari is social love-story between the inter-castes people of the society. It mainly presents the socio-economic and political problems of the Dalits, inter-caste relations and marriage, inter-religious relation and its consequences; and, distance relation and its impacts. The novel mainly focuses on the Dalit issues and subjects; and it opens the many avenues of research in various dimensions of Dalit lives. The novel *Niharika* claims that "*upanyas 'Niharika' Prakash Tiwariko alag swadako moulik upanyas ho. Dalit samudayale bhognu pareko pida ra sangharshako gathale bhariyako prastut upanyasko kathanakle mansarovardekhi arab sagarsammako singo bhugol sametko chha* [The novel *Niharika* by Prakash Tiwari is an original novel with unique taste. Having presented the problems and struggles of the Dalit community; it covers a complete geographical location from Mansarovar to Arabic Sea in the stories..." (trans. "Cover Declaration of the Novel"). The complete story revolves round the struggles of Mohan and Sharada- from remote village to Kathmandu; and, inter-caste relations; marriage and tragic end with the death of Sharada at the end.

Literature on Dalit issues and subjects presents the various aspects of social lives of the Dalits. To quote, popular writer Sharankumar Limbale as "Dalit literature is precisely that literature which artistically portrays the sorrows, tribulations, slavery, degradation, ridicule and poverty endured by Dalits. This literature is but a lofty image of grief..." (30). The Dalit literature presents the multi-layer problems of the Dalits. In the novel, *Niharika*, Mohan, as Dalit youth, who has passed Masters' Degree in History and teaches in Janahit Secondary School of his location; becomes a victim of his colleague Raman's conspiracy. The school gives him a retirement without any fault. The school management committee decides to terminate him from his service as the narrator reveals, "*baithakle shikshak Mohan Bishwakarmalai padiya acharan biparit kaam gareko, Nepalko itihasko apabyakhya gardai biddhyarthiharuma hindu dharmaprati anastha srijana garne prayas gareko ebam aafnai sahakarmimathi abhadra bebahar gareko aadi abhiyogka aadharna sewabata barkhastha garne nirnaya liyako chha* [The meeting has decided to terminate from the service by accusing to the teacher Mohan Bishwakarma of violating the code of conduct; misinterpreting the history of Nepali and creating the disbelief to Hindu religion; and, misbehaving to the colleagues of the school]" (trans. Tiwari 48). In the novel, Mohan Bishwakarma is a competent Dalit teacher to whom a non-Dalit teacher Raman suffers a lot due to his social hierarchy. The case begins when teachers- Mohan and Sharada take the students to an Educational excursion; a student misconducts during the visit which the teachers are uninformed about the incident; and the issue is fabricated in the school. Finally, Mohan is terminated from the school service. This denotes that discrimination and oppression to the Dalits is still rampant in workplace.

The novel, *Niharika*, as a masterpiece of Dalit literature depicts the socio-economic problems. In this connection, Lambale remarks that "The experiences articulated in Dalit literature have not yet been expressed in any other literature. They are the experiences of a particular community. Experiences conveyed in Dalit literature have several characteristics" (31). Dalit literature is the expression of Dalit experiences. As in the novel, Mohan becomes jobless now. He plans to start a tuition center for students and literacy classes for women and elderly people of the village; and searches the land for it but he cannot find easily. Many non-Dalits do not

want to provide the open land for this purpose. Finally, a businessman Tulsidas Shrestha provides a small land nearby Boulakhkhola (a local stream) where Mohan makes the temporary hut for classes but the flood damages it shortly. The novel reveals that "[...] Mohan *jhismire ujyalomai khola kinarama nimit taharo herna gayo. barsha ajhai rokhiyako thiyana. usale tadhaibata boulakhkhola ko binashlila herdai laamo sas tanyo. thulthula chattan ra ledo matosahitko badhile taharoko namonishan metaisakeko thiyo... kholako badhisangai Mohanbhitra sambedanaka ghau dukhdai gaya* [Mohan went to look up the newly constructed tuition-hut early in the morning. It was still raining. He just kept on pondering the damages of Boulaha khola (stream). The infrastructure was already finished with big rocks and liquid mud...The deep pain of reality suffered with flood in the heart of Mohan" (trans. Tiwari 56). Unfortunately, Mohan's dream to establish a good institution from there is washed away with flood. Even the natural disaster persists as a destructive for the Dalit character, Mohan. It is supposed to be the destiny of the Dalits.

