

ISSN 2976-1158 (Print)

ISSN 2976- 1166 (Online)



Affiliated to Tribhuvan University

Rupandehi Campus Journal

(A Peer Reviewed Journal)

Volume 5 No.1

January 2025

5

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EDITORIAL

Academic journals play a crucial role in shaping informed societies by offering a platform where ideas are debated, knowledge is expanded, and research is shared. The Rupandehi Campus Journal was established with this very purpose in mind to encourage critical thinking, scholarly inquiry, and meaningful dialogue within and beyond the campus. Since 2015, it has served as a space for educators, researchers, and practitioners to contribute to the evolving landscape of academic discourse in Nepal.

The journal welcomes a wide array of research areas, encompassing English language and literature, education, mathematics, health sciences, social sciences, management, law, Buddhist studies, and environmental concerns. It also offers space for the discussion of pressing social, ethical, and community-based issues, thereby embracing a holistic approach to scholarship and inquiry.

Volume 5 continues this mission by presenting studies that are both relevant and thought-provoking. The articles featured in this issue span a range of subjects from innovative approaches in language teaching and critical literary analyses to public health awareness, environmental sustainability, and cultural identity. These contributions not only reflect current academic trends but also address the lived realities of our communities, enriching the dialogue between research and practice.

A key force behind the journal's continued success is the Campus Research Cell. It plays a vital role in coordinating the editorial process and upholding the journal's academic standards. The Cell is committed to encouraging practical, solution-focused research that supports community development and addresses local and national needs.

Our commitment to open-access publishing ensures that all published articles are freely available to a wide audience. Readers are welcome to access, download, and share the content without restrictions, fostering broader engagement with the knowledge being produced. This open model supports equitable access to information and encourages inclusive participation in the research process.

In conclusion, The Rupandehi Campus Journal remains a vibrant platform for the convergence of disciplines and perspectives. It continues to support meaningful scholarly contributions that respond to contemporary challenges and promote informed academic discussion across multiple fields.

Parthivendra Upadhyay
Editor In-Chief

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The Effectiveness of ELT Practices in Government-Aided Schools

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Abstract

This study explores the current status of English Language Teaching (ELT) in government-aided public schools in Nepal by reviewing its historical development, including colonial influences and integration into the education system. Using a qualitative approach based on literature review and classroom observations, the study identifies several persistent challenges, such as reliance on outdated teaching methods like the Grammar-Translation Method, scarcity of teaching resources, and insufficient teacher training. The findings highlight the urgent need for reforms in ELT practices. To address these issues, the study recommends adopting communicative language teaching methods, integrating modern technologies into classrooms, enhancing teacher professional development, and improving the overall classroom environment to make English learning more effective in public schools.

Keywords: challenges, ELT. history of English, public school, solution, technology

Introduction

The concept of globalization has changed the world into a tiny village. And the easy access to the scientific invention has really brought revolution into entire system of style of every human being. The fingertip can stir the events of the globe around us if we really are eager to. One of the leaders to carry us step to step to the innovative world is the widespread use of the Lingua Franca-English language. Either we embrace it or reject it; the third eye to view the kaleidoscopic light of the world is the English language. No languages are considered superior or junior in terms of their presence. And none can certify the certificates to a language that everyone is supposed to accept it superior or inferior to another. It is at the same time apparent that in terms of the utility, use and dominance a language is supposed to be a leading language. I am sure in this regard that English language can be called superior to all. The present boom of English language certainly differs from the past i.e., it was supposed to be the language belonging to few people of the world. The British, Americans and other few thought the language purely of their own possession. But the language has no boundary as such now. The seven seas have no walls to restrict the language within. It has flown across to us and we are definitely proud to have such language with us. However, we must be proud to have Nepali as our mother tongue at the same time.

Historical Background of English Language in Nepal

Gupta (2011) points out that due to its association with the British colonizer in India, English started life in Nepal as not just a foreign language, but as a sophisticated language. As the instrument of the reluctantly adopted Lingua Franca to the status symbol of the upper classes English language speeded its roots in Nepal in the closing years of the 20th century when English began to emerge as a global language, which led to a transformation in the Nepali classroom. This change was driven by a shift in the learners' environment. Previously, the surroundings had been acquisition-poor with regard to English. Suddenly, however, every language user seemed to be jumping on the bandwagon to learn English. The first step of English language invaded into Nepal in 1628 along with the arrival

of the missionary Rupandehi Campus Journal Volume 5, 2025 7 people however, the impact of the language remained invisible. The official entry of English language was clearly noticed along with the establishment of the first modern school-Durbar high school in 1805 A.D. The sole objective to establish the high school was to make the Rana sons know English as well as please the British Empire so that the Rana regime would be safe. On the other hand the British Empire had also mini interest to expand its rule through the introduction of English as the official language and language for introductions. Gopinath puts forth that during the period 1854 A.D. to 1947 A.D. 13 secondary schools were opened throughout the nation. Kansakar (1998) writes ELT has now become an essential compose in Nepal's educational strategy. In schools run by private sectors, English is taught from nursery level, all subjects except Nepal are taught in English. Thus, English as a medium for other subjects and English and content begins from very inspectional stage of education. English is accepted as compulsory school subject in the curriculum. In government aided public schools, English is taught from grade one, in view of communicative approach CDC curricula of all levels of public schools has been managed from 1992 to 1998.

Objectives of the Study

Here are three possible objectives for the article:

- To Analyze the Historical Evolution of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Nepal
- To Evaluate the Current State of English Language Teaching in Government-Aided Public Schools in Nepal
- To Propose Solutions for Improving English Language Teaching in Government-Aided Public Schools

Literature Review

The introduction and development of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Nepal have been shaped by historical, linguistic, pedagogical, and institutional factors. Various scholars have explored these dimensions, offering insights into both progress and persistent challenges.

Adhikari (2020) notes that English was formally introduced into Nepal's education system following Prime Minister Junga Bahadur Rana's visit to Britain. This led to the establishment of Durbar High School, where English began to be taught, marking the beginning of formal English education in the country.

Bist (2011) emphasizes the status of English as a foreign language for many Nepali students, especially those from linguistically diverse backgrounds. Due to limited exposure and practice opportunities, English use in Nepal remains largely confined to academic, technical, and select literary domains, thereby restricting students' ability to use the language in practical and social contexts.

Ghimire (2019) highlights that Nepal's national English curriculum is designed around the Communicative Approach to Language Teaching (CLT). This approach aims to foster communicative competence by integrating language skills, language functions, and thematic learning. However, the actual implementation of CLT in classrooms often faces challenges due to lack of training, resources, and supportive environments.

Adhikary (2023) provides a comparative analysis of English language proficiency among students from 8 Rupandehi Campus Journal Volume 5, 2025 private and public schools. Private school students generally perform better in speaking skills, pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary, although they still encounter difficulties with grammar and tense usage. In contrast, public school students

demonstrate more significant deficiencies, including frequent grammatical errors and poor sentence construction that often result in misleading or unclear communication.

Timilsina (2021) acknowledges that ELT in Nepal is fraught with numerous complex challenges, including inadequate resources, lack of teacher motivation, and student disengagement. While complete resolution may not be feasible in the short term, collaborative efforts from teachers, students, parents, and school administrations can help address local and context-specific issues, thereby gradually improving English education outcomes.

Methodology

This study adopts a historical-descriptive approach to investigate the evolution of English Language Teaching (ELT) in government-aided public schools in Nepal. It traces the historical development of ELT practices, examining how socio-political changes and global trends influenced the Nepali classroom environment over time. The analysis focuses on English teachers and students in both public and private schools to assess shifts in teaching methods, the availability of resources, and levels of student engagement. Observations will be carried out in public schools, along with consultations with school administrations, to explore how ELT has evolved, the challenges it has faced, and the impact of contemporary teaching practices. Classroom observations will provide evidence of the practical application of ELT methodologies, student-teacher interactions, and the integration of technology. Additionally, historical and policy documents—such as national curriculum frameworks and educational reform policies—will be reviewed to evaluate the alignment between educational directives and classroom realities. The study aims to identify long-standing structural factors contributing to disparities in ELT quality between public and private schools and to offer historically informed recommendations for improving English language education in public institutions.

Discussion

This discussion examines the progression of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Nepal by focusing on three key areas: the long-standing dependence on the Grammar Translation (GT) method and its limitations, the existing challenges faced by government-aided public schools in implementing effective ELT practices, and the marked disparity in teaching quality and resources between private and public educational institutions.

1. Predominant Use and Limitations of the Grammar Translation (GT) Method

Despite global advances in language teaching methods, the Grammar Translation (GT) method has remained deeply entrenched in Nepal's public education system. This method, introduced during colonial times, emphasizes rote memorization and translation over practical communication skills. While private schools gradually adopted direct and communicative methods, government-aided public schools continued to rely on GT.

Key issues include:

- GT does not promote speaking or listening skills, leaving students unable to communicate effectively.
- Teachers using GT often focus solely on written grammar and translation tasks.
- Students are passive recipients, leading to disengagement and poor learning outcomes.

2. Current Challenges in Government-Aided Public Schools

Government-aided public schools face severe systemic challenges that hinder the effective teaching of English:

a. Teacher Resistance and Training Gaps:

- Teachers are exposed to modern methods during training and workshops but rarely implement them in the classroom.
- Common justifications include lack of resources, poor student readiness, or administrative negligence.

b. Socio-Economic Factors:

- Most students in public schools come from marginalized backgrounds with limited parental support.
- Education is not prioritized in many households, creating a vicious cycle of disengagement and underachievement.

c. Result-Oriented Cramming Culture:

- Teachers tend to neglect English teaching for much of the year, only becoming active during exam seasons.
- Focus shifts to exam tips and shortcuts, promoting memorization over understanding or communication.

3. Disparity Between Private and Public Schools in ELT

There is a significant gap in ELT quality between private and public schools, driven by the following factors:

- Teaching Methods: Private schools adopt communicative and student-centered methods; public schools remain GT-focused.
- Classroom Environment: English-speaking environments and interactive classrooms are common in private institutions.
- Teacher Accountability: Private school teachers are under performance pressure, whereas public school teachers often lack supervision and motivation.
- Resource Availability: Private schools have better access to teaching aids, digital tools, and infrastructure.

This disparity reinforces social inequality, limiting upward mobility for students in public schools.

4. The Role of Technology in ELT Reform

Technology has the potential to revolutionize ELT in public schools through:

- **Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI)** and **Language Learning Apps** to encourage self-paced and interactive learning.
- **Audio-visual Aids** to create engaging, multisensory learning experiences.
- **Online Platforms** for exposure to global English usage and practical language applications.

Some Solutions to get rid of such Problems

The ELT in public schools can't be improved until we don't work together. There must be a prop from around to make ELT really stand on its feet in the classroom of the government aided public schools. The solutions to improve ELT in the government aided public school can be categorized under the following headings.

ELT Strategic Solutions

Good teaching method, technique and environment play positive role to strengthen the real ELT in the government aided public schools. The ELT strategic solutions as such are mentioned below.

- English language teaching and learning is not possible without the use of modern innovative and creative methods and techniques, so the ELT classroom should be decorated with such methods and techniques.
- Communicative way is the best way to really teach and learn language. It's obvious that communicative competence is the cry of today. If the learners play language in communicate manner, they certainly achieve communicative competence (Richards & Rodgers 2002 p.20). Therefore, the classroom activities should be equipped with communicative way of teaching
- Use of materials especially the modern technologies definitely add a lot to ELT classroom. Use of computer programmer for instance CAI and CALL can really be useful to enhance English language teaching as well as learning. If computer programmes are too difficult to bring into ELT classrooms, other useful equipments like tape recorder, recorded materials, visual materials and so on could be made use of in ELT classes.
- Teachers' activities can also play dominant role to create some communicative creativity in ELT Classrooms. Different innovative activities are being discovered by methodologists every day. The teachers can make use of such activities in ELT classrooms to make the classrooms lively and creative
- Pair work, group work, peer work, survey, language games, use of role play, drama, simulation etc can be useful activities to bring the potential communicative aspects of the learners into real communicative arena.
- The prescribed text books itself is sufficient to strengthen all the communicative activities as well as make the learners achieve communicative competence. The text books comprise all the aspects of language that the learners really need to focus on in achieving what the real goal of ELT teaching in Nepal at secondary level is.

ELT Administrative Solutions

It has clearly been observed that there is also some short of administrative leakage to manufacture such a problem in respect to ELT in government aided public schools. Although there is a web like connectivity from Ministry for Education and Sports to the head master of a school following the directions directed from each step, it is invisible. Responsibilities among the stakeholders seem very demoralizing. The ship has not Rupandehi Campus Journal Volume 5, 2025 11 totally sunk down to the button. Some part of it is still visible on the surface water level. The following steps could be handy to uplift the other part of ship

- Teacher selection must be based on pedagogic skill and proficiency not based on source and bribery.
- Creating good environment in the classroom as well as around the school area is inevitable to facilitate English language teaching as well as learning.
- Maintaining discipline not only amongst the students but also amongst the teachers really values English language teaching and learning process
- Keeping a worm eye view to the teachers so far as their contribution to teaching, to keeping whole teaching and learning system sound, and to keeping a helping hand to every part of teaching learning process, from the authorized person definitely enforces the entire educational system.
- Compulsory of training for those who have not received training and establishing strong relationship between teachers training as teacher licensing can be a justifiable remedy

Conclusion

In conclusion, the development of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Nepal reflects both the historical influence of British imperialism and the modern significance of English as a global lingua franca. While private schools have embraced communicative teaching methods and integrated technology to create engaging learning environments, government-aided public schools continue to rely heavily on the outdated Grammar Translation (GT) method. This reliance, combined with insufficient resources, limited teacher training, and socio-economic challenges such as low parental involvement and student motivation, has hindered the effectiveness of ELT in public institutions. To improve the situation, a multi-faceted approach is essential—emphasizing modern, practical teacher training programs, equitable resource distribution, and the integration of technology such as Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) tools. Additionally, addressing broader socio-economic factors will help foster a more supportive and motivating learning environment. By implementing these strategies, Nepal can bridge the gap between private and public education, making English language learning more inclusive, equitable, and effective for all students.

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Journal of NELTA, Vol 27 No. 1-2, December 2022 138

Received : 2024/11/20

Revision received : 2024/11/25

Accepted : 2024/11/26

Burden of Cataract and Surgical Interventions in South Asia : A Narrative Review

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Abstract

This study explores the prevalence of blindness primarily caused by cataracts in South Asia and evaluates the availability of eye care services. Drawing from books and research articles, it compares eight countries, noting cataracts as the leading cause of blindness 58 percent followed by refractive errors and glaucoma. Cataract surgery coverage stands at 71 percent, yet access remains limited due to lack of awareness, low health-seeking behavior, inadequate infrastructure, and high costs. The study emphasizes the need for regional cooperation, targeted awareness campaigns, and improved healthcare access to reduce the burden of preventable blindness across the region.

Keywords: cataract, South Asia, prevalence, coverage, blindness

Introduction

"This word dates from the middle age and has been derived from the Greek word 'katarraktes' which means 'waterfall'" (Khurana, 2022). As today, the term cataract refers to development of any opacity in the lens or its capsule. A cataract is an opacification of the eye's natural lens that impairs vision. The lens is in charge of focusing light onto the retina, which is situated in the back of the eye behind the iris, which is its colored component..(Gervasio, 2017).

Cataract including nuclear 8.22 percent, cortical 8.05 percent and posterior sub-capsular cataract 2.24 percent are the first leading cause of blindness in the world mostly in above 60 years of age. It is an avoidable cause of blindness(Hashemi et al., 2020).

Numerous factors contribute to cataract development, which is characterized by a loss of transparency in the lens of the eye due to tissue deterioration, protein clumping, and harmful environmental and hereditary factors.(Lepcha et al., 2019a)

Millions of people worldwide are impacted by blindness, a global public health issue that significantly lowers their quality of life and makes it more difficult for them to go about their everyday lives, work, and interact with their communities.(Canatan, 2024) . If quality of life is affected it has negative impact in the community people in context of daily activities.

With surgical intervention, cataracts which are effectively treated and are defined by the clouding of the eye's natural lens can be properly treated, enabling patients to regain their vision and reclaim their independence.(Flessa, 2022).The above conditions are complication stage if not aware in proper time. Every age group people need to be aware of his or her ocular health condition. Cataract affects people of all ages, gender ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

Cataract-related blindness is estimated to affect over 10 million people worldwide, with over 35 million experiencing moderate to severe visual impairment, despite a general drop in prevalence.

(Canatan, 2024). It is also the impact of contribution concerned organization to alleviate blindness but still there is problem which is extra burden in medical intervention.

The World Health Organization states that uncorrected refractive errors and cataracts are the main causes of vision impairment and blindness. Cataracts, on the other hand, account for around 46.53 percent of blindness worldwide, making them the primary cause of curable blindness.(Canatan, 2024). WHO defined about supporting factors for vision problem and its complications about half of the population worldwide.

Currently, explorers have focused on the Disability-Adjusted Life years (DALYs), which are defined as the sum of years lived with disability and years of life lost due to premature death and reflect the difference between the real state of health and the standard condition(Jiang et al., 2023).It is one of the vital indicator for evaluating the impact of health and disease in human population. It determines about the differences between productive and unproductive conditions.

Global burden of cataract

According to a 2019 study, the prevalence rate and DALY rate of cataract-related visual impairment increased significantly during the previous 30 years, with the former rising by 58.45 percent and the latter by 32.18 percent. (Jiang et al., 2023). It can be concluded that a considerable increase in both the occurrence and the overall impact of cataracts on global health during this period.

The 74th World Health Assembly recognized a global target for effective cataract surgical coverage of 30 percent increase by 2030. To achieve this target, they analyzed Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness (RAAB) survey data to establish baseline estimates of ECSC and CSC(McCormick et al., 2022). The assembly has prioritized improving cataract treatment by aiming for a 30 percent increase in effective cataract surgical coverage by 2030, with baseline estimates for this target established through the 2022 RAAB survey data. This illustrates a committed global effort to improve in cataract surgery accessibility and effectiveness.

Despite the fact that cataracts are estimated to be the source of 50 percent of all blindness and 33 percent of visual impairment, most cases can be effectively recovered with cataract surgery, a very straightforward lens replacement technique. Thus, in low- and middle-income countries, cataracts are essentially a medical problem that largely affects the most vulnerable populations, such as those who reside in rural areas, are elderly, are women, or lack literacy.(Flessa, 2022).It is mainly the problem of low and middle level income countries due to illiteracy and low socioeconomic status.

The prevalence of cataract-related blindness in adults 50 years of age and older is lowest in high-income nations like the United States, Norway, and Ireland 17.50 percent, while it is highest in South Asian nations like India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan 63.10 percent. The increased frequency of cataract-related blindness in these low- and middle-income areas is caused by a number of factors, including aging populations, restricted access to eye care services, and socioeconomic inequities(Canatan, 2024). Nepal is also included in among the south Asian countries so the problem of cataract is about of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan due to access of health services and low socioeconomic status of the country.

Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to

- explore the situation of cataract including other ocular health problems within south Asian countries
- determine the surgical coverage and other health care aspects applied by south Asian countries to alleviate the ocular health problems

Methodology

In this study secondary data from different source like google scholar, pub-med, books and journals were taken for the study. The study that was conducted among south Asian countries are source of information. It is narrative review about situation of cataract among south Asian countries.

Different studies about cataract done among these countries were taken for the studies. The burden of cataract from different countries of south Asia are taken for the study. Related books, journal articles, bulletin and review reports were taken as secondary data source. Secondary data including abstract and full text articles were used as from the period of 1998 to 2024.

Results

Afghanistan

According to a cross-sectional study, 8.7 percent of people were blind, 13.9 percent had limited vision, and 22.6 percent had visual impairment. The most common cause 52.8 percent was cataract, which was followed by glaucoma 8.6 percent and uncorrected refractive error 26.9 percent. Visual impairments have been associated with poverty, overweight, hypertension, and illiteracy. Among all majority of the causes are preventable(Amansakhatov et al., 2002) .The most common cause of blindness in research involving 6011 individuals 50 years of age and above was cataract 54 percent, followed by glaucoma 25 percent. Seventy five percent of people had cataract surgery, yet many people, especially those without intraocular lenses, still had vision problems after the procedure. Indifference and waiting for maturity were barriers, underscoring the need for improved surgical criteria and results (Abdianwall & Doğan, 2018). Blindness was reported in 2.4 percent of 3751 persons over 50 in the study, with cataracts accounting for 36.8 percent of cases. There were 2.2 percent, 6.9 percent, and 8.7 percent of people with severe, moderate, and mild visual impairments, respectively. Perceived lack of need 23.7 percent and expense 22.0 percent were barriers to cataract surgery, underscoring the need for improved eye care services (Sapkota et al., 2021).