It is Dalit consciousness that Dalit have to revolt against the system. The Dalit literature itself is the part of revolution for rights and liberty. Limbale in this regards argues, "The Dalit consciousness in Dalit literature is the revolutionary mentality connected with struggle. It is a belief in rebellion against the caste system, recognizing the human being as its focus..." (32). In the novel, Mohan does not lose his hope because Sharada is in his side who always encourages him to do the best. Sharada suggests to him as:

*Tapaimathi prakriti pani lagyo. sat garneko mangal ra asat garneko binash hunchha bhanthe tara binash sat garneko hune rahechha. kati handar khanu bho tapaille. thuprai ghatpratighat sahanu bho. aba taharo haina bhukampako kastai dhakka thegna sakne bhawan banaunus. ma tapailai sakeko sahayog garna tayar chhu' Sharadale santwana diyi* [The nature also suffered you. It would said that there is always good to those people who involve in good deeds and bad to the people who involve in the misdeeds but it is opposite in your case. You struggled a lot. You are suffered a lot. Now, not the temporary house, but you should build the earthquake-proof building. I am ready to support you from my side'. Sharada consoled]. (trans. Tiwari 57)

In the novel, Sharada who is the daughter of Chandraprasad Pandit, is a strong supporter of Mohan. She does not let him kill his hope. Her encouragement gives an enthusiasm to Mohan. And, he plans to purchase the "Naya Kiran Secondary School" in support of hundreds of shareholders. The school managed by Mohan and his team improves its performance within few years. It shows that Dalit characters are also capable to handle and manage the challenging situation and show the performance perfectly in need.

The inter-caste relation is generally rejected by the Hindu society. The non-Dalit people think that they are at the top position in the social hierarchy. According to K. Satyanarayana and Susie Tharu, "While the caste system lasts, the Brahmin caste has its supremacy. No one, of his own will, surrenders power that is in his hands. The Brahmins have exercised their sovereignty over all other castes for centuries..." (27). The Brahmins exercise their supremacy and sovereignty in the social activities. In the novel, Raman, a non-Dalit character critiques about Mohan as "*je bhaya pani kami kami nai ho. Mohane ufrinu bhyaguto ufre barabar ho. jati ufre pani kuwako kuwaima'. Ramanka kura sunera Chandraprasad ra Rama hanse* [Anyway, he is ultimately Kaami (a Dalit caste). Having jumped by Mohane (a derogatory word) is like the jumping frog. Ultimately, it would be inside the well. By listening the comment of Raman; Chandraprasad and Rama laughed at]" (trans. Tiwari 63). It shows that how and what the non-Dalit people think about the educated and competent Dalit who is actively working for the society. They do not encourage to the Dalits to move ahead; rather, they insult and pull the legs in every step of life.