After examining the three Afghan studies mentioned above, cataracts and other eye health issues were found to be the most frequent causes of blindness. The efforts to prevent and control cataracts including cataract surgery have not yielded much improvement. The prevalence of cataract is approximately 54 percent, which is somewhat lower than the total prevalence among south Asian countries. The overall percentage of cataract in south Asian countries is approximately 67 percent.

Bangladesh

According to a survey, 21.6 percent of adults have impaired vision and 1.5 percent were blind. Refractive error 63.2 percent, conjunctivitis 17.1 percent, and cataract 7.2 percent were the most

prevalent eye problems. While cataracts were less likely with higher education, refractive error was associated with older age, female gender, and employment, underscoring the need for improved access to eye care(Dineen et al., 2003). An analysis of 11,624 individuals over 30 examined the results of cataract surgery. Of the 199 eyes that were operated on, 10 percent had Intracapsular Cataract Extraction and Intraocular Lens (ICCE+IOL) and 88 percent had Intracapsular Cataract Extraction (ICCF) With correction, 30.1 percent of patients had good vision (VA 6/12 or better) after surgery, up to 50.4 percent. ECCE+IOL produced better results than ICCE. Patients who read well performed better. Results from ECCE+IOL operations performed in hospitals were better(R. R. A. Bourne et al., 2003). The overall prevalence of cataract among patients attending the ophthalmology OPD was 19.87 percent. The majority of cataract cases, 50.98 percent, were over 69 years. Most cases, 52.94 percent, were among illiterate and 58.13 percent were female. A significant portion of cases, 72.55 percent, came from rural areas. Among cataract cases, 9.8 percent had diabetes. The study indicates a significant improvement in visual acuity following cataract surgery, although common post-operative complications included astigmatism and posterior capsular opacification(Dineen et al., 2003). Interviews, visual acuity testing, autorefraction, and optic disc examination were employed in research of 12,782 persons among 30 years of age or older. Out of the 11,624 people who were screened 13.8 percent had low vision (<6/12 VA) and 1.53 percent were bilaterally blind. Refractive error 18.7 percent, cataracts 74.2 percent, and macular degeneration 1.9 percent, were the primary causes of low vision. Additionally, the primary cause of bilateral blindness 79.6 percent was cataracts. Based mostly on curable cataracts, the study approximates 650,000 blind persons in Bangladesh, underscoring the necessity of a national plan for eye care(Hossain et al., 2021) .

According to research on eye health in Bangladesh, 26 percent of adults have vision impairments, primarily from cataracts, and 1 percent of adults are blind. Although cataract surgery is a vision-improving procedure, its increased incidence in rural, illiterate, and elderly populations emphasizes the need for specialist eye care services. In order to treat treatable cataracts and enhance general eye health, the study recommends creating a national plan for eye care.

Bhutan

In this country, 1 percent of people are affected with bilateral blindness; rates are higher in women and rural areas. The majority of blindness (53.8 percent) is caused by untreated cataracts, and 46.7 percent of early visual impairment is caused by untreated refractive issues. Although the success rate of cataract surgery is 67.3 percent, accessibility is still a significant problem. Since 2009, the percentage of blind people has decreased to 1.0 percent, indicating a need for ongoing measures to maintain eye health (Lepcha et al., 2019a) . A statewide RAAB survey (2018) found that the country's blindness rate decreased by 33 percent between 2009 and 2018, fulfilling the goals of the WHO's global action plan for eye health. The percentage of patients who had cataract surgery increased from 72.7 percent to 86.1 percent, with 67.3 percent of patients experiencing good visual results (VA >6/18). Cataract blindness declined from 0.7 percent to 0.4 percent. Untreated cataracts and corneal opacities have decreased dramatically, and conjunctivitis is no longer a serious health concern. The introduction of intraocular lenses (IOLs) and manual small-incision cataract surgery has transformed the management of cataracts. This advancement has been bolstered by the hiring of international specialists in the field of eye care and the development of local eye care facilities(Lepcha et al., 2019b).

The WHO's eye health targets have been significantly attained In Bhutan as evidenced by the RAAB survey (2018). Bilateral blindness dropped to 1.0 percent of the population, and both the coverage of cataract surgery and the quality of the visual outcomes improved significantly. Cataract management

has been greatly improved by the decrease in untreated cataracts and corneal opacities, as well as by the use of sophisticated cataract surgery procedures and the hiring of foreign eye specialists. Even with these developments, accessibility problems still need to be solved in order to further reduce blindness, especially in rural and female populations.

India

The average corneal astigmatism of 3,597 patients undergoing cataract surgery in North India between 2010 and 2017 was 1.17 D. Of these, 15.59 percent had oblique astigmatism, 51.72 percent against the rule, and 29.83 percent with the rule. With age, astigmatism changed from being in favor of the rule to being against it. Of the patients, 40.49 percent required toric intraocular lenses, and the majority 56.69 percent had astigmatism less than 1.0 D (Sharma et al., 2021). According to research conducted in 2021–2022 on 1,472 patients, the primary reasons why severe cataract surgeries were postponed were: inability to obtain eye care 44.2 percent; ignorance of elective procedures 42.6 percent; lack of public transportation 37 percent; fear of COVID-19 23.4 percent and waiting for outreach camps 20.4 percent. More than half struggled with daily chores, which led to a backlog of complex cases and emphasized the importance of taking preventative measures(Vedachalam et.al., 2022). Among all, 98.5 percent of the 192 cataract patients were aware of their ailment, and 57.6 percent were aware that surgery was a possible course of treatment. Only half knew that surgery meant a prosthetic lens would need to be inserted. For 89.2 percent, the high cost was an issue, and for 31.5 percent, it was unaffordable. Despite a high level of awareness of the disease, the main hurdles were fear of discomfort 65.5 percent and insufficient accessibility 98 percent(Gupta, 2022). In India, preventable blindness is a serious health concern. According to a 2015–19 survey of adults over 50, there were 26.68 percent vision impairment cases and 1.99 percent blindness cases. Blindness was associated with old age and ignorance. The most common cause 66.2 percent was cataracts, which were followed by glaucoma and other conditions. The majority of cases of blindness 92.9 percent and visual impairment 97.4 percent were avoidable, highlighting the need for better eye care(Vashist et al., 2022). The results of cataract surgery at secondary and tertiary centers were examined in a 2021 study. Out of 32,302 surgeries, the tertiary center handled 27,945 cases, including more complicated cases with higher rates of complications, while the secondary center completed 4,357 surgeries. The tertiary center exhibited reduced success rates (BCVA $\geq 6/12$) for Manual Small Incision Cataract Surgery MSICS and phacoemulsification, although fulfilling WHO criteria. For MSICS outcomes at the post-secondary level to improve, further study is required(Gunasekaran et al., 2023) (Ind. 5). In this study of 52,380 Indians over 50, cataracts were discovered in 14.85 percent of the participants. Of those who had surgery 76.95 percent another 23 percent still required it. Age-specific surgery rates were 24.62 percent for people 50–60 years old and 78.30 percent for those 66–80 years old. Unmet needs were highest among the poorest. Even though blindness prevention has advanced, more work needs to be done to assist the underprivileged(Das et al., 2024).

In India, cataracts continue to be a leading cause of blindness, particularly in the elderly and underprivileged. Access to cataract surgery has been successfully increased, but COVID-19 has made hurdles like cost, accessibility, and awareness worse. It is imperative to focus on high-need populations, handle expenses, and improve access to eye care in order to lower the rate of blindness caused by cataracts.

Maldives

The most prevalent eye conditions in the nation were glaucoma, pterygium, cataract, and refractive errors. According to local specialists, ocular toxoplasmosis is a major cause of permanent eyesight

loss in people aged 10-45. About 3.03 percent of individuals had toxoplasmosis effects, according to a 2009 screening. Glaucoma, ocular trauma, infections, and diabetic retinopathy are further problems. Although there is little information on eye conditions, hospital records indicate that 46 percent of blindness is caused by cataracts. The most prevalent procedures performed at IGMH between 2003 and 2006 were cataracts, which were followed by pterygium and lid surgeries. Twenty to twenty-five percent of outpatient patients are affected by refractive problems (Ministry of Health and Planning: Center for community health and disease control, 2010).

The standardized prevalence of blindness by age and sex was 2 percent. The most common cause of blindness 51.4 percent and visual impairment 50.9 percent was cataracts and uncorrected refractive error, respectively. Blindness was more common in women 16.3 percent and older age groups. 86 percent of cataract-blind eyes and 93.5 percent of cataract-blind individuals had cataract surgery. In eyes with cataract surgery, the best corrected visual acuity was 76.6 percent, and the median visual result was 67.9 percent. 48.1 percent of participants in this study had undergone cataract surgery in nearby nations. Two significant reasons for not utilizing the services were "treatment deferred" 33.3 percent and "did not feel the need" 29.7 percent (Thoufeeq et al., 2018).

The primary causes of vision problems include pterygium, cataracts, glaucoma, and refractive errors; cataracts account for the majority of blindness. The age range affected by ocular toxoplasmosis is 10-45. Improved records of eye health are required. Pterygium and lid operations are frequently combined with cataract surgery. Refractive issues are also important; they need for targeted treatments and enhanced data collection.

Nepal

In Bhaktapur, cataracts and glaucoma are the two main causes of blindness, with cataracts being the most prevalent. Many people have undergone cataract surgery, however not everyone is aware of these issues with the eyes. Just 2.4 percent knew about glaucoma, and 6.7 percent knew about cataracts. More efforts are needed to address refractive defects and raise public awareness of these illnesses. (S. S. Thapa et al., 2011). Even though cataract surgery is available in rural Nepal, many people have financial difficulties; only 45.5 percent of patients, more males than women, agree to have the procedure. Individuals who are blind are more inclined to agree to medical procedures.

After counseling, just 13 percent of non-acceptors accepted, citing anxiety, lack of time, and financial issues. In medical practice, a comprehensive strategy taking into account social, cultural, and economic variables is required (Snellingen et al., 1998). This study concentrated on low vision and blindness among adults 60 years of age and older. Following rectification, the percentages of blind people and those with limited eyesight among 2100 people rose to 1.61 percent and 22.92 percent, respectively. The chance of developing visual impairment increased dramatically with age. The majority of blindness 46.66 percent and decreased vision 68.07 percent were caused by retinal disorders. Visual impairment has been connected to illiteracy. In this population, screening and prompt intervention can lessen visual impairment (Thapa et al., 2018).

A study conducted in Nepal examined the quality of cataract surgery at three Primary Eye Care Centers (PECCs) and the base hospital, PLLEH. Post-surgery, 80 percent of 1038 patients had satisfactory vision; however, outcomes differed according to location, with Rampur showing the best results and Arghakhanchi the worst. The cost of surgery varied from PLLEH (\$25) to Rampur (\$62). Notwithstanding differences, PECCs can provide better patient selection together with high-quality, reasonably priced cataract surgery (Manandhar et al., 2018). According to a study, cataracts

are the primary cause of blindness in the districts of Morang and Sunsari. Treatment was delayed due to budgetary restrictions and lack of awareness. Compared to women, men were more likely to seek treatment for bilateral blindness. Reducing blindness rates in these locations could involve lowering medical expenses, increasing public awareness, and enhancing women's access to surgery(Sheng et al., 2021) . A study conducted in tertiary eye hospital in six-month research, in which 6,916 patients, of whom 54.66 percent were female who received free eye care. Of the Among 1,776 cases, 1,706 patients selected for cataract surgery. With an average age of 60.84 years, women made up 52 percent of cataract cases, despite the fact that there were fewer healthcare facilities. To reduce blindness, free eye camps for the underprivileged, women, and the elderly are crucial. Women's access to cataract surgery has to be increased through gender-sensitive strategies (Gupta et al., 2023).

Though glaucoma is also a major factor in some area, cataracts are the primary cause of blindness. The percentage of people who are aware of glaucoma or cataracts is very low. Financial constraints prevent more women from seeking cataract surgery in rural Nepal. It is imperative to tackle financial and awareness impediments. Studies also stress the significance of early intervention and screening to lessen vision impairment. The quality of cataract surgery differs depending on where you live, however PECCs provide affordable solutions. Lastly, free eye camps are crucial to lowering the rate of blindness, particularly among the elderly and female population.

Pakistan

Bilateral cataract blindness was seen in 4.8 percent of cases. Bilateral cataract blindness was 2.1 times more common in women than in men 7.1 percent vs. 3.4 percent. However, women were less likely than men to have cataract surgery covered. 43.1 percent of eyes with cataract surgery had a VA <6/60, indicating poor overall quality of prior cataract surgery. Of those with bilateral cataract blindness, 73.3 percent said they were unable to have cataract surgery because they could not afford the expense(K M Anjum, 2006c).

In order to determine if cataract procedures conducted between January 2009 and June 2011 complied with WHO recommendations, this study assessed that compliance. Out of 495 procedures, 58 percent of the patients were female. After six to eight weeks from surgery, 93.3 percent of patients had good vision, 4.4 percent had results that were unclear, and 2.2 percent had poor results. Ninety-three percent of below-normal results were caused by pre-existing conditions. The study demonstrated how successful phacoemulsification combined with intraocular lens implantation is in producing favorable visual results(Hashmi et al., 2013). This study looked at the results of cataract surgery among 16,507 people over 30 in Pakistan. Of the 1,788 eyes that were operated upon, 61 Percent had Intracapsular Contract Extraction (ICCE) and 34 percent had Extracapsular Contract Extraction with Intra Ocular Len (ECCE+IOL). After surgery, only 15.4 percent of patients had good vision. Poor results were a result of surgical complications, concurrent diseases, and refractive defects. Poorer eyesight was linked to factors including eye camp surgery, ICCE, living in a rural area, being a woman, and illiteracy. The significance of refractive correction and enhancing surgical quality is emphasized in the study(Bourne et al., 2007). This study looked at the causes of cataracts in children under the age of fifteen, both acquired and congenital. Out of the 192 patients, 166 had congenital cataracts and 26 had acquired ones. The majority of congenital instances were bilateral, with 36.74 percent being inherited and 40.96 percent having unknown etiology. Most cases of acquired cataracts were unilateral. Among the risk variables mentioned were consanguineous marriages and delayed hospital presentations(Irshad, 2021). The cataract surgical rate (CSR), as reported by a recent survey commissioned by Pakistan's Ministry of National Health Services, was

5307, about twice as high as the 2002 rate. Compared to men, women received more surgeries: 63.9 percent used phacoemulsification, and 98.9 percent used intraocular lenses. NGOs and the commercial sector performed the majority of the procedures. An annual total of 1,840,000 procedures are required to achieve a CSR of 7500+ by 2030. By 2030, if present trends continue, the CSR will drop to 4628(Khan et.al, 2022). The purpose of this study was to investigate the role that genetics in common eye problems. Blood samples from 100 of the 256 patients were analyzed to look for genetic abnormalities linked to cataracts. A silent mutation in the CRYAA gene with little effect on the structure of the gene or protein was found through analysis. It was decided that environmental influences had greater sway than hereditary ones. In order to gain a deeper understanding of eye illnesses in Pakistan, the study recommends broadening the research population(Khan, 2022).

Research conducted in Pakistan evaluated the causes, effects, and genetic makeup of cataract surgery in children. Both phacoemulsification and intraocular lens implantation yielded positive outcomes. The number of cataract procedures rose, and more women had them. The significance of environmental influences is suggested by the limited role that genetics play in eye disorders. It is advised to expand the research population in order to gain deeper insights.

Sri-Lanka

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the prevalence of cataracts among the elderly and evaluate their effect on life quality. Age, gender, and socioeconomic level were found to be risk factors. The NEI-VFQ's validation revealed a lower quality of life brought on by cataracts, which influenced public health initiatives for treatment and prevention(Nanayakkara, 2009). The purpose of the study in Kandy, was to ascertain the prevalence of cataracts and risk factors in persons 40 years of age and older. More than 33 percent of subjects had various types of cataracts. There was inconclusive evidence linking smoking, gender, and outdoor work to cataracts; nevertheless, poorer education levels and shorter stature were connected to an increased risk. It is necessary to conduct more research to determine how height and education affect the risk of cataracts(Athanasiov et al., 2010) . The Visual Functions (VF) and Quality of Life (QOL) subscales showed acceptable internal consistency and reliability, according to the study. People who are blind had lower VF/QOL scores and more difficulty completing tasks. Completing VF tasks and QOL categories was difficult for people with visual impairments associated to cataracts. The results of VF/QOL following cataract surgery were improved, demonstrating the value of blindness management programs in monitoring functional gain as reported by patients(Murthy et al., 2018). Even though there are free treatments accessible for cataract patients, a lot of older people with cataracts don't use these services because of misconceptions, financial limitations, and lack of awareness. These obstacles were identified in a study including 379 adults over 60, emphasizing the necessity of removing them in order to raise the prevalence of cataract surgery and enhance public health initiatives(Nishad et al., 2019). Disparities in cataract blindness were seen among married women living in rural regions, especially widows, according to a national blindness survey conducted in Sri Lanka. Even though they made up only 18 percent of the population, they were responsible for 54 percent of cataract-related blindness. For this particular demographic, there were notable deficiencies in the quality of care and accessibility to services (Jacqueline, Ramke Fatima, 2017). Of the 5,779 individuals who were screened, 345 had had cataract surgery in one or both of their eyes (486 eyes). Overall, the prevalence of cataract surgery was high 85.4 percent for vision $<3/60$; 79.1 percent for vision $<6/60$, but it was significantly higher among younger age groups, urban dwellers and those with higher socioeconomic status. In Uva Province, coverage was 60 percent, whereas in Southern Province, it was 100 percent(Murthy et al., 2018).

Research conducted in Sri Lanka revealed that cataracts are common among the elderly and have an effect on life quality. Age, gender, and socioeconomic position are examples of risk variables. The validation of the NEI-VFQ indicated that cataracts reduced life quality, which calls for more effective public health initiatives. Despite the availability of free treatments, seniors specially widow still face obstacles to receiving cataract surgery. Married rural women showed differences in cataract blindness, highlighting the need for better access to care.

Table 1

Overall situation of Cataract and Surgical Intervention

Country	Survey year	Inv. Population	Cataract %	Cataract surgical coverage %
Afghanistan	2021	50+ yrs	36.8	Not specified
Bangladesh	2021	30+ yrs	18.7	Not specified
Bhutan	2019	General	0.4	67.3
India	2015-19	50+ yrs	14.85	76.95
Maldives	2018	50+ yrs	51.4	48
Nepal	2023	60+ yrs	24.66	100
Pakistan	2022	50+	4.8	73.3
Srilanka	2019	+40 yrs	>33	79-83

The information presented above regarding South Asian nations describes the prevalence of cataracts and the coverage of surgical interventions based on data from several study sources carried out at various points in time. The Maldives has the highest prevalence of cataracts among all countries, whereas Bhutan has the lowest. The majority of the countries chose people over 50, but few chose people 30 or 40 years old. Unlike surgical intervention, which has no particular data in two nations, Nepal's study has full coverage, with the highest range of coverage encompassing all countries except the Maldives. It can be concluded that the majority of countries need to improve the coverage of surgical interventions and run awareness campaigns.

Conclusion

In the majority of south Asian nations, cataracts are the most common cause of morbidity among all eye health issues. In isolated places, cataract surgery is not accessible, especially for the female population. Financial difficulties and a lack of broad public understanding of treatment options for cataracts, particularly for women and widows, are barriers to cataract surgery. Environmental factors significantly contribute to cataract development, even though hereditary factors are the primary cause of cataracts. Therefore, the government health sector needs to focus on improving access to eye care services including cataract surgery in order to prevent and control cataracts and other ocular diseases. All regions of the nation should have access to cataract surgery and treatment, with a focus on strengthening the PHCC's ability to address these issues.

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Received : 2024/12/13

Revision received : 2024/12/15

Accepted : 2024/12/20

Household Waste Management in Siddharthanagar Municipality: Practices, Challenges, and Solutions

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Abstract

This study analyzes household waste management practices in Siddharthanagar Municipality, Rupandehi District, Nepal. Using a mixed-method, cross-sectional design, data were collected from 174 households through questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The findings show challenges such as poor infrastructure, lack of equipment, and limited public awareness. The study emphasizes the need for collaboration between local governments and communities. It recommends awareness programs, improved waste collection systems, and community involvement to promote effective and sustainable waste management and reduce landfill waste in rural municipalities.

Keywords: household, waste management, municipality, practices

Introduction

Managing waste in municipal regions poses substantial difficulties for governments in developing countries (Han et al., 2018). Local municipalities often operate with restricted budgets, which are particularly constrained in rural and remote locations (Mihai&Taherzadeh, 2017). Waste collection efforts are hindered by insufficient equipment, infrastructure, and treatment facilities, along with limited access to waste processing centers (Hidalgo et al., 2017). Additionally, disparities in waste management infrastructure across Nepal arise from historical politico-socio-economic inequalities (NepalEconomicForum, 2024). These challenges contribute to issues like littering and illegal dumping, which differ in terms of waste volume and type—littering involves small items such as candy wrappers and plastic cups, while dumping entails large or bulky waste like old furniture and household items.

Waste includes any material that an owner wishes to discard, whether or not it can be reused, recycled, or recovered. Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) primarily consists of household waste, along with some commercial waste. Household waste is generated through activities such as cooking, cleaning, gardening, and product disposal, including items like old clothing, furniture, appliances, paper, and packaging materials (Viljoen et al., 2021). Managing MSW involves planning, financing, and implementing waste control programs that regulate waste generation, storage, collection, transportation, and environmentally responsible disposal (Viljoen et al., 2021).

A key objective in waste management is shifting from landfill-based disposal to resource recovery solutions, which prioritize waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were established as a result of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012 and the UN General Assembly in September 2014. In the SDGs, 17 goals were set up for reducing poverty, enhancing social equality, decreasing pollution levels, and making cities more livable (UN, 2016). To achieve sustainability, the Global Waste Management Goals include ensuring affordable, secure, and accessible solid waste collection services; preventing open burning and dumping; and managing environmentally sound WM by 2030 (Ferronato& Torretta, 2019; Sharma et al., 2021). Nepal is committed to the current global initiative as a member of the UN (NPC, 2017).

Nepal's National Development Plan (NDP) aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) (UN Nepal, n.d.). Progress in health initiatives, such as reducing the maternal mortality rate from 539 per 100,000 live births in 1996 to 151 per 100,000 live births in 2021, highlights the country's commitment to sustainability. Additionally, policies such as the Basic Health Service Package (BHSP) have enhanced healthcare accessibility and equity. Urban sustainability goals have been incorporated into Nepal's 15th Development Plan (2019/20–2023/24) and the 25-Year Long-Term Vision 2100, reflecting a commitment to public health and sustainable urban development.

Effective municipal waste management is closely linked to proper household waste handling (Birhanu&Berisa, 2015). Household waste management practices, such as reuse, recycling, and composting, are crucial for sustainability. However, in rural communities, separation-at-source programs are generally absent due to inadequate facilities (Wang et al., 2018). This underscores that waste management is not solely the responsibility of municipalities but also requires active household participation.

This study focuses on examining the unique context of Household waste management in Siddharthanagar municipality. It investigates household waste management practices, policies and challenges specific to the area. It identifies challenges such as inadequate garbage collection systems, a lack of public awareness, and financial limitations. In addition, it also provides valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers by addressing these challenges and proposing recommendations and solutions to improve Household waste management in Siddharthanagar Municipality. The study aims to suggest sustainable and efficient household waste management strategies for the benefit of the municipality's residents and the environment. The study objectives include:

- Examining household waste management practices.
- Identifying challenges households face in waste disposal.
- Exploring ways in which municipalities can support effective waste management.
- Providing policy recommendations for a more sustainable household waste management system.

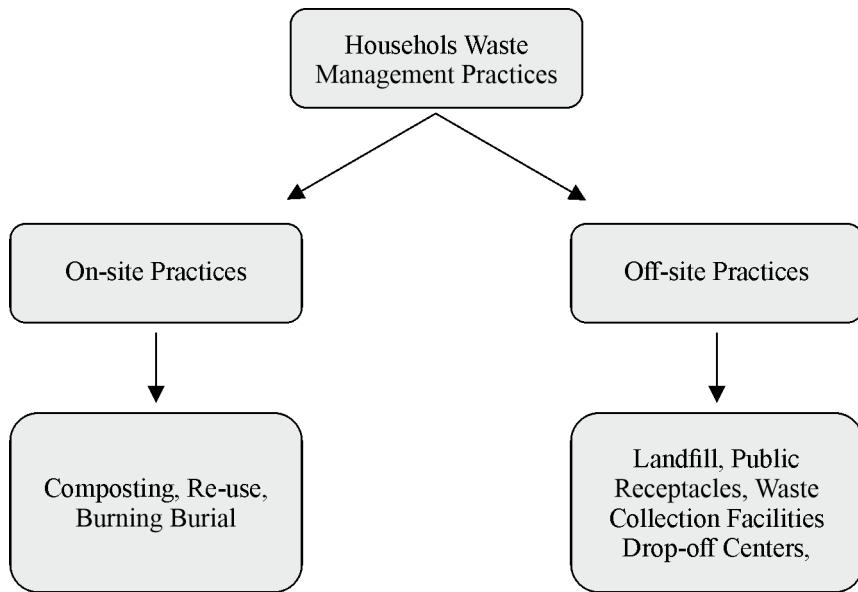
Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

The conceptual framework and related concepts discussed are applied in the context of a rural, remote area where the management of waste is more challenging than in urban areas. The literature supporting the conceptual framework is summarised in two major categories, namely on-site and off-site household waste management practices.

Concept of Household Waste Management

The government's new waste management approach sees waste as a valuable resource and emphasises strategies, such as reducing, re-using, and recycling waste (Nepal et al., 2023). The types of solid waste generated by households vary according to economic circumstances, seasons, as well as the demographic landscape and location of the areas (Birhanu&Berisa, 2015). In higher-income areas, for example, more inorganic waste is generated whereas in low-income areas more organic waste is produced. The population density and socio-cultural, as well as seasonal, factors (e.g., fluctuations in garden waste) affect waste volumes (Birhanu & Berisa, 2015).

This study follows the conceptual framework of Ferrara (2008) in which the waste/recyclables disposal practices available to households are on-site, off-site, and curb- side waste disposal. These two categories of household waste management are depicted in Figure 1.



On-site household waste management entails household composting, recycling, re- use, and burning or burying of waste in their own yards (Ferrara, 2008). Off-site household waste management refers to disposal at a landfill or in public receptacles, donations, or delivery of separated recyclablestodrop-offcentres (Ferrara, 2008). Off-site waste/recyclablesdisposalalso includes 'conventional' environmentallyunfriendlywastedisposalpractices(wang et al., 2018; Abel, 2014; Comerford et al., 2018; Kawamoto&Urashima, 2006; Momoh et al., 2010; Sasao, 2016), such as open-burning and the dumping of waste in uncontrolled environments (for in- stance, on streets, in empty spaces, and on riverbanks). The latter practices pollute the environment, pose community health risks, and involve costly clean-ups of such sites by the local government (Matsumoto&Takeuchi, 2011).

Literature Overview and Empirical Evidence

On-Site Household Waste Management

On-site household waste management refers to the practices households undertake to manage their waste within their own premises, aiming to reduce reliance on municipal waste services (Adhikari, Barrington, & Martinez, 2010). Organic waste can be composted at residential, community, and municipal levels. In developing countries, residential composting works well while high failure rates are reported for composting at municipal level (Birhanu & Berisa, 2015). Reasons provided for the failures at municipal level include high operational, management, and transportation costs, the poor quality of products received due to improper waste sorting, and poor understanding of the composting process. Evidence recorded by Ziraba et al. (2016) shows that waste sorting is rare or absent in most developing countries, making recycling or composting difficult. Hidalgo (2015) also found that the habits of rural populations to use biodegradable material as feed for animals

complicate centralised composting. Household and community level composting work best in isolated rural areas (Hidalgo et al., 2017; Sasao, 2016). Using organic materials as compost (plant nutrients) at the residential level can benefit households.

To reuse waste, it must be cleaned and used in its original form repeatedly for the same or a new purpose (e.g., bottles, clothes, and books) (Birhanu & Berisa, 2015). Rural households, especially in low- and middle-income countries, tend to re-use much waste, such as dung, crop residues, wood, sawdust, paper, and cardboard as an energy or heating source (Mihai & Taherzadeh, 2017). Food waste, such as meat and bones, is re-used for animal feed.

The re-use of recyclables is preferable over composting and recycling as it reduces pollution, decreases natural resource use, and saves the energy costs involved with producing new products from recyclables (Birhanu & Berisa, 2015). Re-using, re-distributing, and/or re-manufacturing strategies are the preferred approaches in a circular economy "as they are less costly in the long-run as repairing a product made to last is always less expensive than producing it from scratch" (Lemille, 2019).

Off-Site Household Waste Management

Off-site household waste management refers to the process where waste generated by households is collected and transported to locations outside the residential premises for treatment, recycling, or disposal. This typically involves municipal waste collection services and external facilities such as landfills, incinerators, or recycling plants (Adhikari, 2010). Serret and Ferrara (2008) also noted that access to drop-off recycling facilities increases the recycling efforts of households. However, according to Jenkins' (Jenkins et al., 2003) study in the United States of America, it does not hold for all types of recyclables.

Many other factors also play a role in the success of environmentally friendly off-site household waste management. Wang, Chen, Reisner, and Liu (2018), for example, stress the importance of multiple collection points close to residences to ensure proper waste disposal. These authors, as well as Abel (2014) and Niyobuhungiro and Schenck (2020), found that insufficient waste collection facilities in rural, remote and under- developed areas will increase the probability of dumping in open areas; they also point out that a lack of information is a concern. When people are not aware of the location of the nearest landfills or waste collection facilities the likelihood of dumping and littering increases. Both drop-off facilities (off-site waste management) and curb-side recycling programs (curb-side waste management) were found to reduce the time and storage costs of recycling. However, curb-side recycling programs increase recycling rates more due to their lower transport cost for the households (Fischer et al., 2013; Serret & Ferrara, 2008). Door-to-door collection of recyclables has been proven to achieve the best results in rural communities (Hidalgo et al., 2017).

Environmentally unfriendly off-site waste management practices of households, including burning practices, open-dumping, and littering, pose challenges to local authorities across countries, cultures, and languages as seen by studies in developed countries, such as Japan (Kawamoto & Urashima, 2006; Sasao, 2016) and Australia (Comerford et al., 2018), and developing countries, such as China (Wang et al., 2018), South Africa (Abel, 2014), and Nigeria (Momoh et al., 2010). In developing countries, agricultural, as well as household waste is often disposed of through open burning practices and open dumping (Mihai & Taherzadeh, 2017; UNEP, 2009). Rural residents in developing countries usually do not follow recommended waste collection practices out of habit or due to a lack of facilities and knowledge of these practices (Wang et al., 2018).

Poor waste management infrastructure and facilities, low quality of waste management services,

lack of funds, poor environmental awareness, limited markets for recycled materials, and the lack of separation of waste at source recycling programs contribute to the dumping of waste (Ichinose & Yamamoto, 2011). Remote and rural areas are often characterized by poorly managed domestic waste with inadequate waste management facilities and infrastructure (Apostel & Mihai, 2012). This, in turn, leads to higher levels of littering and the illegal dumping, burying, burning, storing, and uncontrolled abandoning of waste and unused resources (Lamasanu & Mihai, 2015).

In order to move towards a more holistic and community-driven waste management strategy at the municipal level, which emphasizes the importance of resource conservation, enhanced recycling initiatives, and the sustainable re-use of materials, it is crucial to first gain a thorough understanding of the existing waste management practices followed by households. Additionally, it is essential to identify and analyze the specific barriers and challenges that households face in effectively managing their waste. Understanding these dynamics is key to designing policies and interventions that encourage greater community involvement and ensure that waste management processes are more efficient, equitable, and environmentally sustainable for all stakeholders involved.

Materials and Methods

Research Context

The data for this study were collected in October 2024 in Siddharthanagar Municipality, using a sample of 174 households. During the data collection period, information was gathered on various aspects of waste management and disposal practices among different groups, including street traders, businesses, and households. However, this study specifically focuses on the waste disposal practices of households and the challenges they face in this context. Understanding household waste disposal behavior is crucial for developing effective and sustainable municipal solid waste management strategies, as households are one of the primary sources of urban waste. The findings of this research can provide valuable insights for local policymakers, municipal authorities, and environmental planners to design targeted interventions that address existing gaps, improve community awareness, and promote responsible waste management practices.

Research Design

A cross-sectional research design was used, and the data were collected at a given point in time. To estimate the prevalence of certain behaviours amongst a research population, a cross-sectional study is suitable (Mann, 2003; Sedgwick, 2014). Cross-sectional studies help to determine the prevalence of the aspects under investigation without the distinction between cause and effect, but rather to infer causation (Mann, 2003).

Research Population

The research population consists of the households in Siddharthanagar Municipality of Rupandehi district. The town has a total population of 9680 people (4634 males and 5046 females) and approximately 2509 households (Central Bureau of Statistics, n.d.). A sample of 174 households was interviewed. A non-probability sampling method was used in the form of convenience sampling (Etikan et al., 2016) to gather primary data from the representatives of all households. The findings also include researchers' observations and information gathered from key informants in the town.

Data Collection

A mixed method research methodology was used. A questionnaire with qualitative (open-ended) and quantitative (closed) questions was used as the data collection tool. Open-ended questions were used to yield in-depth and additional data and information to complement the quantitative data. The qualitative information can also be used to explain the quantitative data. The data collection was managed by the researchers who also participated in the collection of data, assisted by a team of well-trained field workers who have previous experience in data collection of this nature. Ethical clearance for the project was obtained and adhered to in the study, and the municipality's permission was granted for the project.

Data Analysis

The data were captured and analysed in Excel and STATA version 15. The analyses include descriptive results with frequencies, percentages, means, and medians, as well as thematic tables and qualitative responses from the respondents. The thematic analysis was used to identify the challenges that households experience with their waste management activities and ways in which the municipality can encourage households to keep the town clean. The validity of the data was assured by restricting the household representatives' age to 18 and older and by using well-trained field workers to ensure an accurate representation of the households' responses by the persons interviewed.

Findings

The findings of the study were presented according to the objectives of the study. The first section presents the personal background of the respondents and household characteristics. The second section provides the waste management and waste disposal practices of the households according to the conceptual framework followed by the challenges experienced by households regarding their waste management. The environmentally unfriendly waste disposal practices will be outlined. The paper will end with a discussion of the results, as well as policy recommendations towards a more sustainable household waste management system in the area.

Respondents' Personal Background and Household Characteristics

The demographic background of the respondents and the characteristics of their households are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1:

Respondents' Personal Background and Household Characteristics (N = 174)

Category	Sub-category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	98	56.3%
	Female	74	42.5%
Age Category	18 to 24 years	25	14.4%
	25 to 34 years	58	33.3%
	35 to 44 years	42	24.1%
	45 to 54 years	28	16.1%

	55+ years	21	12.1%
Family Size	1 to 2 members	39	22.4%
	3 to 5 members	94	54.0%
	More than 5 members	41	23.6%
Occupation	Government employee	30	17.24%
	Private sector employee	45	25.86%
	Self-employed/Business	35	20.11%
	Student	25	14.37%
	Retired	10	5.75%
	Unemployed	29	16.67%
Income Range (Monthly)	Below Rs.15000	60	34.48%
	Rs.15000-Rs.25000	50	28.74%
	Rs.25000-Rs.35000	40	22.99%
	Rs.35000-Rs.45000	15	8.62%
	Above Rs.45000	9	5.17%
Educational Qualification	Primary education	23	13.2%
	Secondary education	47	27.0%
	Bachelor's degree	62	35.6%
	Master's degree or higher	32	18.4%
Housing Status	Owned	118	67.8%
	Rented	56	32.2%
Dwelling Type	Single-family house	91	52.3%
	Multi-family house	30	17.2%
	Other (Shared, informal)	7	4.0%

The table presents the personal and household characteristics of 174 respondents. A majority of respondents are male (56.3%), with 42.5% being female. The age distribution shows that 33.3% are aged 25 to 34 years, followed by 24.1% in the 35 to 44 age group. Most respondents (54.0%) live in families with 3 to 5 members, and 22.4% live in smaller households with 1 to 2 members. In terms of occupation, private sector employees make up the largest group (26.4%), followed by government employees (19.5%) and self-employed individuals (21.3%). The majority (52.9%) of respondents earn between Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 25,000 monthly, while 27.6% earn below Rs. 15,000. Educationally, most respondents hold a Bachelor's degree (35.6%), with 27.0% having completed secondary education. The majority of respondents own their homes (67.8%), with 32.2% renting. Most live in single-family houses (52.3%), followed by 17.2% in multi-family houses.

Types of Waste

Waste is any material that is discarded after primary use or is no longer useful. It can be classified

into different categories based on its origin, composition, and environmental impact. The major types of waste include solid waste, liquid waste, organic waste, inorganic waste, hazardous waste, e-waste, biomedical waste, construction and demolition waste, radioactive waste, industrial waste and agricultural waste.

Table 2:

Types of Waste

Waste Type	Number of Respondents (N)	Percentage (%)
Food waste	140	80.5%
Plastic waste	160	91.9%
Paper waste	120	69.0%
Glass waste	80	46.0%
Textile waste	95	54.6%
Electronics	65	37.4%
Metal waste	55	31.6%
Hazardous waste	30	17.2%
Yard waste	100	57.5%

The survey indicates the most common types of waste generated by households. Plastic waste is the most prevalent, with 91.9% of respondents reporting its occurrence. Food waste follows closely at 80.5%, reflecting its significant presence in households. Paper waste is also common, with 69.0% of respondents disposing of it. Other types include textile waste (54.6%), yard waste (57.5%), and glass waste (46.0%). Electronics waste is reported by 37.4% of respondents, while metal waste is less common at 31.6%. Hazardous waste is the least reported, with only 17.2% of respondents indicating its disposal. This highlights that plastic and food waste are the dominant waste types, while hazardous and metal waste are less frequently encountered.

Person(s) primarily responsible for waste management

Table 3 provides a summary of the person(s) primarily responsible for the waste management of their household.

Table 3:

Person(s) primarily responsible for the waste management

Disposer	Responses (N, %)
a. Mother/Wife	78 (44.8%)
b. Father/Husband	52 (29.9%)
c. Child/Children	28 (16.1%)
d. Grandparents	12 (6.9%)
e. Servant	4 (2.3%)

The survey reveals that waste disposal in households is primarily handled by the mother or wife, with 44.8% of respondents reporting that they are responsible. The father or husband follows closely

at 29.9%, while children contribute to waste disposal in 16.1% of cases. A smaller percentage of respondents (6.9%) mentioned that grandparents take on the task. Only 2.3% of households employ servants for waste disposal, highlighting that the responsibility is largely managed by family members rather than external help. This distribution suggests that waste disposal is predominantly seen as a household duty, with the mother or wife taking on the largest share of this responsibility.

Household Solid Waste Management Practices

As illustrated in Table 4, most of the household very few households make use of on-site (composting and re-use) waste management and disposal practices whereas. Food waste is the most common waste product that is re-used as animal feed (in this case, dogs) by 32.4% of households, 6% re-use their paper, whereas only one household re-uses plastic products and another separates its food waste for making compost.

Table 4:

Household Solid Waste Management Practices (N = 174)

Waste Type	Compost (N, %)	Re-use (N, %)	Burn (N, %)	Bury (N, %)	Landfills (N, %)	Public Receptacles (N, %)	Road-side area (N, %)	Door-to-Door Collectors (N, %)
Food Waste	50 (29%)	30 (17%)	40 (23%)	20 (11%)	15 (9%)	10 (6%)	5 (3%)	14 (8%)
Textile (Clothes)	10 (6%)	70 (40%)	5 (3%)	15 (9%)	10 (6%)	20 (11%)	5 (3%)	9 (5%)
Glass Waste	8 (5%)	15 (9%)	2 (1%)	4 (2%)	20 (12%)	25 (14%)	8 (5%)	15 (9%)
Plastic Waste	30 (17%)	25 (14%)	50 (29%)	10 (6%)	5 (3%)	10 (6%)	40 (23%)	25 (14%)
Paper Waste	20 (11%)	40 (23%)	10 (6%)	5 (3%)	5 (3%)	25 (14%)	10 (6%)	9 (5%)
Electronics	0 (0%)	15 (9%)	3 (2%)	10 (6%)	50 (29%)	5 (3%)	0 (0%)	5 (3%)
Batteries	2 (1%)	5 (3%)	8 (5%)	0 (0%)	50 (29%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table reveals diverse waste management practices across different types of waste. For food waste, the majority of respondents (29%) compost, but a significant number still burn (23%) or bury (11%) it, indicating room for improvement in sustainable practices. Textile waste is mainly reused by 40% of respondents, suggesting a shift toward more sustainable disposal, while 11% place it in public receptacles and a smaller percentage bury or compost it. In the case of glass waste, 14% discard it in public receptacles, and 12% use landfills, with only small percentages composting or reusing it. Plastic waste is a major concern, with 29% burning it, which poses environmental risks, and 23% discard it in roadside areas, highlighting the need for better management. Paper waste is largely

reused (23%) and disposed of in public receptacles (14%), though composting is also common. Electronics waste predominantly ends up in landfills (29%), with minimal reusing or composting, reflecting the challenges of managing e-waste. Similarly, battery disposal is problematic, with 29% opting for landfills, underscoring the need for more responsible disposal options. Overall, while some respondents engage in eco-friendly practices, landfilling and burning remain widespread, indicating a pressing need for improved waste management strategies and public awareness.