Dalits are discriminated based on their castes and social positions. They become victims due to their castes in everyday of social lives. In this connection, Satyanarayana and Tharu further remark, "Untouchability is not a simple matter; it is the mother of all our poverty and lowliness and it has brought us to the abject state we are not in today...Hindu society must sink unless the untouchability that has become a part of the four-castes system is eradicated" (28). The caste/varna system is the main reason of caste-based discrimination and untouchability. Even the teacher from Dalit community cannot get respect in the society. In the novel, Mohan works as the principal of Naya Kiran Secondary School. The school has the best performance in the district. Once, Sharada and her sister-in-law visit the school that their father comes to know about their visit. The father Chandraprasad scolds to daughter-in-law as:

*'buhari bhar buhariko thankoma basna parchha. tan pani Sharadeko matima laar Kaamilai bhetna gais haina?'*

*'skul herna ga ni, keko Kaami bhetna jaanu' Ranjana darayi.*

*'ke kami kami bhannubha!' Kaami manchhe haina?' Sharadale mukh kholi.*

*'tanlai katichoti bhane, baato hinda mulbaato hinmu, sangat garda thulabadako garnu. tallo jaatko sangatle udhai gati udhai mati huncha'. Chandraprasadko ris hwattai badyo.*

[The daughter-in-law should be disciplined. You also went to meet Kaami with Sharade, didn't you?"]

"We went to visit the school, not to meet Kaami", Ranjana frightened.

"Why are you calling Kaami (derogatory word) again and again? Is Kaami not a human?" Sharada opened the mouth.

"How much did I say that take the main street while walking and make the friends from upper-castes' people. The relations with lower-caste people make you lower." Chandraprakash spoke with high tempered. (trans. Tiwari 71)

The caste system is connected to the social and economic status. In the novel, Sharada's father Chandraprasad insults the Dalit people including Mohan.

The novel *Niharika* as Dalit literature portrays the revolts done by the Dalits and their supporters. It is aesthetic characteristics of Dalit literature that the Dalit characters revolt against the social system. Regarding it Sharad Patil remarks, "It must be considered why counter-revolutionary literature possesses the weapon of aesthetics, but revolutionary literature does not" (06). In the novel Mohan and Sharada have good relation but Raman, Sharada's parents and the society blame them to be lovers. Sharada is already boycotted from his family accusing her to be the bride of Mohan Bishwakarma. So, they are compelled to get married immediately. The narrator reveals that "*Mohanle khaltibata chandiko dibba nikalyo ani machhapuchchhre himallai sakshi rakh dai sharadako siudoma sindur halyo. aaspas upasthit darjanbhar manisharule taali bajaya. Sharadako aankhabata harshaka aanshu jhare* [Mohan put out a silver-box from his pocket and put the vermilion powder (*sindur*) on Sharada's forehead by keeping the Machhapuchchhre mountain as the witness of their marriage. About a dozen of people of surrounding clapped the hands. Sharada wept in happiness]" (trans. Tiwari 84). They love each other from many years but they never express their love directly. When the parents and society blame them as married; as a result, they get married by keeping the mountain and nature as witness.

Inter-caste and inter-religious relations have to face many hindrances in the society. In this regards, Satyanarayana and Tharu remark that "...the existing moral order upholds things that disrupt the society and condemns those would unite the members of the society, must find itself defeated in any struggle for life with other societies" (28- 29). The moral order of society should not be exploitative and discriminatory. But the Hindu society forgets even the social morality while treating to the Dalits. In the novel, the inter-caste relations between Mohan and Sharada and Ranjit and Sunaina materialize their loves into marriages; but inter-religious relation between Ruchila and Krishna cannot be together; rather, Krishna is murdered. Love, marriage and relation are the part of struggles in varna-based society. In the novel, the monologue with nature (river) reveals:

*jiwan ek sangharsha ho. Himaldekhi sagarsammako mero yatra sangharshai sangharshako gatha ho. mero yatrama tang adauna kati chattan aghi aaya. kati bhir paharaharule tarbar laya. taipani ma rokiyina, chhekiyina. Himali goretobaat surubhayako mero yatra samundrarupi chouda rajmargasamma pugyo. yo kunai aloukik shaktiko tathastu thiyana. yasko shutrardharu aafai thiya. tesaile tan pani aafu hidne goretu aafai bana. prakritiko canvasma euta sarthak chitra kor* [Life is a struggle. The travel from Himalayas to seas is the story of my struggle. During my journey, many huge rocks appeared on my ways. Many hills, rocks and obstacles tried to stop me. However, I did not stop my journey; I did not stop my journey of life. My journey began from narrow Himalayas to wide seas. Not any mythical and magical power could control me. I was the beginner of myself. So, you should make your road yourself. Make a clear sketch of yours on the canvas of nature. (trans. Tiwari 54)