Table 5:

"How do you perceive the waste management system in your community?" with corresponding numbers of respondents and percentages:

Response	Number of Respondents (N)	Percentage (%)
Very effective	45	25.9%
Somewhat effective	80	46.0%
Not effective	30	17.2%
I am unsure	19	10.9%

The data presents respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of a particular waste management initiative or program. A significant portion (46.0%) of respondents felt that the program was somewhat effective, indicating moderate satisfaction with its outcomes or impact. 25.9% viewed the program as very effective, suggesting that a quarter of respondents were strongly supportive of its success. However, 17.2% felt the program was not effective, reflecting concerns or dissatisfaction with its implementation or outcomes. Lastly, 10.9% were unsure, indicating a lack of clarity or familiarity with the program's effectiveness. This distribution suggests a mixed response, with most respondents recognizing some level of effectiveness, but also indicating room for improvement.

Table 6:

Reasons for Improper Waste Disposal (Multiple Responses Allowed)

Causes of Improper Waste Disposal	Responses (N, %)
(a) No dustbin nearby, so waste is disposed of anywhere	110 (63.2%)
(b) Waste is not collected regularly	95 (54.6%)
(c) Waste is left around the dustbin instead of inside it	85 (48.9%)
(d) Waste is left in drains	72 (41.4%)
(e) Waste is left on roads	78 (44.8%)

Challenges experienced by Households regarding Waste Management

The majority of households experience challenges with the waste management services provided by the municipality. A thematic analysis of these challenges, as captured in Table 5, shows that the dominant challenge is linked to the municipal waste pick-up services (37.5%): the municipality does not collect dumped waste, does not clean the streets, is not always on time, does not communicate pick-up arrangements during holidays, and does not enforce the law against people who add their waste to uncontrolled dumps. The second ranked challenge was the behaviour of the community and the cleanliness of the neighbourhood. Some of the respondents are concerned about health issues,

such as dog carcasses that are left to rot anywhere, especially as children are playing in the dumps. Another challenge highlighted was the parents' lack of responsibility to keep their children off the dumps. Moreover, respondents were also concerned about the fact that households often lack the transport to 'clean up,' especially yard waste that is not removed by the municipality.

Table 7:

Thematic analysis of challenges with waste management

Theme	Challenge Description	N	%
Municipal Waste Pick-Up	Not always on time/not sure when truck will come/does not always come weekly	16	9.2%
	Skips houses if the truck is too full	4	2.3%
	Does not fetch/remove/collect dumped waste/clean streets	4	2.3%
	Municipality does not give notice to/punish dumpsters	1	0.6%
	Weak management/weak communication during holidays/municipality neglects area	5	2.9%
Community Behaviour and Cleanliness	People pile dirt/are dirty	3	1.7%
	All streets are very dirty—especially over the weekend	4	2.3%
	Illegal dumping hotspots are a concern	3	1.7%
	Uncollected waste and yard dirt is dumped close to homes/in ditches/in others' yards	6	3.4%
	The wind blows waste against the wire fences	3	1.7%
Health Concerns	Dogs tear open bags not collected by the municipality	1	0.6%
	Enough space is needed to bury dead animals	1	0.6%
	Waste dumps and landfill are health risks/dangerous for children playing in the dumps	4	2.3%
Outside Town	Burning of waste and medical waste causes smoke	2	1.1%
	Landfill not managed/big problem at dumping site/disgusting	3	1.7%
	Dirt outside town	1	0.6%
No Infrastructure	Plastic bags are a concern	1	0.6%
	Bins and black bags needed	10	5.7%
	Provide recycling services	1	0.6%
Provide Jobs/EPWP Jobs	Employ more people to clean more thoroughly	5	2.9%
Educate People	Teach people about composting and recycling	2	1.1%

The researcher observed parents dumping discarded items in front of the school and saw children playing on uncontrolled dumps. Some respondents also mentioned problems at the landfill site and plastic bags that are blown all over the area. Five respondents asked that more people be employed

to clean the town, and two respondents asked for more information on composting and recycling.

Table 7:

Ways to Improve

Themes	N (174 respondents)	%
More education on environmental clean-ups/recycling programs and awareness campaigns	129	74.1%
Provide empty bags	131	75.3%
Incentives as encouragement, such as giving food parcels	111	63.8%
Launch competitions to keep the community clean	102	58.6%
Create jobs (use the unemployed to pick up waste so they can earn an income)	21	12.1%
Provide bins (to households/along the streets)	20	11.5%
Drop-off sites	3	1.7%
The community must all take responsibility for cleaning their areas	9	5.2%
Fine people for dumping	5	2.9%
School projects	7	4.0%
Better waste management and communication from the municipality	10	5.7%

The data presents a range of suggestions for improving waste management practices in the community, highlighting the varied approaches that respondents consider important. The most commonly suggested interventions include education on environmental clean-ups and recycling programs (74.1%) and providing empty bags (75.3%). These responses emphasize the importance of raising awareness and encouraging community participation in sustainable waste disposal practices. Such suggestions align with findings from previous research, where education is frequently identified as a crucial element in promoting pro-environmental behavior (Oosterveer&Spaargaren, 2010). Awareness campaigns can help bridge the gap between knowledge and behavior, potentially leading to more consistent waste segregation, recycling, and responsible disposal.

The suggestion to provide incentives like food parcels (63.8%) and launch competitions (58.6%) reflects a community-driven approach to motivate action. These measures are commonly used in behavioral change programs to foster positive engagement, though their long-term effectiveness may depend on the sustainability of the incentives and the integration of incentives with more structural, systemic changes in waste management. Financial or material incentives can stimulate short-term improvements but may need to be accompanied by deeper societal shifts in attitudes and practices for long-lasting effects (Aldrich, 2009).

Interestingly, job creation through waste collection (12.1%) has relatively low support. While providing employment opportunities can serve a dual purpose of addressing unemployment and improving waste management, respondents might not see this as an immediate priority compared to

awareness programs or incentives. Nevertheless, this approach aligns with the idea of creating green jobs, which has been advocated in environmental policies as a way to address both environmental and social issues (UNEP, 2016). The relatively low percentage of support might indicate a preference for direct solutions rather than structural changes.

On the lower end of the spectrum, providing bins (11.5%), drop-off sites (1.7%), and school projects (4.0%) indicate limited enthusiasm for infrastructural improvements or educational projects within schools. This suggests that respondents prioritize action-oriented measures (like awareness campaigns and incentives) rather than long-term, infrastructure-heavy solutions. It also implies that respondents may see the lack of waste management infrastructure as a consequence of broader systemic failures, rather than as a straightforward issue that can be solved with more bins or drop-off sites.

The notion that the community must take responsibility (5.2%) and fines for dumping (2.9%) reflects a grassroots approach to waste management. These responses suggest a desire for more accountability at the community level. However, the relatively low support for fines suggests a possible reluctance to impose punitive measures, which may be viewed as too harsh or ineffective without a comprehensive strategy that includes support, education, and infrastructure improvements. Similarly, the low demand for better communication from the municipality (5.7%) may indicate frustration with local authorities but also reflects a possible underestimation of the importance of clear and transparent communication between local governments and the public.

In summary, the results point to a strong preference for educational and incentive-based approaches, with a marked focus on community engagement. However, there is less enthusiasm for structural changes, such as the provision of bins or drop-off sites, and even less for punitive measures like fines. This suggests that successful waste management interventions in the community will likely require a combination of education, motivation through rewards, and increased community responsibility, rather than relying solely on infrastructural improvements or enforcement.

Ways to Improve the Cleanliness of the Municipality

To improve cleanliness in the municipality, a multi-faceted approach is required, involving residents, local authorities, and various stakeholders. Here are several ways to enhance cleanliness:

1. Improve Waste Collection and Management

- **Regular and Timely Collection:** Ensure that waste collection is consistent, frequent, and timely, especially in densely populated or high-traffic areas. Establishing clear schedules and ensuring that waste collection vehicles are properly maintained will reduce littering and waste build-up.
- **Expand Door-to-Door Collection Services:** Offer waste collection services that directly collect from residential homes. This reduces the likelihood of waste being dumped in public areas.
- **Introduce Segregated Waste Collection:** Separate waste into recyclable, organic, and non-recyclable categories to facilitate more efficient management and recycling. Provide residents with appropriate bins and clear guidelines on sorting waste.

2. Enhance Public Awareness and Education

- **Launch Educational Campaigns:** Run campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of cleanliness and proper waste disposal. Use media, schools, and community centers to spread the message.

- **Promote Zero Waste Lifestyle:** Encourage residents to adopt zero-waste habits by reducing consumption, reusing materials, and recycling. Educate the public on the environmental and health impacts of littering and improper waste disposal.
- **Community Workshops and Cleanliness Programs:** Organize workshops, school programs, and neighborhood meetings to educate people about the importance of waste segregation, responsible disposal, and the dangers of littering.

3. Install Proper Infrastructure

- **More Waste Bins in Public Spaces:** Ensure that there are enough waste bins placed strategically throughout the municipality, especially in parks, markets, streets, and public transport areas. Label the bins to make it clear which materials should go in each one.
- **Develop Recycling Stations:** Set up designated recycling stations where residents can dispose of recyclable materials separately. This reduces contamination of recyclable waste and increases recycling rates.
- **Litter Traps and Collection Points:** Install litter traps in gutters, drains, and near water bodies to prevent waste from being carried into the environment, especially in rainy seasons.

4. Foster Community Involvement

- **Organize Community Clean-up Drives:** Host regular neighborhood or community-wide clean-up events where residents come together to clean streets, parks, and public areas. This fosters a sense of community responsibility for cleanliness.
- **Create "Cleanliness Ambassadors":** Encourage local leaders or passionate individuals to serve as cleanliness ambassadors, who can motivate others to keep their neighborhoods clean and lead by example.
- **Incentivize Cleanliness:** Offer rewards or recognition for individuals, families, or neighborhoods that consistently maintain cleanliness. Incentives can include discounts on municipal services, food vouchers, or community recognition.

5. Enforce Strict Laws and Regulations

- **Implement Fines for Littering:** Enforce fines for littering in public spaces. Publicize the penalties for illegal dumping or improper waste disposal to deter such actions.
- **Establish and Enforce Sanitation Laws:** Strengthen sanitation laws that mandate regular cleaning of private properties, commercial establishments, and public areas. Conduct regular inspections to ensure compliance.
- **Create a Waste Management Task Force:** Set up a team to monitor and address sanitation issues. This team would respond to complaints, inspect businesses and residential areas, and enforce cleanliness standards.

6. Promote Waste-to-Energy and Composting Initiatives

- **Develop Composting Facilities:** Promote community-based composting programs for organic waste. Educate residents about how to compost at home or at designated facilities, reducing the amount of waste sent to landfills.

- **Waste-to-Energy Projects:** Explore waste-to-energy technologies that convert municipal waste into usable energy, thus reducing waste volume while providing an additional source of energy for the community.
- **Encourage Biodegradable Alternatives:** Promote the use of biodegradable bags and products to reduce plastic waste in the municipality. Distribute reusable bags or offer incentives for using them.

7. Improve Drainage and Sewage Systems

- **Regularly Clean Drains and Sewers:** Make it a priority to maintain and clean public drains, sewers, and waterways to prevent garbage buildup and blockages. This will prevent flooding and ensure that waste is properly managed.
- **Install Stormwater Management Systems:** In areas prone to flooding, develop stormwater management systems that can handle large amounts of water without carrying waste into public spaces.

8. Enhance Waste Management Technology

- **Implement Smart Waste Management:** Use technology such as smart bins, which are equipped with sensors to detect when they are full, to optimize waste collection schedules and avoid overflow.
- **Waste Management Apps:** Develop or promote apps that allow residents to track waste collection times, report issues with waste management services, or request additional collection services.
- **Use Drones for Inspection:** Deploy drones for monitoring areas prone to illegal dumping or areas where waste piles up unnoticed.

9. Involve the Private Sector

- **Partnerships with Waste Management Companies:** Collaborate with private waste management firms to improve efficiency in waste collection, recycling programs, and public education campaigns.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Programs:** Encourage businesses to contribute to maintaining cleanliness by supporting community clean-ups, providing bins, and participating in sustainability initiatives.

10. Improve Public Health and Sanitation

- **Regular Street Sweeping:** Implement or enhance street sweeping programs to clean up dust, debris, and litter from public streets. Ensure that streets, particularly those near markets and public transit stations, are swept regularly.
- **Public Health Campaigns:** Address the health risks associated with poor cleanliness by highlighting the links between sanitation and public health. Educate citizens on diseases caused by unsanitary conditions and improper waste disposal.

By employing these strategies, municipalities can significantly improve cleanliness, reduce waste accumulation, and promote sustainable waste management practices, ultimately leading to a cleaner, healthier environment for all residents.

Conclusion

To move towards a more sustainable household waste management system, the commitment of the municipality, households (community), businesses, shop-owners, as well as producers, is essential. Although the removal of waste in Siddharthanagar Municipality is the legal responsibility of municipalities, the participation of communities in waste management is becoming more relevant, and even critical, in keeping most towns clean.

To move towards a more sustainable household waste management system, not only recycling, but also the re-use of recyclables and the composting of organic waste, should be encouraged. To achieve these, the commitment of the municipality, households, and the community, as well as the producers of products that generate recyclable products, are essential.

The challenges, as experienced by the households, ask for the commitment of the municipality to:

Efficient and timely waste collection from all designated points is crucial in managing household waste effectively and preventing illegal dumping and littering. Regular and structured waste collection services play a significant role in maintaining cleanliness and environmental sustainability.

Recommendation

To discourage uncontrolled dumping, the municipality should identify, map, and monitor illegal waste disposal sites while enforcing stricter regulations and penalties. Involving the community in monitoring and reporting illegal dumping activities can further strengthen enforcement efforts.

Public awareness and education are essential for improving waste management practices. The municipality should:

- Provide residents with knowledge about composting at both the household and community levels.
- Encourage the re-use of recyclable materials by inviting industry experts to demonstrate innovative ways to extend the life cycle of recyclable products.
- Establish drop-off points where community members can return empty containers for reuse by others, possibly as part of a funded initiative.

To ensure effective waste disposal, the municipality should provide:

- Bins, skips, drop-off points, and receptacles for mixed waste, garden waste, and recyclables at convenient locations. These collection sites should be well-maintained and regularly emptied, as unclean surroundings often encourage further littering.
- A curbside recycling collection program to motivate households to separate recyclable materials from general waste.

Households and the broader community should actively engage in waste management by:

- Attending information sessions and discussions on best practices for waste disposal, composting, and recycling. Experts and community members can share innovative recycling ideas and techniques.
- Participating in community-led recycling initiatives and supporting individuals who can benefit from reusable items.
- Using designated waste disposal facilities responsibly, keeping them clean, and reporting any misuse.

- Avoiding environmentally harmful waste disposal practices such as littering and uncontrolled dumping, while reporting violations.
- Utilizing biodegradable organic waste for composting at home.
- Increasing the re-use of household waste and separating recyclable materials from general waste.

Manufacturers and producers of recyclable goods should also extend their reach to rural and remote communities by establishing sponsored recycling facilities, conducting awareness programs, and educating residents on creative ways to repurpose waste materials, including transforming recyclables into valuable tourist souvenirs.

It is recognized that financial limitations, common in many rural and remote areas, may hinder municipal efforts in providing the necessary infrastructure and services for sustainable waste management. To overcome these challenges, additional funding and investment are needed. Given the town's geographic remoteness from recycling markets, the municipality should explore alternative waste management solutions at the local level and collaborate with neighboring regions.

Ultimately, effective waste management requires a collaborative approach between the municipality and local households. A participatory system of discussions and actions can help develop practical waste solutions that align with the needs of both the community and the local government. By fostering responsible waste behavior and establishing well-structured waste management systems, Siddharthanagar Municipality can move towards a cleaner and more sustainable environment.

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Received : 2024/12/15

Revision received : 2024/12/16

Accepted : 2024/12/22

Using Constitutive Rhetoric in The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable by Amitav Ghosh

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Abstract

This paper examines Amitav Ghosh's *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* through the framework of Constitutive Rhetoric. It analyzes how the author not only raises awareness about environmental degradation but also critiques the socio-political structures that marginalize vulnerable communities. Ghosh's narrative positions the Global South—particularly Asian nations—as central to the discourse on climate justice, calling for their active inclusion in global climate action. Through rhetorical strategies that evoke collective memory, ecological and cultural identity, the paper argues that Ghosh constructs an eco-conscious subjectivity that challenges dominant Western narratives. The analysis reveals that Ghosh's eco-narrative functions as a rhetorical call-to-action, aiming to boost a globally inclusive and culturally resonant form of environmental advocacy

Keywords: Climate change rhetoric, Global South, Amitav Ghosh, Constitutive rhetoric, Environmental justice

Introduction

The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable, written by Amitav Ghosh in 2016, is a powerful critique of the cultural narratives, the relationship with nature and literary genres. This book addresses the inadequacies in confronting the most pressing crisis of our time: climate change. Ghosh regrets the failure of modern literature in engaging the existing threat posed by the climatic condition due to over-exploitation. Although climate change is widely discussed in online and traditional media, it remains largely unexplored in arts and literary fictions (Ghosh, 2018, p. 201).

Ghosh uses the terms like 'derangement' and 'unthinkable' to emphasize the lack of sufficient exploration and integration of climate change in contemporary literature that hinders authors and readers from adequately addressing the magnitude and urgency of the climate crisis. He says that the perception of climate crisis issues have been a failure in how we think and act that has led people to ignore the serious danger of climate change consequences. According to him, climate change narratives are often viewed as rare or unlikely event treated as 'serious fictions'-realistic that lack imagination. As a result, such fictions fail to adequately address the large scale of environmental devastation (2018, p. 11).

Recognizing the importance of rhetoric and literacies of climate change is crucial matter to acknowledge (Schell, 2020) in the global context. Some region's vulnerability to global warming's devastating impacts make this discourse even more urgent (Dobrin & Weisser, 2002). This urgency is heightened in largely populated Asian countries: Bangladesh, India and Vietnam, where rising sea levels, extreme weather events and environmental degradation have killed more than 300,000 and displaced millions of people disproportionately affecting marginalized communities. Similarly, melting of Himalayan glaciers in countries like Nepal, India and Pakistan has resulted in floods that have killed thousands of people each year (2018, pp. 118-122) .

Ghosh through his narrative urges that global policy documents should consider and address the unique conditions of mainland Asia, which are often overlooked in discussion. Ghosh argues that understanding the climate crisis completely requires the knowledge of the grown industrialization in the West. This pattern has been fuelled more resource exploitation leading to the environmental degradation that threatens the Global South communities (2018, pp. 117-118).

Research Questions

How does Amitav Ghosh use constitutive rhetoric to empower marginalized voices in The Great Derangement?

How does Ghosh's narrative help to build eco-conscious and promote inclusion of the Global South in global climate action?

Methodology

This paper explores how Ghosh constructs his argument through the lens of constitutive rhetoric (Burke, 1969; Charland, 1987; McGee, 1975). Constitutive rhetoric examines how language and symbols aren't only used to communicate ideas to persuade individuals. Instead, it emphasizes how rhetoric helps to shape a unified/collective identity and our social reality. Theorist like Maurice Charland examines how rhetorical acts can lead individuals to identify themselves as part of certain communities or groups. In other words, rhetoric is a powerful force that helps to 'constitutes' people into specific kinds of subject-matter (Charland, 1987, pp. 133-150).

The core concept of constitutive rhetoric lies in its capacity to establish a collective new identity. Through rhetorical narratives, people are often 'interpellated' or invited into a group with their particular roles and relationships. This process establishes a shared sense of belonging or purpose among the people. For instance, political speeches often invoke ideas of "the nation" or "the people" to create a sense of unity and collective identity among diverse individuals (McGee, 1975, pp. 235-249). By framing an audience as part of a larger narrative or ideology, constitutive rhetoric brings that audience into being as a cohesive social unit with shared values, goals and identity markers.

Constitutive rhetoric is particularly useful for analyzing texts that attempt to unify diverse groups or inspire social action. It is often used in studying nationalistic speeches, social movements and ideological narratives, where language is crafted to transform individual identities into a collective "we". This theoretical framework suggests that language doesn't only describe things, but also it actively influences how people perceive the world, experience life and understand their roles in the society they live (Burke, 1969).

Constitutive rhetoric aims to construct or reinforce collective identities, which makes well-suited to analyze the Ghosh's work. Ghosh constitutes a global eco-conscious subject by weaving together personal, historical and ecological narratives. This context explains how climate change narratives construct both collective and individual identities around ecological crisis. Ghosh constructs an identity for this global urban class as inheritors of conqueror of ecological biosphere (2018, p. 51). Ghosh's rhetorical strategy is transformative, as he questions readers into a collective environmental subjectivity.

This paper explores constitutive rhetoric as a theoretical framework. This framework gives a critical

lens to examine Ghosh critiques of how language and narratives shapes collective identities of people who are victims of climate change. Additionally, it also focuses on how Ghosh's create narrative discourse regarding the Western ideologies that have contributed to environmental degradation and impacted the marginalized vulnerable communities that has forced them to unite.

Literature Review

To construct a rhetorical analysis of Amitav Ghosh's *The Great Derangement*, it is important to minutely observe the broader scholarly discussion about rhetorical ecologies in the Anthropocene epoch (Smith, 2020, pp. 352-367), that are interconnected with literature and climate change. This review focuses mainly on two areas: the rise of climate change discourse and ecological rhetoric in narratives and the climate justice and its consequences for the Global South .

Scholars are attracted to climate change and its short/long—term effects. Amitav's book has been studied and analyzed by many researchers. Among them, Dr. TK Pius in "Climate Crisis and Historical Narrative: A Study based on Amitav Ghosh's *The Great Derangement*; Climate Change and the Unthinkable" explores from the lenses of history and power dynamics. Pius critically examines Ghosh's fall short of adequately capturing the magnitude and complexities of the climate crisis. He further explains Asia's fundamental position in the climate debate and the overarching influence of European powers. Through this deeper examination, Pius not only brings Ghosh's challenge to conventional historical narratives but also contextualizes the climate crisis within broader socio—political and historical landscapes (2016, pp. 23-34).

In her review, Veronica Fibisan explains the connection between storytelling, history and politics related to climate change in *The Great Derangement*. She believes that the way climate events are shown in books needs to be more genuine. While talking about Ghosh's views on Asia's participation in climate talks, she describes how impactful can be fiction in shaping narratives about the climate. She mentions the current era's challenges and the chance to change how we depict climate change in literature. She says that writers and publishers have a big guiding role in overall conversation about the environment (2019, pp. 110-113).

Similarly, Arthur M. Shapiro's review draws parallels between Ghosh's critiques of mainstream literature's neglect of climate change. He compares Ghosh's work to the Argentine film "De Eso no se Habla (I don't want to talk about it)" to show how society avoids talking about the climate crisis. Shapiro appreciates Ghosh for highlighting a less discussed topic (environmental problems) from the Global South and for urging global citizens to take responsibility. However, he feels Ghosh doesn't offer clear solutions because he believes that only education can only bring awareness of such issues. He sees Ghosh's work as an important reminder that needs more reflection and real actions (2018, pp. 102-103).

Ecological rhetoric explores the role of language, narrative and discourse in shaping public perception regarding environmental issues. In the article, "From Environmental Campaigns to Advancing the Public Dialog: Environmental Communication for Civic Engagement", Robert J. Brulle explains how environmental discourse shapes human perception to alert with awareness and urges for immediate action. Brulle underlines that this type of communication is often used to invoke fear, urgency and a moral obligation to protect the environment. In contrast, he also mentions the limitations of this approach, which may fail to address wider historical and social contexts (Brulle, 2010, pp. 82-98).

In the books, Ecocriticism on the edge: The Anthropocene as a threshold concept by Timothy Clark and Blue Ecocriticism and the Oceanic Imperative by Sidney I. Dobrin analyze the problems and complications in communication about anthropogenic concerns (Clark, 2015; Dobrin, 2021). With the reference of best-known climate change stories, Kim Stanley Robinson's Science in the Capital Trilogy (2004-2007) explains that environmental issues happen on large and complex scales, so people find it really tough to fit into the narratives (Pak, 2019, p. 59). Clark suggests that the climate crisis raises rhetorical issues of representation. So, he questions, how do we discuss something that is abstract and seems beyond human control? This dilemma is crucial to Ghosh's critique in *The Great Derangement*, where he claims that modern literature has failed to appropriately address climate change. Ghosh views it as an exceptional or science-fictional concern rather than an everyday reality.

The Anthropocene (an era of human activity that has had an impact on Earth's ecosystems) has emerged as a key concept in modern environmental studies. In literature, scholars like Dipesh Chakrabarty and Rob Nixon have investigated how the Anthropocene alters our view of human history and agency. In the book, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, Chakrabarty suggests that this epoch forces us to rethink of historical narratives. He urges that the human actions now has affected on a planetary scale, disrupting both ecological and social systems (Chakrabarty, 2021).

Similarly, in the article "Anthropocene and Environmental Justice", Nixon proposes the concept of environmental justice, focusing on the often unnoticed and procrastinated environmental damage which has impacted underprivileged communities in the Global South disproportionately (Nixon, 2016, p. 29). This paradigm explains how Ghosh's *The Great Derangement* places the climate issue within the broader historical patterns of ecological exploitation.

The concept of climate justice intersects climate change and social justice in environmental studies. Scholars like, Naomi Klein and Vandana Shiva argue that climate change impacts vulnerable communities and their need for systemic change to address these inequalities. In *This Changes Everything*, Naomi Klein explains the deep interconnection between climate crisis and capitalism. He critiques the economic systems that exacerbate climate change and leave marginalized communities most vulnerable. Klein mentions a paradoxical and unfair situation where even though Bolivia contributes very less in global carbon emission, it has to suffer severely from climate debt (Klein, 2015, p. 187).

Similarly, in the article "Earth Democracy: Sustainability, Justice and Peace", Vandana Shiva critiques how the globalized economic systems undermine ecological and social well-being that has wiped out aborigines and their primitive grains (Shiva, 2018, p. 12). She highlights the concept of "eco-apartheid" (2018, p. 4) which means the exploitation of natural resources by the corporations and industrialized nations to leave indigenous communities to bear the brunt of environmental disaster.

In the book, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Rob Nixon provides a critical lens for understanding environmental issues that Asian countries face. He also mentions that the ecological damage to the marginalized communities in the Global South is mostly overlooked by the Global North due to the delayed manifestation of the damage (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). In *The Great Derangement*, Ghosh aligns this issue and highlights how the experiences of the victims in the Global Southern countries like Pakistan, India and Bangladesh are mostly overlooked in global climate discussions and policymaking.

Even though, rhetorical materialism looks somehow similar and many people often

get confused with their similarities. Rhetorical materialism has subtle nuances with constitutive rhetoric, as it examines how discourse reflects and shapes material realities. Rhetorical materialism focuses on the relationship between rhetoric and the material conditions that reflects and influences people perception (McCann, 2018, pp. 3-10). This theory can be practically relevant for analyzing materialistic conditions that shape public understanding and policy decisions on climate change. Even though, we can observe Ghosh exploring how economic systems, colonial histories and environmental degradation are interconnected.

The literature review on ecological rhetoric and environmental justice provides a foundation for understanding Ghosh's interventions in *The Great Derangement*. This critique provides a strong foundation for comprehending the significance of this book by Amitav Ghosh. His work particularly intervenes in these discourses by critically examining how literature and culture have failed to address the climatic issues through narratives. He also emphasizes the need to center the perspectives and immersive experiences being on the marginalized shoes to understand the real and practical problems rather than speech on documented files. In future, these kinds of realistic narratives help in awakening the policy-makers to understand from the real life climate crisis stories to get the first-hand experience.

Discussion and Analysis: Constitutive Rhetoric

Constitutive rhetoric doesn't only use the idea that language shapes as rhetoric but also shapes identities, communities and ideologies (Charland, 1987). In other words, it doesn't just reflect reality, it helps to construct it. Through language, people come to understand who they are (their identity) and their place in the world (their role and responsibilities). Constitutive rhetoric can shape how a community sees itself in relation to climate change. The way climate narratives are framed can create an identity for a nation as a 'climate leader' or for a marginalized group as 'victims of climate change'. These narratives define who is responsible, who suffers and who benefits from environmental actions or inactions.

Theorists of constitutive rhetoric like, Kenneth Burke, Michael C. McGee and Maurice Charland focus on how rhetoric can create collective identities and inspire collective action. "Kenneth Burke proposes 'identification' as an alternative to 'persuasion' as the key term of the rhetorical process" (Charland, 1987, p. 133). In *The Great Derangement*, Ghosh's concept of 'recognition' in multiple instances symbolizes a sense of belonging to a place, a group and the ecology, which is parallel to Burke's idea of 'identification'. The individual's recognition of nature's presence is generally reflected in rhetoric that transforms passive engagement with the discourses into active participation (2018, pp. 5-7).

Similarly, the concept of "the people" in McGee's "In Search of 'the People': A Rhetorical Alternative" refers to a collective (constitutive) group of individuals coming together to raise a voice for collective change. Ghosh's work can be seen as an effort to create a new collective identity for humanity—one that recognizes the strong community ties in the Global South (Asian Communities) in relation to ecological tragedies (McGee, 1975, p. 198). Ghosh evaluates collective appeal for the anthropocentric narratives of freedom and progress that are impacted by Western industrialization.

The demand for "climate reparations" is therefore founded on unshakeable grounds, historically and ethically. Yet the complexity of the carbon economy's genealogy holds a lesson also for those in the global south who would draw a wide and clear line between "us" and "them" in relation to global

warming. While there can be no doubt that the climate crisis was brought on by the way in which the carbon economy evolved in the West, it is also true that the matter might have taken many different turns. The climate crisis cannot therefore be thought of as a problem created by an utterly distant “Other” (2018, pp. 153-154).

In climate change discourse, the term “us” refers to those who are affected, especially in the Global South, while “them” denotes to those who are responsible for it, fostering a strong sense of group identity. Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism can be used in deepening the analysis of how these Western discourses construct the East as both exotic and inferior using the concept of ‘other’ that perpetuate current climate injustice (E. Said, 2005, p. 17). Similarly, Ghosh asserts that the Western world narrative denies recognizing the agency of nonhuman forces like climate systems, oceans and other ecological actors.

Ghosh points out that the Eastern countries often lack agency in climate discussions. This idea connects with Said’s argument that the West often describes the East as passive and unable to act on its own. Because of this, there are disparities in how actions are taken. Ghosh argues for a more inclusive global conversation that listens to voices from the Global South. In the discussion of constitutive rhetoric, Said’s theory is also similar to Ghosh’s idea of how the West sees itself as ‘climate leaders’ (2005, p. 244) and portrays the Global South as ‘victims’. This reinforces a sense of Western dominance and excludes the real victims’ suffering in the global discussion.

Ghosh describes the impact of global warming, highlighting the difference between the Global North (the rich) and the Global South (the poor). The phrase “the rich have much to lose; the poor do not” (2018, p. 198) reinforces this divide, building a collective identity for the poor as those who bear the brunt of climate impacts. He also emphasizes the strong community ties in the Global South, reflecting a class-conscious form of what Maurice Charland refers to as “constitutive rhetoric”. This type of rhetoric enables individuals to think and act beyond their individuality—embracing their identity as a group or a collective people (Paur, 2024, p. 97). The Global South refers to the poor and disempowered as a group that requires collective action to urge political elites to acknowledge the costs of inaction (2018, pp. 153-154).

Similarly, Ghosh highlights his family’s experience as “My ancestors were ecological refugees long before the term was invented” (2018, p. 4). Ghosh through his ancestral stories and personal memories evokes a sense of connection to the environment as a force shaping and shaped by human lives. This frame of climate change displacement isn’t just a series of isolated events but something that shapes and defines human identity and history together. This links with the concept of displaced millions of people and their collective identity (Vigil & Baillie Abidi, 2018, pp. 52-60). Even though they form various clusters like modern society, middle-class, urban planner and settlers the urgency is same (2018, pp. 50-59). He connects people’s perception on dominance of nature has now become a need to unite people from modern to affluent urban societies to marginalized communities in remote.

In *The Great Derangement*, Ghosh avers the connection between ecological degradation and class struggles in the Sundarbans and other vulnerable Asian landscapes (2018, p. 169). He focuses on how climate change impact biases the working-class, subaltern communities ‘a term by Gramsci to explore power relation (Dwivedi, 2023, p. 1)’ and women in Asia. These biased people are always least equipped to adapt/defend or recover and are the most vulnerable to environmental catastrophes (2018, pp. 121-122). The Sundarbans (a vast mangrove forest in the Bengal Delta) serve as an example of a powerful symbol of this intersection (2018, p. 7). This highly vulnerable area that is

prone to rising sea levels, flooding and storms, is home to indigenous communities who depend on fishing and farming (2018, pp. 118-120). For these communities, climate change is not an abstract future threat but a pressing and current everyday reality (2018, p. 122).

Ghosh asserts that though these communities have contributed the least to global carbon emissions but bear the highest burden of climate change consequences (2018, p. 123). He states, “The poor nations of the world are not poor because they were indolent or unwilling; their poverty is itself an effect of the inequities created by the carbon economy” (2018, p. 148). In the global context, the carbon economy has maintained significant economic inequalities. He explains “Western power with the result that other variants of modernity came to be suppressed, incorporated and appropriated into what is now a single, dominant model” (2018, p. 146). Said’s concept of cultural hegemony could help explain how Western narratives continue to dominate and marginalize the voices of those most affected by climate change (E. Said, 2005, p. 25). Western power along with neoliberal systems has suppressed alternative modernity that contributes to economic and social disparities rhetorically (Nguyen, 2017). This prioritization of profit over people and the environment exacerbates ecological exploitation that reinforces class inequalities.

Similarly, Dana Cloud argues “the study of rhetoric of how power, consciousness and resistance are crafted, articulated and influenced in and by the act of speaking, is vital to the projects of critique and social change” (Cloud, 1994, p. 141). Cloud provides a critical framework by challenging the idea that rhetoric is constitutive of multiple realities and how it shapes power, consciousness and resistance.

Additionally, in this context of constitutive rhetoric, Michael C. McGhee view that terms like ‘the people’ are not objective reality but rather a linguistic construct used in discourse to legitimize power (McGee, 1975, pp. 235-247). He asserts that the rhetorical construction is used to legitimize power. Ghosh explains the global climate change discourse through these rhetorical constructions that frequently exclude marginalized communities from the conversation. Ghosh clarifies the subtle difference in the impact of climate change between the Global North and the Global South. He criticizes how the Global North has insulated itself from the worst impacts of climate change, despite being responsible for the most of historical carbon emissions. Meanwhile, the Global South suffers the most immediate and severe consequences (2018, p. 12).

Ghosh rhetorically places Asia at the centre of both the problem and the potential solution for the climate crisis. On the one hand, Asia’s large population and ongoing industrialization make it a critical region for addressing global emissions. On the other hand, Asia is home to many communities most vulnerable to climate change, including the inhabitants of the Sundarbans and the farmers in drought-prone regions of India and China (18-19). Ghosh’s framing of climate change in Western discourse for ignoring the immediate effects of ecological crisis through a rhetorical criticism aligns with the scholars like Michael Calvin McGee and Dana Cloud. He argues that this neglect unfairly harms marginalized communities in the Global South (2018, pp. 56-60).

Ghosh connects rhetorical concept of ‘green washing’(O’Neill, 2024, pp. 258-278) with the big corporations that exploit nature who often use terms like ‘environmentally friendly’. This phrase has both connotations; one suggests being comfortable while overexploiting nature and the other implies encouraging a deeper connection with the ecology and its problems. This rhetoric perpetuates harmful practices under the guise of sustainability, leaving the most vulnerable communities to suffer the brunt of climate change (2018, p. 4). He further examines the rhetoric of progress that justifies environmental destruction. Similarly, he adds his family’s history stories of displacement

from the Sundarbans along with his own Delhi tornado experiences that has resulted due to over-exploitation to unite and alert victimized communities (2018, p. 20).

In conclusion, Ghosh talks about how these exploitation and unfair planetary justice (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020, pp. 1-10) have affected Global South (Asian region). Actually, the focus explains “Why rhetoric matters for ecologies” (Druschke & McGreavy, 2016, pp. 46-52). He urges for unity to call for a shift in how we understand and respond to the climate crisis. Finally, he demands for a more inclusive and just global conversation regarding climate change raised by the collective voices of vulnerable communities. Like Ghosh, Md. Kamal Uddin also urges the Global North to take greater responsibility for its role in causing the climate crisis. He also advocates for a fairer distribution of resources to help the Global South adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change (2018, p. 109). He looks at climate change from this viewpoint and highlights how it’s important to fix the unfair systems that hurt the poorest and most at-risk people.

Conclusion

Synthesis: Eco-Narrative and Climate Change

In *The Great Derangement*, Amitav Ghosh talks about the past and present environmental challenges that Asian nations are facing daily. He highlights how the industrialization has changed the area’s ecology. Ghosh notes that the environmental degradation in Asia is a result from the legacy of North’s exploitation, where colonial powers extracted natural resources for their benefit (2018, pp. 117-122). This imperialist exploitation has resulted in deforestation, monoculture plantations and large-scale change of waterways. These actions have harmed the environment and disrupted traditional lives and economies in the regions.

Ghosh emphasizes that this legacy of exploitation still continues today. Many Asian nations are now facing severe consequences of climate change, worsened by ongoing industrialization. In countries like India and China, rapid economic development has led to significant environmental costs. Global industrialization has contributed to problems such as air pollution and water scarcity (2018, p. 153). For instance, Ghosh highlights the Bengal Delta (Sundarbans) as a strong example of the connection between ecological and human crises (2018, pp. 118-119). The Sundarbans is a fragile ecosystem of mangrove forests. It is threatened by rising sea levels and more severe cyclones. At the same time, it is home to some of the poorest communities in South Asia. These communities rely on the land and sea for their livelihoods. They are often the first to suffer the consequences of climate change, even though they contribute the least to global carbon emissions (Chakrabarty, 2021, p. 16).

In *The Great Derangement*, Amitav Ghosh employs narrative strategies that blend personal and collective experiences of ecological disasters. He emphasizes the interconnectedness of human and non-human entities in the context of climate change. One key rhetorical tool he uses is the ‘eco-narrative’ (Parui, 2022, p. 103) as a powerful tool to describe the complex relationship between matter and meaning. “Developing in bodily forms and in discursive formulations the stories of the matter is a material mesh of meanings, properties and processes, in which human and non-human players are interlocked in networks that produce undeniable signifying forces” (Iovino, 2012, pp. 1-2). Ghosh’s depiction of the Sundarbans serves as a symbolic ‘material mesh’ where environmental and human histories intertwine. The reflection of broader climate crisis affects both ecosystems and marginalized communities.

Ghosh effectively utilizes metaphor and narrative settings to link ecological devastation to capitalist ambition. He states that “the climate crisis is also a crisis of culture and thus of the imagination” (2018, p. 12). This statement could be expanded with more direct examples of literary works that engage or fail to engage with climate realities. Rather than summarizing Ghosh’s position, a more critical analysis would involve questioning whether the ‘crisis of imagination’ is limited to literature, or whether it extends to other cultural forms like media or political rhetoric. This would provide a richer analysis of how narratives surrounding climate change are constructed and disseminated.

Ghosh urges contemporary authors to incorporate the climate change into literature that advocates for a new narrative form that grapples with the Anthropocene(Flöttum & Gjerstad, 2017). As noted by Justyna Poray-Wybranowska and Tyler Scott Ball,

...we examine the potential for novels to foster more productive relationships between human beings and their environments. Ghosh’s novels do this work in three distinct ways: through the representation of setting, the use of metaphorical devices and the linguistic play in dialogue between characters (2021, p. 3).

Ghosh’s novels, including The Great Derangement, The Hungry Tide, The Gun Island, Sea of Poppies and The Glass Palace, promote a more productive relationship between humans and their environments. Ghosh exemplify this potential through their representations of setting, use of metaphor and the linguistic interplay in character (role) dialogue. By expanding on these connections, the narrative could offer more concrete examples of how individual stories reflect larger systemic issues. The personal history (logos/ethos/pathos (Lutzke)) intertwines with the broader narrative of the climate crisis that makes the issue more relatable and immediate.

Ghosh challenges the modern literature for its inability to address climate change issues treating it as ‘uncanny’ (2018, pp. 29, 40, 41, 42, 43, 74, 87, 88, 97, 108 and 172) an unthinkable and distant phenomenon. He blames this failure makes the cultural response to climate change a form of “derangement” (2018, pp. 15, 48, 124, 125, 149, 162, 181 and 217). Ghosh writes “Recognition is famously a passage from ignorance to knowledge” (2018, p. 5) capturing the idea of the ‘uncanny’ spreads widely through Ghosh’s narrative as, he describes moments of ‘recognition’ when humans realize their connection with non-human forces. This moment of realization in his storytelling is vital in drawing the attention towards climate crisis.