The life of a Dalit is similar to a journey of a river (stream) of Hilly region. One should face many obstacles and hindrances during the journey of life; and should defeat them one after another to make an existence in life. In the novel, inter-caste relation between the characters Ranjit Acharya and Sunaina Gharti starts with love; continues with happy marriage; and ends with Sunaina's MBBS study in Banglore, India. The distance relation between them cannot last long as usual that Sunaiya betrays to Ranjit and gets marriage to Amit (a teacher of her college) at first and Prashant (her previous one-sided lover) later. Having informed about the reality, Ranjit becomes drunkard and suffers with depression. Finally, he commits suicide. It is the tragic ending of their love-story. The suicide letter of Ranjit reveals:

*'manou ma marubhumima bhoutariraheko yatri. tiraskarko bharile thichiyako manis. maile sundar sapana sajudai sunainalai daktari panda banglore pathayan. ma sochthe- ek din meri shrimati doktor banera farkinechha. yo sochda matra pani kati gourab hunthyo malai. mero chahana biprit u aafailai padaune shikshak amitko mohjaalma fasi. Amit tin mahinaka lagi America jaanda u depressionko sikar bhayi Kathmandu aayi. aushadhiko golile usko birami thik hunda sakena...malai bistarai bistarai tyo rahasya gyan huna thalyo...samayakramma u amitdekhi pani tadha bhayi prashantko nikat huna thali...tehi uniharule gandarva bibah gare...(Mohanlai sambodhan gardai) maile aarjit gareko sampatibata anaathashram banaidinu...anathashramko name 'Sunaina Anathashram' rakhidinu* [Perhaps, I was a traveller wandering on desert! A man pressed with loads of hatred! I had sent Sunaina to study the medical science in Banglore with many happy dreams. I thought- my wife would be back being a doctor. Instead of it, she fell in her teacher Amit's love-plan. When Amit went to America for

three months; she came back to Kathmandu being a victim of depression. The medicines could not cure her. When, she would receive a call of Amit from America; she would be fit and fine. Amit was her perfect treatment...Slowly; I came to know the mystery...Later she became close to Prashant...They got eloping marriage there... (Addressing to Mohan) please establish an orphan home by my property...Give the name "Sunaina Orphan Home" (trans. Tiwari 195- 196)

The above mentioned assertion denotes the love, relation and tragic end. It also shows that the love and trust cannot work in distance relationship. Ranjit has hope, expectation, belief, trust and commitment with his wife but Sunaina breaks them all as soon as she reaches to Bangalore, India for her study.

Dalit literature is the product of Dalit consciousness. The characters seem advance and conscious on their right, equality and duty to the society. They try to work hard to be successful in lives. Sharankumar Limbale argues, "Dalit literature is a new literary stream of the post-independent period. Not only is it new, its form and purposes too are different from...it cannot be appraised using traditional aesthetics" (115). The literature has unique aesthetic features and characteristics comparing to mainstream literature and classical literature. In the novel, Mohan and Sharada shift to Kathmandu and start working in the school. For that they need a rented room and search for many days. They do not find the rooms due to their castes. The conversation between home owner and Mohan reveals as:

*'kati jana basnuhunchha?' usle thar sodhnuko badala pahile sankhya sodhyo.*

*'dui jana' Mohanle jawaf diyo.*

*'ke kaam garnu hunchha?'*

*'blue moon skulko principalma niyukti hudaichhu'*

*'ani yi nani?'*

*'yini meri shrimati sharada'*

*'tapai ke thari ni?' prashna dhumai fiari jaattirai modiyu. thar bhannu ki nabhannu?...*

*'Bishwakarma' nalukai bhanyo usle.*

*'nani ta bahuni jasti dekhinu hunchha? usle Sharadatira herdai bhani.*

*Sharada kehi bolina...*

*'hunchha bhani deu' lognele aankhako isara garyo,*

["How many people do live here?" He asked the number of dwellers rather than caste.