Ghosh shows the connection between global and local (glocal) ecological struggles. This relation makes the issue more relatable that shows a clear picture of significance (2018, p. 2). This combination of local as well as global narratives helps the reader feel an emotional and intellectually attached. It makes the threat of climate change feel closer and easier to perceive.

Ghosh uses rhetorical method to shift how the Global North perceives the climate crisis differently

² Aristotle taught that a speaker’s ability to persuade an audience is based on how well the speaker appeals to that audience in three different areas: logos, ethos and pathos. Considered together, these appeals form what later rhetoricians have called the rhetorical triangle. Logos appeals to reason. Logos can also be thought of as the text of the argument, as well as how well a writer has argued his/her point. Ethos appeals to the writer’s character. Ethos can also be thought of as the role of the writer in the argument and how credible his/her argument is. Pathos appeals to the emotions and the sympathetic imagination, as well as to beliefs and values. Pathos can also be thought of as the role of the audience in the argument. (Lutzke)

glocal- According to Dictionary.com ‘of or relating to the interconnection of global and local issues, factors, etc.’ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/glocal>

than the Global South. He highlights the need for multiple approaches to deal to the real challenges faced by vulnerable people in Asia daily. Ghosh uses the word 'recognition' (2018, pp. 5, 6, 7, 8, 39, 41, 87, 140 and 153) multiple times (repetition-rhetorical tool) to think and rethink of the climate crisis that needs global action immediately. He calls for a more inclusive (voices of the victims) conversation on climate justice that elevates the experiences and voices of the Global South. This challenges the hegemonic discourses of the West and opens up new ways to understand and address the climate challenges faced by these regions (E. W. Said, 1977, pp. 162-206). Ghosh calls for a paradigm shift in how climate change is addressed. The shift should move from top—down that means the Global North driven solutions to more inclusive approaches that prioritize the lived experiences of marginal communities.

Rhetorical Outcomes

Ghosh's *The Great Derangement* has a strong rhetorical impact. It challenges readers to consider their role to prevent the ecological destruction done knowingly and unknowingly by the human beings. He encourages readers to rethink their role of these ecological systems. Many writers raise awareness of the environmental crisis and calls for a collective re-evaluation of how humans are related to nature (Newell, Robin, & Wehner, 2016, p. 242). Ghosh urges readers, especially those in the advanced world to question what they have given for climate change. He also points out that these narratives have not yet been affected by communication technology (2018, p. 168). He highlights the experiences of the Asian vulnerable communities and show how exploitation still drive today's environmental crisis has. Likewise, he also reveals how Western narratives downplaying the urgent dangers faced by marginalized communities that are deprived of wealth (2018, p. 148).

The rhetorical effect make people realize need of modern fictions and Western discourses to address the scale of global warming (2018, p. 168). Ghosh urges climate scientists, environmental activists and reporters to confront their own efforts in supporting systems that harm the environment. The issues like consumption habits, political discourse (Butler, 2024) disengagement and over-reliance on technology are the primary reasons for this act (2018, p. 169). In doing so, Ghosh encourages readers to move from passive awareness to active involvement in addressing the climate crisis.

Ghosh's work offers new opportunities for action for Asian communities and intellectuals. He stresses that intellectuals in the Global South should take a more active role in shaping the global discussion on climate change. By reclaiming their histories and narratives, Asian communities should challenge and aware the Global North in their languages. He highlights the significance in communication technologies that address both the challenges and the solutions to the climate crisis (2018, p. 164). He advocates for a fresh perspective on ecological debt that takes into account the specific vulnerabilities and strengths of the Global South (2018, p. 211).

Similarly, Ghosh appeals to view the climate crisis not only as a scientific or policy-making agenda for discussion, but also as a cultural and moral responsibility (2018, p. 173). He calls for the narrative forms that can convey the complexity and urgency of the ecological challenges (2018, p. 86). By confronting the cultural issues that have caused climate inaction, Ghosh paves the way for a more engaged and proactive intellectual community in Asia. This community can advocate for sustainable solutions based on local knowledge and experience. Through these rhetorical effects, *The Great Derangement* serves as a call to action for both individual readers and collective movements in the Global South.

5.3 Implications for Future Research

Ghosh's writing provides a strong layout for future studies of climate change. It focuses on how climate change affects the marginalized communities of the Global South. Furthermore, researchers could look at how other Asian authors write about environmental degradation. This could build on Ghosh's ideas about how these forces can cause problem in the ecology of writing (Cooper, 1986, pp. 364-375). Comparing the Asian and the Western climate narratives can give us a valuable insight in climatic condition highlighting the idea of 'different place different problems'. It would show how different writing styles influence public opinion and policy in both regions.

Finally, future research should focus on how literary works from the Global South can offer alternative narratives and solutions for climate justice from their first-hand experiences. Additionally, exploring diverse fiction, indigenous stories or realistic narratives can engage readers with challenges of the Anthropocene could further enrich the field of ecological rhetoric (Lan & Yuan, 2022). This can build climate resilience in a diverse global context.

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Received : 2024/12/04

Revision received : 2024/12/05

Accepted : 2024/12/08

Awareness and Attitudes on HIV/AIDS Among Married Madhesi Women in Siddharthanagar.

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Abstract

This study investigates public perceptions and awareness of HIV/AIDS in Ward No. 9 of Siddharthanagar Municipality, Nepal. Using purposive and systematic sampling, data were collected from 110 respondents via interview schedules and attitude scales. Most participants were semi-literate and held misconceptions about HIV transmission, including beliefs that it spreads through mosquito bites, kissing, or shared food. Married women in particular lacked adequate knowledge about causes, symptoms, and prevention. Cultural norms, poverty, and gender inequality were identified as major barriers to women's sexual health awareness. Few respondents had sought medical consultation. The study calls for targeted education programs to improve awareness and promote reproductive health.

Key words: AIDS, attitude, gynecologist, knowledge, misconception

Introduction

This is the world of advancement of science and technology . Along with the Advancement of science and technology various kinds of diseases have challenged to the mankind . AIDS become a global challenge of unprecedented proportion. It varies crucial health , economical, social , humanitarian, legal and ethical issues. AIDS over the world and way attempts have been made to control the infection and the transmission of the life threatening problem. Recognized as an emerging disease only in the early 1980's. AIDS has been rapidly established itself throughout the world. AIDS has evolved from a mysterious illness to a global pandemic which has infected tens of millions within 20 years . HIV/AIDS spread fastest where there is poverty, powerlessness , and social instability It is estimated that 34-36 million people are living with HIV/ AIDS. Already more than 20 million people have been infected since the virus first appeared (Park, 2005) .

Nepal also significantly affected by HIV/AIDS epidemics .The first positive case was identified in July 1988 in Nepal. By the end of 2015, National Center of ADS and STD control, Teku Kathmandu was published that the total number of HIV positive case reached to 64000 which is taken very higher comparatively with other countries.

Significance of the study.

HIV and AIDS is burning problem in the world. It is a great challenge for Nepal also. Still there is no cure for HIV and AIDS. Health education awareness program and mass media are the key factors to avoid the problems. So micro level researches are important for every individual and organization which are working at grass root level. Hopefully following are the significance of the study.

- The result of the study will serve as a guideline for developing policies and program related with promoting awareness.

- The study result will be useful for concerned person and agencies for planning and implementing.
- Will be helpful for evaluating related to awareness program and policies
- The finding of the study will be guideline for further study in target community.

Review of Related Literature

Literature review is the foundation of the study and it helps to gather information and helps to develop new knowledge, investigate idea and result of previous related study. The researchers' study will be strong, supportive and justified with the help of literature review.

The first national AIDS prevention and control program was launched by the government of Nepal in 1988. This program is known as the short term plan for AIDS prevention and control from the basic level. First medium term plan 1990-92, the second medium term plan for AIDS prevention and control in Nepal was formulated to cover the year 1993-97.

HIV and AIDS is not only a health problem but also the socio- economic repercussion of AIDS and also it is enormous because it does not only effect individual and families but also society and the country as a whole. AIDS was first recognized in the gay community in San Francisco in 1981, in the first person in the first officially recorded death of USSR citizen due to AIDS in 1988 (UNAIDS, 1999).

Chapagain (2004) had conducted research entitled “Impact of Mass Media on Enhancing Knowledge of HIV/AIDS and other STIS among Industrial workers” to find the major sources of information on HIV/ AIDS .

Bartaual (2004) had conducted research entitled “ Impact of mass media on knowledge of HIV / AIDS and STDS among migrant female carpet worker. (A study of Kathmandu valley) To examine their knowledge towards condom against HIV / AIDS and to examine the sexual risk behavior of migrant female carpet worker -83 women were selected by using purposive sampling method and interview schedule were used and found that the knowledge of condom was almost universal and knowledge of condom against HIV/AIDS also universal but few of them had never heard of the majority of female carpet-workers were aware that HIV/ AIDS are transmitted through heterosexual intercourse.

Gharti, Chhetri (2006) had conducted a research entitled “theoretical knowledge on sexual health among the college girl students “ exposed the sexual perception of human result out the unsafe sexual intercourse.

Adhikari, (2007) had conducted research entitled “ knowledge and perception of HIV \ AIDS among married Dalit women of sundarbazar VDC Lamjung District” . To identity the knowledge and perception on HIV /AIDS of Dalit people. One hundred ten household were selected by using purposive sampling method. The study conducted that respondents of this study areas had little knowledge about different topic of HIV/AIDS .Most of the respondents were found illiterate about causes mode of transmission, and sign and symptoms.

Methodology

This study was based on cross –sectional survey .

Sources of data

The primary sources of data were the married women of Madhesi community in ward-9 of Siddharthamunicipality.

Sampling procedure

Female of Madhesi community were the respondents of the study . Two hundred seventy five female aged (25-49) was the study population. Whole population was not possible to include to the study with in the limit time resources . Among 275 madhesi women (age 25-49) of ward no -9 with the presupposition of HIV insertion 110 (40 %) were selected on the basis of systematic sampling .

Tools of Data Collection

To meet the objective, it is necessary to use suitable research tools for data collection. The researcher used structural schedule for this purpose.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher had visit the Chairman of ward no. 9, Siddharthnagar municipality with authorized letter from health , physical and population education department and then the researcher had visited selection respondents door to door and explained the purpose of the study. Then the researcher created a favorable situation for interview women, who had not shown interest in supplying answer were not forced for interview.

Result & Discussion

This Chapter deals with analysis & interpretation of the data that were collected from the field survey. The data were tabulated and kept in sequential order according to the purpose of the study. Then the data were analyzed on the basic of percentage and table.

Table No. 1

Knowledge of HIV/AIDS by level of education.

Response	Literate		Illiteratesaz	
	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	55	91.67	28	56
No	5	8.3	22	44
Total	60	100	50	100

From the above table 91.67% of literate women were about HIV/AIDS and remaining 8.3% respondents werenot heard about HIV/AIDS. Similarly 56% of illiterate women were known about HIV/AIDS.

Thus, it can be shown from the table that there is slight different in knowledge of HIV/AIDS between literate and illiterate women. However, knowledge about HIV/AIDS among literals is slightly higher than that of illiterate women.

Table No. 2

View on HIV and AIDS

The table 6 present that 56.27% respondent know about non-communicable disease, 8.18% knew about non-communicable disease, 13.63% about fatal disease and remaining 20.90% knew about dangerous disease.

View on HIV and AIDS

Typing of disease	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Communicable	63	57.27
Non – Communicable	9	8.18
Fatal	15	13.63
Dangerous	23	20.90
Total	100	100

Respondent did not confidently answer on DIV/AIDS. They were feeling uneasy to answer. Some of the respondent replied that it is a fatal disease created by unhealthy human behavior some of other said it is a sexually transmitted problem . According to them, it is a dangerous disease.

Table No. 3

Method of preventing HIV and AIDS

Way of prevention	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Medicines	7	6.36
Awareness	23	20.90
Avoid unprotected sexual intercourse	27	24.54
Traditional healer	4	3.63
Health education	49	44.54
Total	110	100

In this study respondent were about the measure of prevention of HIV and AIDS transmission. Only 6.36% knew to prevent HIV/AIDS from medicine, 20.90% from awareness 24.54% from avoid of unprotected sexual intercourse, 3.63% from traditional healer and remaining 44.54% were known to prevent HIV/AIDS from health education.

Table No. 4

Awareness about infected person:

Have you seen any people living with HIV/AIDS in your society?	No. of respondent	Percentage (%)
Yes	11	10
No	99	90

Total	110	100
Traditional healer	4	3.63
Health education	49	44.54
Total	110	100

The table represents that 90% of the respondents ignore the presence and absence of the HIV/AIDS infected people in the society, only two of the respondents i.e. 10% had replied that they had seen people living with HIV/AIDS in their society. Thus most of the respondents were found less aware about infected people at their locality.

Table no -5

Distribution of perception towards HIV infected person

Respondent opinion	No. of respondent	Percentage %
Love & care them	15	13.63%
Hate them	77	70%
Rehabilitation	13	11.81%
Others	5	4.56%
Total	110	100%
Total	110	100

Regarding the perception towards HIV infected people 15 I.e. 13.63% respondents wanted to love and care to them. 77, i.e. 70% wanted to hate them ,13 i.e. 11.81% demanded their rehabilitation and 5 i.e. 4.56% had other perception . Thus , Most of the respondents had negative attitude towards HIV infected people.

Conclusion:

The study reveals that females in Nepal, including married women, have very limited access to accurate information regarding sex and sex-related matters. This lack of information significantly affects their awareness of HIV/AIDS, including its causes, symptoms, modes of transmission, and preventive measures. As a result, many women remain uninformed and vulnerable to various sexual health issues. A major finding of the study is the widespread prevalence of misconceptions about sex among respondents, indicating a serious gap in knowledge and awareness. Key barriers to improving women's sexual health in the region include poverty, deeply rooted cultural norms, and persistent gender inequality. These structural challenges are complex and unlikely to be resolved in the near future. Although cultural discrimination may play a role in limiting knowledge about HIV/AIDS, the present study, being small in scale, does not provide sufficient evidence to confirm it as the primary obstacle. Overall, the lack of knowledge and awareness remains a critical issue, leading to continued sexual health problems among women in the studied community.

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Received : 2024/12/01

Revision received : 2024/12/02

Accepted : 2024/12/03

Social and Political Representation in the Poem Lunatic by Laxmi Prasad Devkota

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Abstract

A literary text can be analysed from multiple perspectives; however, in this article, the poem Lunatic has been examined through inductive reasoning, with a descriptive analysis of its philosophical and socio-political aspects. While making this analysis, the researcher has meticulously referenced figures of speech, imagery, symbols, metaphors, and phrases from the text. The reflective description and findings will enable common readers to understand the poem's message and the socio-political realities during the Rana Rule. This article will be useful for teachers, learners, and those with a keen interest in exploring the social reality of the time.

Keywords: philosophical, inductive, exploration, reflective, metaphors

Introduction

This article explores the social and political issues addressed in the poem Lunatic by Laxmi Prasad Devkota. I have undertaken a descriptive analysis of the poem's various themes through the lens of critical perspectives. Written during the Rana Regime—a time of political unrest and social inequality in Nepal—common people were deprived of the freedom of expression and forbidden to criticize the Ranas.

Devkota, as a perceptive citizen, closely observed and analyzed the social and political realities of his time. We find in the poem a sharp critique of the Ranas' behaviors and their treatment of the people. The speaker's fierce opposition to the brutality of the Rana rulers was beyond the understanding of many common readers. His pretended madness, expressive language, and use of symbols and imagery are both interesting and serious (Arcilla Jr, 2024).

The aim of this article is to highlight the existing social hypocrisy, inequality, corruption, and injustice of the time, presented through the poem's philosophical reflections. This will provide even common readers with a clear and detailed view of the Rana rulers and their behaviors, and insights into the sufferings and pain of the people under their rule (Bista, 2024). Ultimately, it reveals that when rulers are inhuman and cruel, the lives of the people become miserable.

Background

Laxmi Prasad Devkota, a renowned Nepali poet and critic of his time, wrote the poem Lunatic in 1956 B.S. (1900 A.D.). Influenced by the modernist trend, he experimented in Nepalese literature by donning the mask of a lunatic. Despite his deep understanding of Nepalese society, he presents himself as an idiot, insane, and mad so he could amplify the voices of commoners and offer a fresh perspective on the social order of his time. His sympathy for the common people is evident, as is his scathing criticism of the ruling elite.

In the line, “Clever and Eloquent You are!” he satirically addresses the so-called clever yet foolish Rana rulers (Timalsina, 2024). Their rules were rigid and inflexible, whereas he—through the speaker—championed flexible and humane values. This reveals his cleverness in evaluating both the rulers and the common people of his time. The class gap was severe, and commoners suffered greatly under the rulers’ inhumane treatment.

The rulers displayed inhuman and animalistic behaviors towards the people, showing no emotion or concern for the consequences of their brutality. Practices such as Sati (widow burning), exile, death penalty, and other punishments were intolerable for the people (Timalsina, 2020). Basic human rights—freedom of expression, education, health, personal dignity, and identity—were denied. We can see the class conflict between ruling class and the ruled ones in various social and cultural issues. The poet denies the power of so called fools and rich class people who are holding power and authority.

Devkota’s poem, therefore, addresses the urgent need of the time to oppose such practices and demand justice.

Rationale of the Study

The rationale of this qualitative research is to explore the deeper meanings within the lines, phrases, and words of Lunatic so that students, teachers, and literature enthusiasts can gain insights. The social and political aspects of the poem are explained in clear, simple language to ensure reader understanding.

This article also familiarizes readers with the behaviors of the Ranas and the realities of the Rana rule. It highlights the power of literary works to bring about social and political change.

Methodology

As a qualitative descriptive analysis, this study employs inductive reasoning, free from any bias or prior assumptions. The researcher maintains a neutral stance to provide evidence-based analysis without personal prejudices.

Thematic analysis—a flexible methodology for exploring central themes or messages in poetry—is employed here (Terry et al., 2017). This approach goes beyond the literal meanings to reveal deeper significance, emotions, and ideas expressed by the poet.

Google Scholar, End- Note and Chat-Gpt, have been used for textual references and grammatical accuracy.

Textual Analysis of Lunatic

According to Nissani & Lohani (2013), the poem addresses socio-political representation. During the Rana regime, the ruling class imposed conservative and rigid values, resulting in gender and caste discrimination, economic disparities, and oppression (Lotter, 2011).

The poem highlights how these inhuman practices were enforced solely for the rulers’ pleasure, denying people their dignity and basic rights.

Different World Views

The speaker of the poem contrasts the rigid world of the rulers with the flexible, fluid world of the common people:

“Yours is thick and mine is thin, you have a world of solids and mine of vapour” (p. 162).

He further states:

“You are strong prose, but I am liquid poetry” (p. 161).

These lines highlight the different worldviews: the commoners' world is more flexible, while the rulers' world is rigid and cruel.

From the very beginning, the speaker reveals his alternative perspective:

“I touch objects whose existence the world denies” (p. 160).

This reflects his unique perception of reality.

Critique of Conformity and Rebellion Against It

In Lunatic, we find a critique of conformity and a celebration of rebellion. The speaker challenges social norms and expectations in lines like:

“I see flowers in stones / and a fairy in moon” (p. 161),

“In an uncaring crowd, I build my own world” (p. 162).

Similarly, in:

“They called me one gone crazy” (p. 162),

“Your universe to me is but a hair” (p. 164),

the speaker identifies as a rebel against the corrupt and hypocritical rulers.

Political Representation: Condemnation of Corruption and Oppression

The poem also reflects political corruption and oppression. In lines like:

“Your highly learned men are blind fool” (p. 163),

Devkota criticizes the rulers' blind misuse of power and their role in creating social inequalities.

He condemns corruption by portraying leaders and institutions as “robbers” who exploit those they should serve.

Similarly, lines like:

“I have denounced the Alexander the great” (p. 163),

highlight the speaker's condemnation of the Rana rulers' foolish and oppressive behaviors.

The Individual Versus Society: Resistance and Alienation

Themes of resistance and alienation run throughout the poem. The speaker's alienation is seen in:

“Surely, my friend, insane am I, Such is my plight!” (p.161),

where he identifies himself as an insane man, different from “normal” humans.

This alienation is also seen in:

“I see a flower in a stone, and hear the songs of silence. Don't you know I drink from an invisible cup?” (p.161).

And in:

“Your gold, my iron & your heaven is my hell.” (p.163),

the speaker rejects materialistic values and champions human dignity over wealth.

Empathy for the Marginalized: A Call for Social Justice

The speaker of the poem is sympathetic towards the marginalized and oppressed:

“I find the blind the world's pioneers & and the king a pauper” (p.164).

This shows his support for those unaware of their suffering and his call for social justice and equality.

His rage at exploitation is evident in:

“the tiger pouncing upon the deer and big fish chasing the smaller ones” (p.165).

These images make it clear he cannot tolerate any form of exploitation or cruelty.

Conclusion

Lunatic by Devkota is a masterpiece of Nepalese literature. It provides a sharp critique of the Rana rule's social inequalities, hypocrisies, absurdities, and brutal oppression. The poem reveals how the Rana rulers enjoyed luxury while common people lived under severe suppression.

The poem also addresses themes of alienation, frustration, and hypocrisy as obstacles to social and political justice. The speaker's revolt against these norms represents a call for equality and social reform. Ultimately, the poem demonstrates that the inhumanity and irrationality of the Rana rulers contributed directly to their downfall.

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Received : 2024/12/04
Revision received : 2024/12/05
Accepted : 2024/12/06

Ethno-Religious Ethos; the Silk Road's Teaching to the Modern World

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Abstract

The paper examines on ethno-religious exhibition along the storied Trans-Eurasian Silk routes and attempts to identify how the people maintained peaceful relationships with an exchange and assimilation of one another's culture and religion. On this background, the Silk Road, which is identified to have thrived as a precursor to modern-day, advanced civilization, is surveyed to be a passage without threats to foster friendly relations among nations and people. Employing the document and narrative analysis methods of the qualitative study design, the paper also attempts to explore the historical context of the evolution of the Silk Road and its enduring contributions to the ancient human civilizations that existed during which times the Road provided critical links. The paper focuses on contact of different religions on the Silk Road, the diffusion of ideas, and the exchange of arts, artifacts and cultures. In addition, it also explores the phenomenon of travel culture history that linked different geographical locations together in a line and propelled the crucial connectivity among diverse people to interact along this epic land and water highway, which shall be exemplary to combat against the dissonance of present day world.

Keywords: Silk Road, Trans-Eurasian, diffusion, ancient, human civilization

Introduction

The Silk Road was the trans-Eurasian trade conduit that served as an essential network of land and maritime routes that connected the world in ancient times. Originating in China, during the rule of the Han dynasty, the Silk Road served not only to facilitate trade and commerce but also aided as an extraordinary path of cultural connectivity and coexistence amongst nations and peoples during the time. This massive, historical caravan route flourished roughly from '100 B.C.E to around 1450' (Andrea, 2014) and reshaped the socio-religious, cultural and economic landscapes of Asia and Europe. Ferdinand von Richthofen, a German explorer and geologist gave the name the 'Silk Road' or the 'Silk Roads' to these routes in 1877 because the primary and the most important commodity that was transported along the road was silk. Nevertheless, there is debate on whether the term represents the characteristics of the land and sea routes of the Silk Road in entirety.

Historically, with the exploration of the Persian Gulf in the first century, the trade connectivity between China and Rome was created with a transit to the waters of ancient Persia. In 97 AD, the Chinese Han dynasty general sent Gan Ying as his envoy to Rome. However, he could not reach there because he was given false information by China's Parthian enemies who did not want China to be in direct contact with Rome, as that would jeopardize their profits from the lucrative silk trade (The First Contact between Rome and China, n.d.). However, with the accession of Marcus Aurelius as Emperor of Rome, his envoys in the year 166 initiated the first direct contact between the distant civilizations of China and that Rome which ultimately sowed the seeds of prosperity and the intercourse and growth of cultures, religions, and trade. And, since the first direct contact was made,

the Silk Road provided essential links to scale up interactions among the travelers of the varied and distant civilizations.

The trade routes that systematically began during Han dynasty got momentum under the Tang dynasty of China by resulting it to be a hub of exchange for both the socio-economic and cultural-religious activities. As noted supra, the routes connected Far East, Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent, the Iranian and Anatolian plateaus, the Caucasus, the Arabian Peninsula and the Mediterranean region and Europe (Sarbar, 2017). On this vast geographical tableau, the Silk Road served as historical sites of network for interplay and communications among travelers from different parts of the world and paved a new way of communication directly among foreign publics. Consequently, with its growth and momentum, it ultimately turned out to be a space of extraordinary vibrancy in the exchange of goods and also the mechanism for the profound diffusion of values, ideas, cultures, philosophies, scientific knowledge, and religions.

As one of the first, complicated, international trade routes, the Silk Road - 6462 km straight route from Xi'an (Chinese Province) in the east to Antioch (Greco-Roman City) in the west (Griffith, 2017, p.11) left many indelible implications to the modern world today. Despite multiple serpentine land passes composed of rough, arid stretches through deep and the numerous networks woven across oceanic geographies' of maritime routes, the Silk Routes brought the world closer during this period and served to bind people and nations together. Thus, the Silk Road served as a critical highway for globalization that spanned for more than 15 centuries, from "100 BCE to around 1450" (Andrea,). In addition, the Silk Road has a significant, positive history in the promotion of a global culture of dialogue, respect, communication, tolerance, negotiation and cooperation. The intermingling of peoples of diverse socio-cultural, linguistic backgrounds along the road and their shared values and support system for one another are recognized to be key components of global diplomatic cultures in modern times.

Today, the historical records and archaeological evidences from the excavations exhibit that the Silk Road became a space of connectivity between east and west, and brought world art, culture and religion closer, with beneficial cross –fertilization. And, thus, it helped break 'closed door' state of countries into a more 'open door' policy that fostered prosperity of that part of the world at that time. Hence, this historic road turned out to be a fascinating crossroad for the confluence of the varied cultures and religions. On this backdrop, this study paper attempts to offer a comprehensive analysis on how the Silk Road evolved over time and how the intersect of religious ideologies and practices, and the cultural exchange by itinerants led profound impact in the development of the societies and nations from second to mid fifteenth century.

Method

This study focuses on the emergence of the historical trade routes-- 'the Silk Road'-- and the caravan routes' implications in fostering intercultural exchange and on the spread of the different religions in the lands of the Silk Road. Additionally, it also examines the history of the culture of travel in ancient times. Based on the identified evidences, through narrative analysis and literature reviews, the author prepares a comprehensive study essay. By employing the tools of comparison and contrast, critical analysis and integration of prior knowledge appraisal of qualitative research, this study paper delves into the scope of ethno-religious harmony that gained momentum with the evolution of this ancient singular trade and travel network.

In addition, for the study of the history of the routes, its historical significance and its connections among different cultures, the intensive consultation of the relevant books, dictionaries, and the research articles published in Research Gate, Google scholar and Academia are made.

Result and Discussion

Religious Inheritance from Silk Road to the Modern World

It is accepted that the Silk Road was not only the principal, economic corridor but it was also a melting pot of the people of different cultures, traditions and religions. On this surrounding, it proves out to be a significant site of study through religious praxis. The diffusion of different faiths resulted in religious syncretism along the Silk Road. In addition, the religious diversity of the travelers and their contact with local inhabitants of the communities and cities along the Silk Road aided in fostering fusion of different religions and cultures that lead to greater respect and acceptance of multiculturalism and multi religiosity. Chang Liu (2024) argues that the religious values such as the, 'Hindu tradition of not consuming beef, the Muslim prohibition against pork, the vegetarian practices of Buddhists, and the Jain aversion to root vegetables' passed through these routes throughout its history. And, significantly this practice has got a global recognition till today's time.

Besides, the Silk Road remained vibrantly active to promote religious tolerance and fraternity by availing profound scope for the exchange of religious values and beliefs. The intangible impact that the Silk Road brought along with travel civilization—the narratives of the ancient travelers-- was the space of dialogue among the diverse range of people who journeyed through it, which paved a way for the dissemination of knowledge and philosophy. For an instance, 'Arabs travelled to India and China, Chinese to Central Asia, India, and Iran. Buddhism itself was carried along these roads from India through central Asia to Tibet, China, and Japan. Islam was carried by Sufi teachers, and by armies' (Kurin, 2002). This justifies that the different religious values and belief systems along the road had essentially created incredible experiences and advanced civilization then.

Many complex Caves of Buddhism in Dunhuang that show the 'flying Apsaras on murals' (Xia, 2024) and the artifacts obtained there are instructive to understand that Buddhism spread in China from its origination in India. And whence, it spread onward to Korea and Japan. This dispersion is likewise encountered with Daoism and Confucianism and the road helped establish its deep roots among the people throughout East Asia. Thus, the religious and spiritual presence of Buddhism along the Silk Road served as an instrument to link Europe with Asia.

Likewise, Mohammedanism (Islamism) was another, major religion that spread through the Silk Road. The Muslim travelers, preachers, mystics, Sufi teachers and the merchants served as mediators by propagating these religious beliefs in different parts of central Asia and Europe; both by the land and by the sea (Nanji & Niyozov, 2002). Nanji & Niyozov also claims that the Sufi leaders like 'Ahmad Yasawi (d. 1166)' and 'Bahauddin Naqshband (1318-89)' built communities that nurtured vernacular tradition and languages along the routes. Moreover, many chronicles show that the Muslim law, theology, culture, arts, and architecture spread across the Silk Road with greater influence in Spain, Egypt and Mesopotamia. Besides the spread of Islamism from land, the maritime travel also enabled this religion to expand its presence into the coastal cities of Southeast Asian nations, China and the Indian Subcontinent. Thus, by the end of the 9th century, 'Baghdad turned out to be the magnetic city' (de Freitas, n.d) as international trade center, which cater in spread of this religious ideologies across the continents. Consequently, the Silk Road connectivity aided to help the Muslim tradition and school of thought flourish across the world.

Hinduism, unlike to Buddhism, did not spread wide beyond India and South East Asia during this period. However, this religion was introduced into Indonesia and Malaysia by Silk Roads merchant travelling the maritime trade routes (UNESCO, n.d.). The invocation of the Hindu deities and spirits:

Brahma, Indra, Vishnu, Mahe'svara, Skandha-Kumara, Kapila and Manibhadra in the religious texts and arts of Buddhism and Manichaeism (Klimkeit, Meserve, Karimov, & Shackle, n.d.) indicate that there was contact, influence and exchange of Hinduism with other active religions of the time that existed along the Silk Road.

Above and beyond these all, the ancient Iranian traders made their strong presence felt in China during early 4th century CE. These Sogdian immigrants transported their distinct arts, religion, ideas, and technologies with them while they travelled along this road. Being a follower of Zoroastrianism, named after the ancient Persian prophet Zarathustra, they spread this religion to India and China (Kotyk, 2024). And, these Sogdians, in China, are the best example of the proselytized group of people who had the opportunity to interact with a range of other religions like Buddhism, Hindu and Muslim along the diversified Silk Road and thus, they conversed with different other religions for adaptation.

Sogdians, the ancient Iranians, the most vibrant traders along Silk Road, spread Manichaeism beliefs in China, across Eurasia and in the Roman Empire. The influence of trade across transcontinental regions and their success to exert influence upon them spurred the Sogdians' religious spread.

Likewise, Judaism, in another hand, was the religion that traveled along the Silk Road and enriched its original version with contact to the people along the Silk Road. When Babylonians conquered the Southern part of an Israelite kingdom in 586 B.C.E, many Jews were exiled. They traveled along the Silk Road and developed their own settlements there, especially in the cities like Bukhara and Samarkhand of Uzbekistan, the gateway to east and west connectivity of Silk Road travel.

Similarly, the members of the breakaway faith from Byzantine Christianity, the Nestorians, journeyed along the road and spread Christianity in central Asia, Mongolia, Turkestan, Japan and China. Steward claims teaching of their art and culture, the Nestorians became able to set establish Christian communities along the Silk Road. They even were able to be 'Christian kings and Christian generals in China and in the adjacent countries before the middle of the 7th century' (Steward, 1928, p. XXXI). Travelling through the same passage, these missionaries established strong communities in Central Asia, China, and India and established churches and monasteries in the regions. As of impact, the Syriac language and script of Nestorians has become the basis of the writings of many central Asian languages today.

Hence, in a nutshell, the Silk Road played a pivotal role in flourishing religious ideologies, faiths, and belief systems, and resulted in the proliferation of many religions. By embracing the religious diversities, this road has left an ineffaceable legacy to be acknowledged by the people of modern day civilization. Since the evolution of the Silk Road, it not only promoted trade but also many religious ideologies and practices. Religious tolerance and acceptance of diversity were the key features which aided in cooperation and mutual trust among the travelers and local inhabitants along the routes, which are the true insights to be learned in present time.

The Rhetoric of Art, Culture and Language along the Silk Road:

Since the beginning and ongoing flourishing of the Silk Road, the road served as a channel for the cultural and artistic exchange. Through promoting contact and building connections among the disparate states and people, the ancient Silk Road greatly contributed to the human civilization. In addition to the transportation of precious, tangible goods from the east to the west and the other way around, many intangible values, practices, and beliefs made their way through this wider network

of travel routes. In that context, the Silk Road endured as the route of communication, exchange, and interaction among diverse cultures of the east and west. Thus, besides the movement of silk, porcelain, spices and many other precious items, the Silk Road resulted in dispersal of arts, languages and knowledge resulting in the advancement of world, cultural variety.

The pottery and textiles and images of the different deities and manuscripts, revealed through exploration and studies, are striking evidences that the Silk Road's history is rich in respect to its cultural depth. To cite an example, 'the potential interaction between the representatives of Hellenistic culture and the Qin Dynasty in the late 3rd century B.C.E can be observed as a prototype of the cultural affluence' (Samoylovskiy & Samoylovskiy, 2024, p.27'). This demonstrates how the crisscross of cultures prospered between two distant cultures in at the nascent period of the road's existence.

In fact, the cultural cross-fertilization played an important role to connect multiple civilizations. The tea that originated in China developed in Europe as famous aspect of diet and food culture during 16th and 17th centuries (Bin, 2023). Likewise, the extensive carpets with rich golden fabric, sea silk, as well as glassware and similar items were brought into Asia, especially in China from Rome and Persia along this road. A gilded silver plate that dated back to 2nd century with an image of Greco-Roman god Dionysus discovered in Gansu province (China) is an example of how the road served as instrument to the exchange of art (Samoylovskiy & Samoylovskiy, 2024, p. 9). This process of exchange not only promoted trade and commerce but also served as catalyst to nurture cultural symbols, beliefs systems, and shared experiences along the Silk Road. The exchange of the art works and decorative items containing images of the deities of the time are rich evidence that this road was a unique contact zone for interaction, communication, and negotiation amongst nations and people that, in sum, can be claimed to be the key contribution to the cultural diplomacy during the time.

Leaving a strong legacy, the Silk Road served as a facilitator to intercultural exchange and the spread of cultural ideologies and the practices among on the overlapping and wide ranging roads and seaways. The Meeting of travelers with distinctly diverse socio-cultural, linguistics, and religious backgrounds along the routes not only made it possible for the exchange of goods but that also resulted in 'unprecedented transmission and exchange of knowledge, ideas, beliefs, customs and traditions over three millennia (Andrea, 2014). Cultural exchange and mutual trust among the travelers enabled them to make great strides in civilizational prosperity and harmony of the globe.

On this entire process of the diversification of human civilization, the dialogue and communication were at backbone which brought the languages in interaction along the Silk Road. Dissemination of the significant beliefs was made through visual and verbal communication. Besides the use of iconography on the art and artifacts, the diffusion of languages happened along the Silk Road. Dough Hitch, historical linguistics, has counted twenty languages written in at least twenty scripts in first millennium CE in Turfan only (Mair, 2021, p.5). The fact indicates that linguistically, Silk Road was remarkably diversified as a global language exchange basket. All the major languages of the time: Old Turkic, Chinese, Sanskrit, Sogdian, Middle Persian, New Persian, Parthian, Tibetan, Mongolian, Prakrit, Tumshuqese, Tocharian A and B, Bactrian, Khotanese, Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, Tangut, Greek, and Khitan ((Mair, 2021, p.5) were in interactions for cross-cultural communication, generally all along the routes and in particular at and around Tarim Basin. Consequently, this ultimately turned sport hall for the interaction and fusion of ideas, knowledge, culture and the histories.

Thus, the Silk Road contributed to the development of richer heritages with the exchange of art and culture. The transcontinental features of the Road created flourishing opportunities for cultural richness and the development of art. It was along the Silk Road that 'Hellenistic ideas and cultural traditions of Persia, mixed with central Asia which were transmitted from East to India and China by enriching the diversity of world arts and culture (UNESCO Silk Roads Project, 1988). In addition, the unique Islamic art, clothing and architectural style, Chinese calligraphy, paintings, textiles, ceramics, metalwork and wide varieties of art

works spread along the road during its many centuries have been a tremendous legacy to the modern world's civilization.

Conclusion

Silk Road history celebrates the glories of the ancient world between the second centuries B.C.E. to the mid-fifteenth century. It was instrumental in flourishing of the civilizations, through diversity, religious interdependence, and globalized trade. It connected East with West and left a wide range of influences and achievements in world history. Beyond trade, the Silk Road connected multiple, ancient civilizations of different religious and cultural backgrounds. The hybridization of the cultures along the Road is an enduring lesson that the modern world shall learn to address the observed discord around us today, so much of it in the name of religion and culture. Existing for around 1400 years and the harmony, which the Silk Road maintained, remains to be lasting testament of the ethno-religious diplomacy. The road served arteries for cultural diversity, religious interdependence and globalized trade. It connected East with West and left a wide range of influence and significance upon world history. Beyond trade, the Silk Road connected multiple ancient civilizations of different religions and cultural backgrounds. Hence, the hybridization of the cultures and the religious syncretism were the seminal features of the Silk Road that proved it to be an antique version of our modern era's globalization, and that holds special significance in the world history today. The ethno-religious approach to reconciliation and the enduring practices of the harmony within diversity and the religious and cultural characteristics of this road are the evidences to learn on addressing the dissonance that is resulted due to the clashes of civilization in today's globe.

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Received : 2024/11/22
Revision received : 2024/11/28
Accepted : 2024/11/29

Perceptions of Material Wealth in Buddhist Economics

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Abstract

This article explores the perception of material wealth and its significance in human life within the framework of Buddhist economics. Buddhist economics is a philosophy centered on economic well-being, emphasizing happiness, peace, and stability achieved through the regulation of desires, selfless service, and right livelihood. Also referred to as middle path economics, it advocates for the avoidance of harm to oneself and others. The research synthesizes diverse sources, encompassing articles, journals, books, and Buddhist literature, to offer a comprehensive analysis. Employing a qualitative research methodology, the study employs explanatory and exploratory approaches, with particular emphasis on content analysis. The findings of the study indicate that, in the context of Buddhist economics, material wealth is perceived as a means rather than an end in itself. It is recognized as a valuable resource that, when acquired and employed conscientiously, can yield positive outcomes not only for individuals but also for others. Ultimately, this collective well-being and happiness contribute to the broader advancement of humanity.

Keywords: Buddhist economics, middle path economics, selfless service, material wealth, right livelihood

Introduction

The term “Buddhist economics” was used by E. F. Schumacher in 1955, when he travelled to Burma as an economic consultant. The term was used in his essay named “Buddhist Economics”, which was first published in 1966 in Asia: A Handbook, republished in his influential collection *Small Is Beautiful* (1973). The term is currently used by his followers and by Theravada Buddhist writers, such as Prayudh Payutto, Padmasiri De Silva, and Luang Por Dattajivo. Schumacher argues that Buddhist teaching of right livelihood mentioned in the Eightfold Path is the Buddhist way of life which is considered as the necessary step of a

Buddhist economics (Varma, 1993). According to Ritthithit, Leeka, & et. al (2017), Buddhist economics encompasses three interconnected aspects of human existence: human beings, society, and the natural environment. It emphasizes that economic actions should be conducted in a manner that avoids harming oneself and others, thereby preventing a decline in the overall quality of life. Therefore, Buddhist economics can be considered as the middle path economics, promoting the principle of non-harm towards oneself and others.

Payutto (1994) has defined Buddhist economics as the “*middle path*”. Although that may look, from an outside perspective, to be a place between two extremes, it is not actually a compromise rather a way of “getting things exactly right”

E.F. Schumacher uses the principles of *right livelihood*, inter-dependence and widdle way to propose a nonviolent way in economic and political life. Guruge (2008) explains that Buddhist economics tries to maximise 14 Rupandehi Campus Journal Volume 5, 2025 satisfaction rather than consumption. It measures harmony instead of annual consumption, and seeks to raise the worth of an employee in its place of looking him as a cost item.