"We two", Mohan replied.

"What do you work?"

"I am being appointed as the principal of Blue Moon School"

"And, this sister...?"

"She is my wife, Sharada"

"What caste do you belong to?" Ultimately the question turned to caste. He was confused whether to tell the caste or not...

"Bishwakarma" He spoke directly.

"The sister looks like Brahman girl?" He told noticing at Sharada. Sharada did not speak...

"Tell them okay", the husband noticed with eyes]. (trans. Tiwari 124)

The caste system is rampant even in the capital city of Nepal, Kathmandu. Dalits can hardly get the rented rooms in non-Dalits' houses. To quote, Limbale as, "the anguish of Dalit literature is not that of an individual but of the entire outcastes society" (31). The problem is the problem of entire Dalit community that they cannot find the rented rooms easily even in urban areas and Kathmandu.

Dalit literature is the revolutionary by nature. The Dalit characters are discriminated, exploited and oppressed in every sphere of socio-economic lives. So as the literature expresses the aggression and revolt against the system. Regarding it, Indian Marathi Dalit writer, editor, activist, and Dalit Aesthician Arjun Dangle argues, "Dalit literature is marked by revolt and negativism, since it is closely associated with the hopes for freedom by a group of people who, as untouchables, are victims of social, economic and cultural inequality" (qtd. in Mukherjee 01). The Dalit characters express their revolts against the society and system for equality and freedom. In the novel, when Mohan is terminated from school teacher service; Dalit community unites and protests against the school management committee. The novel reveals as:

*'kaamiko chhora bhanera hepeko?'*

*'Mohanlai skulbata nikalne re. kasari nikalda rachan, hami pani herchau'...*

*'baithakka din sabai jaanuparcha'*

*'nara julus gardai baithaksthal ghernuparcha' sahabhagiharule aa-aafno dharana rakhe...*

*'ekpakshiya nirnaya ek mandainou...'*

*'sabaile taali pitera samarthan janaya...Dalitharule kon sabha gare. Mohanle chhoto bhashan diyo.*

["Do they insult him because he is a son of Kaami?

"Does Mohan terminate from school? Let us see how do they terminate him from the school?"

"We all should go to the meeting"

"We should go with agitation", the participants put their opinions...

"We will not accept any favoritism..."

All accepted by clapping the hands...Dalits' protest changed into corner-meeting. Mohan addressed the program shortly]. (trans. Tiwari 48- 49)

Dalits are united to protest against the action of School Management Committee. They are not ready to accept the decision of School management committee but non-Dalits people had already made the conspiracy to give Mohan a retirement. The protest cannot make any materialistic change against his retirement.

Dalits are still discriminated and oppressed on the basis of their varna and birth. Dalits do experience in their everyday lives. Dalit literature is the depiction of Dalits problems and experiences. "Caste, caste discrimination and the struggle against it are in many ways the defining features of Dalit literature but this does not mean that these topics will not find resonance in struggles against injustice and discrimination elsewhere" (Misrahi-Barak et. al 1- 2). Dalit literature has distinct literary features and characters. Mostly, it is the literature of experiences and feelings. In this connection, Limbale argues, "Dalit literature narrates experiences that have not been heard or seen until now, the reader is shaken while reading them..." (55). The literature shows the new but pathetic experiences of Dalits. In the novel, Mohan and Sharada give birth to a baby boy. Later, Sharada's brother wants to take the baby boy to his house for sometimes. But people discriminate even to the infant baby because of this father's caste. The narration reveals as:

*'na auu! na auu! na auu! hajuraama chhuichhui bhaaki chhe' Laptanni karai...*

*'hamro sano bhanijai dekhera daraunu bho ki kwa ho didi!' Ranjanale bhani...*

*'haina kina daraute. sasura chhan ni sasura. Sharadeko chorale chhoidela. jogayara lyaa bhannuncha. uta jaau babu uta'...*

*ek sanjh gauleharuko kachahari basyo.*

*'ki ta Chandraprasadle kaamiko chhoru tyagun. haina bhane unilai tyagnaparcha.'*

*'mohi magna go aara chhoi dinchha tyo bachcha. na pitnu, na kyai garnu.'*

["Do not come near to me. Grandmother is in mensuration period". Laptanni spoke...

"Are you worried about looking at our youngest nephew, sister?" Ranjana spoke...

"No, why to worry! There is my father-in-law at home. He has told not let to touch by Sharade's son. Be careful. Please go away baby"...

The meeting of the local people decided that...

"Whether, Chandraprasad has to abandon the Kaami' son; otherwise, we have to boycott him from the society".

"When, we go to bring *mohi* (whey), the baby touches. Neither to beat nor..." (trans. Tiwari 222-223)

The discriminatory behavior to the infant-baby shows inhumanity inherited in the varna-based society. The social mindset is not changed. The mentality of so-called upper-caste people is not changed. The society is still practicing the inhuman praxis in the social life.

Dalit consciousness tries to change the concept of people. And, the Dalit literature is medium for social change. It is not a common literature but it is a mission literature to change the social concepts and malpractices. In this connection Laura R. Brueck argues, "[...] since Dalit literature is not a body of texts written for aesthetic pleasure, but rather vehemently regards itself as part of a larger movements of sociopolitical resistance, it is worth considering the ways in which these narrative strategies develop Dalit *chetna*" (85). The novel *Niharika* is not only a literary text but it is a worthy-work of the Dalit literature which upholds for equality based society. The protagonist Mohan is a conscious Dalit youth that he knows the value of politics, political movements and power. So, he involves in a political party; gets victory in the election; and, later, he becomes the minister of Nepal. Whenever, he is appointed as the minister; the in-laws family- Chandraprasad, Rama and Nishan show their positive behavior towards Mohan and Sharada. The narration reveals:

*'Mohan Bishwakarma shram tatha rojgar mantrima niyukta. aajai aparanha sapatth grahan'*

*'jillaka pratham dalit mantri' sthaniya mediaharule pani samachar banaya.*

*Chitrabesi gauka yubaharuko bhuma khutta rahena. deepawali ra naachgan bhayo...*

*Nishanle gharaima pugera Mohanko babulai badhai diyo.*

*Bholipalta bihanai Sharadaka babuaama pani Mohanko ghar gaye.*

["Mohan Bishwakarma is appointed as Minister of Labor and Employment. The oath taking program commence by today"

"First Dalit minister of district!" Local media made news.

The youths of Chitrabenshi were over-excited. They organized a program on the auspicious occasion...

Nishan extended his happiness and congratulated to Mohan's father...

Next day Sharada's parents (Chandra Prasad and Rama) also reached to Mohan's father home].  
(trans. Tiwari 211)

The novel reveals that position, power and economic status blur the boundaries of castes. Mohan Bishwakarma is discriminated, oppressed and boycotted from the society when he gets married to a Brahman girl (Chandraprasad and Rama's daughter) Sharada in the beginning days. Later, Mohan becomes successful in his professional and political career and becomes the minister of the nation; and then he is accepted by the in-laws family. The caste system is not only based on social hierarchy but also based on economic status and finance.

Ultimately, Dalit literature also portrays the consciousness in society through various social paradigms and practices. The rays of education and literacy are not enough to change the social mindset. In the novel, Mohan is an educated and competent Dalit but his education and competency cannot get any social respect. In this regards, Tapan Basu argues, "The coercive aspect of caste power is apparent also in the denial of knowledge to those considered outside the pale of caste power" ("Introduction" xxiii). Dalits' education and knowledge cannot get any space and respect in the society in traditional Hindu society. In the novel, Mohan and his team plan to establish a school with new vision and strategy; the antagonistic characters- Raman and his supporters involve in backbiting against him to make Mohan failure. The narrator reveals as:

*'Mohan ramro niyat bhayako manchhe haina. herdai jaanus, kunai din paisa kumlayara taap kascha. mero bhanai galat thahariya bhane kaan katidiya huncha.'*

*'aruko dah garnubhanda asal karma garnatira lagnus.'*

*'haina yaslai Mohaneko kati dherai maya laako ho!' Ramale bhani.*

["Mohan's intension is not pure. Just keep on waiting, he will run away by collecting the money from villagers (shareholders). If my assumption is wrong, I will cut my ear".

"Do your job, rather than showing interest in others' matter"

"Why are you supporting to Mohane?" Rama spoke]. (trans. Tiwari 63)

The social structure and traditional mindset do not evaluate the education, capacities, competencies and works of the Dalits; but they directly look at castes, social position and hierarchy. The caste makes Dalit a failure in the first sight of non-Dalit people.

Dalit literature is all about experiences of pains, sorrows, humiliation and discrimination of Dalits and the Dalitness. It is a new form of literary movement. In this context, Judith Misrahi-Barak et. al argue that "Dalit life experience, insights and aspirations inform and shape Dalit literature. A new critical perspective, namely, a Dalit perspective, is at the heart of this new literary movement...Dalit literature is ultimately a literary expression of the Dalit movement..." (2-3). It is true that Dalit literature creates a literary movement and extends the consciousness in Dalit community and the society. It helps to develop own tangible Dalit identity in the society. In this regards, Laura also argues, "In the developing aesthetics of Dalit literature, Dalit *chetna* has evolved from general political awareness and self-respect to a specific theoretical definition of a revolutionary mentality..." (82). The protagonist Mohan's involvement in political party refers that the political consciousness gives the freedom, equality and justice in the society. Mohan knows the strategies to win the election and makes the strong slogan, "*berojgarlai bhatta, gariblai satta. tara partyka ummedawarlai bhari matle bijayi garaou* [Allowance to unemployed; Power to poor. Let the candidate of Star-Party wins]" (trans. Tiwari 186). Ultimately, Mohan is successful to win the election. The novel shows the victory over all the superstitious beliefs, discrimination and exploitation against the Dalits. Many issues related to the Dalits are uncovered by the novel *Niharika*.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Prakash Tiwari's novel, *Niharika* portrays the Dalit problems, caste system, social hierarchy and political consciousness of Dalits. The novel, as a piece of Dalit literature is successful to present the aesthetic characteristics and features artistically. It has basically covered the inter-castes and inter-religious relationships, its problems and transformation with socio-economic and political consciousness. The writer sketches the relationship between Mohan and Sharada and their struggles for social ratification. At the same time the relationships between Ruchila/Salama and Krishna, Ranjit and Sunaina get failure due to castes/religions result to the death of Krishna, separation between Sunaina and Ranjit; and, suicide of Ranjit in the novel. The relation between Mohan and Sharada remains good throughout their lives based on the novel and get social ratification and acceptance as well. But, death of Sharada due to road accident shows the failure of marriage lives between these characters. The writer mythically illustrates that Sharada's soul is seen as the nebula (*Niharika*) in the sky when the blast is heard nearby surrounding. The novel is successful to present the Dalit aesthetic characteristics and consciousness for rights, equality, justice and social dignity of the Dalits. Moreover, the writer Tiwari's effort to show the social transformation through his literature is really appreciable work.



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