In his article titled “*WESTERN ECONOMICS VERSUS BUDDHIST ECONOMICS*”, Laszlo Zsolnai (2007) summarizes that happiness, peace, and stability can be attained through the control of desires and selfless service. However, these ideas of Buddhist philosophy may seem irrational to western

economics, which focuses on creating demand and maximizing profit or utility. Buddhist economics challenges the fundamental principles of modern western economics and proposes alternative principles, including the reduction of harm, the simplification of desires, the promotion of non-violence, the encouragement of genuine care, and the fostering of generosity. Fazal & Menon (2016) writings seems to conclude that Buddhist Economics is a hefty topic covering many areas including Right livelihood, Appropriate spending, Attitude to wealth, Economic ethics for leaders, Monastic and lay people economics, and the Fair economic distribution. The Buddha not only mentions the importance of material wealth for lay life but also shows how wealth should be acquired, protected and utilized.

Literature Review

Loy, R. Devit (2003) seems to state that it is wrong to say that wealth completely solves the problem of poverty. So Instead of focusing only on poverty, people also need to address the wealth and growth with its cost on person, society and to entire ecosystem. According to Loy and Devit (2003), it is incorrect to assume that wealth alone can completely eradicate the issue of poverty. Instead of solely concentrating on poverty, it is crucial for individuals to also consider the consequences of wealth and economic growth on individuals, society, and the overall ecosystem. By recognizing the broader impacts and costs associated with wealth and growth, a more comprehensive approach can be adopted to address the complex challenges related to poverty and sustainable development. Kotegoda (2006) study seems to conclude that Buddha was not against the happiness derived from material wealth of lay people, although the main emphasis of Buddhism is to get out of the Samsāric presence by realizing Nibbana. The Buddha attempted to give ethical importance in method of earning material wealth. He was against unethical and immoral ways of it. Ariyabuddhiphongs, V., & Jaiwong, D. (2010) study argue that Buddhist five precepts having wealth, using wealth, not being in debt, and engaging in a harmless profession leads to subjective wealth, and happiness. Research done on four hundred residents of Bangkok wants to show that happiness begins by not transgressing upon oneself and violating others, and may depend less on what one has than on what one has left after paying off the bills. According to the study conducted by Ariyabuddhiphongs and Jaiwong (2010) "Observance of Buddhist Five Precepts, wealth, and happiness among Buddhists in Bangkok, Thailand", it is argued that adhering to the Buddhist five precepts, which include having wealth, utilizing wealth, avoiding debt, and pursuing a harmless profession, contributes to subjective wealth and happiness. The research, involving four hundred residents of Bangkok, aims to demonstrate that true happiness stems from abstaining from actions that harm oneself or others, and may depend less on material possessions and more on the remaining resources after fulfilling financial obligations. This suggests that the ethical aspects of wealth management and financial responsibility play a significant role in attaining personal well-being and contentment. Michael (2017) seems to accomplish that the Buddha has emphasized the term "less is more" which is applied for attaining real happiness to meet one's needs prudently. This is just opposite to the Benthamite Utilitarian view of more wants is always chosen to less. Self-command permits for Buddhist to identify that the desire for more and more things leads ultimately to suffering, not to happiness. Dorjey, (2018) express that a part of earning must be given as donation for the wellbeing of people. He argues that the four things must be kept in mind for happy life. They are the generosity of material things, the generosity of freedom from fear, the generosity of spiritual teaching which entails offering comfort, concern and advice to support other's psychological and emotional well-being, and the generosity of love. Ven. Neminda (2019) appears to conclude his article that moral issues are associated with material wealth in Buddhist economics. Material wealth is one of the important factors contributing to the development of a Buddhist economics, which supports in poverty alleviation. When people are provided with opportunities to earn material wealth, they will be content, has no anxiety or fear, and will not harm to the society,

which helps to prepare peaceful and prosperous society. Sauwalak Kittiprapas (2020) seems to tell that limited desires for material wealth and finding knowledge of its appropriate level gives happiness to mankind. He further adds while acquiring material wealth, one should not give over load to self as well as the others. Material wealth can be benefited in the society if people have *sīla* (morality), *dāna* (generosity, sharing), and *paññā* (wisdom). He concludes that Buddhism does not reject materials development, if it is supervised by Dhamma. Numerous research scholars and writers have explored various perspectives on the significance of material wealth in achieving contentment for humanity. These studies have been explored that material wealth holds little significance in Buddhist philosophy, as the focus is primarily on spiritual wealth. But these studies have not been principally focused on material wealth and its role in humankind as per Buddhist philosophy. This article aims to bridge this gap by concentrating on the perceptions of material wealth in Buddhist economics through a systematic review of relevant articles and conducting reflective analysis.

Methodology

In this modern world, many people place a great importance on acquiring material wealth, which is also a key focus in Buddhist economics. Surprisingly, even those who possess a lot of wealth often experience unhappiness and suffering. This leads to make questions about Buddhism views on material wealth, its perceptions and significance of material wealth on Buddhist economics. These questions have motivated 16 Rupandehi Campus Journal Volume 5, 2025 researchers to explore this topic, and this article aims to provide insights into how material wealth is perceived and its importance in human life. The study draws upon various sources such as articles, journals, books, and Buddhist literature as the main references. The research methodology employed is qualitative, using explanatory and exploratory approaches, with a specific emphasis on content analysis. Given the brevity of this article, only the most relevant and closely related sources have been selected to support the arguments and findings.

Discussion

“It is not wealth that stands in the way of liberation but the attachment to wealth; not the enjoyment of pleasurable things but the craving for them”, Schumacher (1973). So, craving and attachment on wealth are the obstacles of happiness of the mankind. Helping others with own wealth gives us satisfaction and keeping necessary wealth gives happiness. A person can be happy who does not crave for money and spends it not only for himself but also for the welfare of others.

A person suffers because of pursuing unnecessary wealth. On the one hand, he suffers to earn money and on the other hand, he wastes his life in accumulating money. In fact, modern people have isolated themselves from the path of wisdom, religion, and happiness. They are indulged into accumulating wealth by corrupting, harming others, killing animals and so forth. But they do not use that wealth for others, nor they ultimately use it for themselves.

E. Hardy (1959) discusses the teachings from the *Anguttarnikāya* that The Buddha shared regarding the four factors that lead to happiness in the present world. They are *Uttansampadā*, *Arakkhasampadā*, *Kalyanamittatā*, and *Samajivikatā*. Let's explore each of these in detail:

- a) ***Uttansampadā*:** *Uttansmpada* refers to the ‘attainment of energy.’ It emphasizes the importance of being mindful and dedicated to personal growth and development. Regardless of one’s occupation, it encourages having an inquisitive mind and the ability to organize and accomplish tasks effectively.

- b) **Arakkhasampada:** This term translates to the ‘attainment of watchfulness.’ It highlights the significance of being attentive, watchful, and cautious in safeguarding one’s possessions from theft or destruction.
- c) **Kalyanamittata:** Kalyanamittata promotes the idea of ‘keeping good friends.’ It emphasizes the importance of surrounding oneself with morally upright individuals who possess good values. It encourages cultivating virtues such as respectfulness towards elders (saddha), morality (sila), generosity and sacrifice (caga), and wisdom (panna).
- d) **Samajivikata:** Samajivikata means ‘leading a balanced life.’ It emphasizes the importance of maintaining a state of balance in both mental and physical aspects, even during the extremes of life’s highs and lows. It further emphasizes the importance of living within one’s means and avoiding both debt and unnecessary hardship, as Buddhism prohibits both.

Overall, *Samajivikata* encompasses these teachings and encourages adhering to these principles in order to lead a balanced and fulfilling life.

In the *Vyagghapajja-sutta* of the *Aiguttara-nikaya*, the Buddha seems to praise the usefulness of balancing one’s income and expenditure where it is clearly mentioned that expenditure should not exceed one’s income. If somebody’s expenditure is more than his income, he cannot balance his budget. Whatever he earns is exhausted and unable to manage his household. Such a person always remains in deficit and running into debts. The Buddha said that it is very unethical if somebody does not settle loans borrowed from lenders and calls him a ‘Vassala’ (bad).

In his book “*A Middle Way for the Market Place*”, Payutto (2009), a Thai Buddhist monk, conveys the Buddha’s three significant economic messages regarding wealth for different individuals: monks, householders, and business people. These messages can be summarized as follows:

1. **Acquisition:** The acquisition of wealth should not involve exploitation but should be obtained through sincere effort and intelligent actions. It should be acquired in a morally upright manner.
2. **Safekeeping:** Wealth should be safeguarded and preserved as an investment for the progress of one’s livelihood and as a protection against future adversities. When accumulated wealth surpasses these two purposes, it can be utilized for the betterment of society by supporting the community.
3. **Utilization of Wealth:** Wealth can be used in the following ways: (1) to support oneself and one’s family, (2) to foster fellowship and social harmony, such as by hosting guests or supporting the activities of friends and relatives, and (3) to contribute to endeavours that promote the well-being of the community and society as a whole.
4. **Mental Attitude:** Wealth should not become an obsession or a source of worry and anxiety. It should be approached as a means for personal progress, individual growth, and happiness. There should be limitations on the pursuit of material wealth.

These messages highlight the importance of acquiring wealth ethically, managing it responsibly, and utilizing it for the benefit of oneself and others, while maintaining a healthy mental perspective on wealth and its role in one’s life.

According to Balachandran (2006), the Buddha did not encourage his lay followers to renounce their worldly activities. Instead, he advocated for the integration of economic and spiritual values to maximize overall benefits for both individuals and society. In this particular form of Buddhism, wealth, encompassing both material possessions and intangible qualities like wisdom and virtues, holds significant importance. The stability and harmony within society stem from the principles of equality and fair distribution of wealth.

Acquisition of wealth

The acquisition of wealth, as mentioned in the *Sutta Nipata*, is described by the Buddha as being achieved 18 Rupandehi Campus Journal Volume 5, 2025 through diligent effort, accompanied by physical exertion and hard work. This demonstrates the Buddha's encouragement for his lay followers to energetically pursue wealth, but in a manner consistent with moral principles. In another instance, the Buddha draws a comparison between earning wealth and bees collecting honey without causing harm to the flowers. This analogy underscores the importance of gradually accumulating wealth without causing harm to others. Buddhism strictly prohibits all illicit activities, including the trading of weapons, the killing of animals, and the trade of drugs and alcohol.

Uses of wealth

Prof Dr. Piyaratana (2019) writes in "Buddhist Perspective on Economical Preservation" that once individuals have acquired the necessary wealth in their lives, it is important to utilize it wisely for the benefit of themselves, their families, and their relatives. In line with the teachings of the Buddha, the income should be divided into four parts. The first part should be allocated for personal consumption, ensuring one's own well-being. The second part should be set aside to address any future obstacles or contingencies that may arise. The third part should be invested in income-generating ventures to secure future financial stability. Lastly, the fourth part should be dedicated to supporting children, parents, monks, and other deserving individuals. This allocation framework reflects the Buddhist approach to financial management during the Buddhist era, where it was deemed appropriate to allocate 50 percent of income for consumption and 50 percent for savings.

Protection of Wealth

According to the *Anguttara Nikaya*, wealth should be protected from confiscation by king, theft, fire, floods, and enemies. Another source shows that property can be dwindled away by six kinds of practices. The first practice is the habit in taking various kinds of intoxicating drinks. The second is the wondering around the streets for no reasons; addiction in celebration of the festival, third; the fourth is the involvement in gambling; the fifth is the company with bad friends; and the sixth is the habit of laziness which one says, it is too cold, it is too hot, it is too late, and it is too early. If one indulges in these six bad habits, he will destroy his property and his family. Avoidance of such practices in other words is the safety to his wealth.

According to Buddhist teachings, wealth is benefit if it is used for good purposes. Despite having greater success, the billionaires have to deserve their great successes for this they should also concern on common goods, such as social stability, skilled employees, infrastructure, and so forth. According to the principle of Buddhist teaching, all the concerned stakeholders should get equal benefits and distribution from the success of any organization.

Basangoda Rahul (2008) highlights the Buddha's emphasis on ethics in the pursuit of wealth, advocating for honesty, respect for customs, and avoidance of harm towards others. Wealth accumulation should be gradual and devoid of exploitation, akin to bees collecting honey without damaging flowers.

Dhammadvijaya (1992) highlights the generous contributions of wealthy lay followers to support the sangha Rupandehi Campus Journal Volume 5, 2025 19 and alleviate poverty. *Anathapindika*, a millionaire, exemplified this by providing daily sustenance for hundreds of monks and the impoverished. In an ideal society, guided by a just ruler, poverty would be eliminated, ensuring self-sufficiency and enabling support for monks through the community's surplus resources.

Material wealth can benefit to everyone in society by funding in education, healthcare, and other public services. Though, material wealth can also be a source of inequality and conflict, when it concentrates in the hands of a few; it can lead to poverty and suffering for the many and also lead to environmental deprivation, as people compete for scarce resources. Previous studies and accounts have revealed that acquiring wealth in a responsible manner leads to personal happiness, while an excessive desire for wealth brings suffering. Therefore, it is crucial to view money as a means rather than an end, utilizing it to benefit oneself and others with a balanced level of wealth. In Buddhist economics, the objective is to establish a society where individuals have sufficient material wealth to meet their basic needs, without making material wealth the primary focus of life. Instead, the emphasis should be given for creating a fair, equitable, and sustainable society.

Conclusion

The Buddhist economic system is rooted in ethics, guiding the acquisition of wealth. It distinguishes between harmful and beneficial wealth. Buddhist economics aims for sufficiency in society, individuals, and the environment, prioritizing happiness over the accumulation of wealth.

Key findings of the study are:

- Ethical acquisition of wealth, without causing harm.
- Using acquired wealth to support and assist others.
- Recognizing that blind pursuit of wealth leads to suffering.
- The moral value of wealth depends on its use.
- Viewing wealth as a means, not an end.

Excessive greed for wealth should be avoided, as it serves as a means, not a final goal. Unfortunately, the relentless pursuit of wealth has eroded morality and widened the wealth gap. Ethical acquisition and proper use of wealth can mitigate this inequality. Donations and mutual support are vital in today's society. Adhering to Buddhist economic principles in wealth management enhances social welfare. In conclusion, ethically acquired wealth benefits individuals and fosters happiness for all of humankind.

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Received : 2024/11/21

Revision received : 2024/11/26

Accepted : 2024/11/27

Exploring Approaches to Contextualize Community Resources in Secondary Level Classroom Instruction in Nepal

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Abstract

This study investigates pedagogical approaches for integrating locally available community resources into secondary-level classroom instruction, with a particular focus on contextualizing real-world practices within the study area. It critically examines the strategies, methods, and techniques employed to bridge the gap between formal education and practical, experience-based learning. The research also proposes actionable strategies for incorporating community resources to enhance functional and task-based instructional practices aimed at promoting practical education. Employing a qualitative research design, data were collected through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), classroom observation, and semi-structured interviews. An interpretative paradigm was used for data analysis. The findings reveal a rich availability of community resources that can be effectively utilized to support skill-oriented, task-based learning, both within the specific study context and more broadly.

Keywords: community resources, real world practices, task-based instruction, skill-oriented education

Introduction

Education, learning, and experience are inherently interconnected processes that occur simultaneously and reinforce one another through contextualization. Dewey (1916) conceptualizes education as a continuous process of experiencing and subsequently reorganizing those experiences into forms of learning that cultivate practical skills through adaptive engagement with the environment. He asserts that education serves as a form of training aimed at developing practical competencies by enhancing individuals' inherent potential (p. 61). Similarly, Agrawal (1992) emphasizes the productive dimension of education, asserting that it enables individuals to overcome challenges through the application of practical skills (p. 33). These perspectives underscore foundational principles of contemporary educational theory, which prioritize the functional, productive, and skill-oriented dimensions of learning.

Further reinforcing this paradigm, Dewey (1997) posits that the fundamental purpose of education is to prepare individuals particularly the youth for future responsibilities and successful life outcomes by fostering mastery over organized bodies of knowledge and structured skillsets (p. 18). Crow and Crow (2008) extend this view by characterizing education as a dynamic force that influences multiple dimensions of human development—physical, mental, emotional, social, and ethical thereby producing practical values, behaviors, and competencies within a societal framework (p. 53).

From a critical perspective, Smith (2006) argues that education may function as both a solution and a challenge, depending on how policies and practices respond to local diversities. He contends that educational systems must be assessed for their responsiveness to diverse socio-cultural realities and their capacity to contribute to broader social development (p. 29). This observation highlights the central role of diversity in shaping educational outcomes, as it offers a range of opportunities

grounded in the varying forms of knowledge, skills, and experiences present within a society. However, effectively incorporating such diversity poses significant challenges for policymakers striving to create inclusive and responsive education systems.

Taken together, these viewpoints suggest that the development of practical skills among learners necessitates active engagement with contextually relevant resources embedded in the local community embedded with socio-cultural environment. The socio-cultural context encompasses human diversity in terms of individual and group identities, which are informed by distinct bodies of knowledge, lived experiences, and culturally specific practices. In alignment with this, UNESCO (2011) defines socio-cultural context as a complex interplay of factors including race, class, ability, learning conditions and styles, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, and other identity dimensions that shape individual and collective behavior (p. 2). Supporting this orientation, Nwabueze and Isilebo (2022) identify modern educational trends as being event-based and task-oriented, grounded in social learning theories that emphasize the need for students to interact and contextualize with locally available resources within their communities (p.545).

Objectives of the study

- To identify the locally available community resources in the study area.
- To explore and analyze the approaches to integrate such resources in secondary level classroom instruction in study area.
- To recommend the approaches to contextualize available resources in classroom instruction.

Research questions

- Are there community resources available in the study areas?
- Can the available resources be contextualized in classroom instruction?
- How can the available resources be contextualized in classroom instruction?
- What can be the approaches to contextualize available resources in classroom instruction?

Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology to explore and interpret the lived experiences of individuals. Hermeneutic phenomenology, as articulated by Langdridge (2007), provides a framework for understanding how people make sense of their world through the subjective meanings they attach to their experiences. Following Van Manen's (2014) approach, this methodology emphasizes the interpretation of experience as it is lived, aiming to uncover the essence and deeper meaning embedded in participants' everyday realities.

The research is situated within an interpretive paradigm, which views knowledge as socially constructed and emphasizes the importance of context and meaning in human experience. The aim of this study, therefore, was not merely to describe behaviors or attitudes, but to explore the

hidden meanings, practiced knowledge, and embodied skills within individuals' lived experiences. As Higgs (2001) notes, the interpretive paradigm seeks to understand and interpret the social world from the perspective of those who experience it, making it particularly suitable for research focused on complex, subjective, and socially situated phenomena.

To collect data, the study utilized unstructured and semi-structured interviews guided by phenomenological questioning techniques. These interviews encouraged participants to express their thoughts and feelings freely, allowing for in-depth exploration of personal experiences (Beck, 2021). The experiential data gathered through these interactions served as the basis for phenomenological analysis and reflection. The aim of this process was to generate interpretive categories and themes through an iterative process of analysis, reflection, and writing, ultimately unlocking meaning from participants' narratives (Stolz, 2023).

A combination of research tools was employed to enhance data richness and triangulation. These included Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques, classroom observation, and semi-structured interviews. Additionally, field notes, photographs, and voice recordings were used as supportive tools and techniques to capture contextual details and non-verbal cues that added depth to the data.

The analysis of data followed a six-stage hermeneutic process. These stages were: immersion, where the researcher engaged deeply with the data; understanding, which involved identifying initial patterns and meanings; abstraction, where conceptual themes were formed; synthesis, in which these themes were organized into coherent categories; illumination and illustration, where findings were clarified and supported with illustrative examples; and integration and critique, which involved situating the findings within broader theoretical and practical contexts.

The research was conducted in Tilottama Municipality, located in Rupandehi District, Nepal. This site was purposefully selected due to its socio-cultural diversity and the presence of various ethnic groups engaged in different occupations. Such diversity was considered valuable for capturing a broad range of educational practices, lived experiences, and community perspectives.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling and included a diverse group of stakeholders involved in education. The sample consisted of six teachers (three male and three female), twelve students (six male and six female), six parents (three male and three female), one male member of the School Management Committee (SMC), and two local representatives from the ward office (one male and one female). To uphold ethical standards, all participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study. In order to protect their privacy and confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used throughout the research documentation.

Literature Review

Conceptualizing resources

The concept of "resource" is inherently anthropocentric, emerging when elements of nature are assigned value for human use or benefit. Nature, often perceived as a nurturing entity, is transformed into a resource through human valuation and appropriation (Hope, 2002, p. 2). This transformation highlights the central role of human agency in defining what constitutes a resource.

According to the World Bank, natural resources are defined as naturally occurring materials that are essential or beneficial to human life, including air, water, land, forests, fish, wildlife, topsoil,

and minerals (Collier, 2003, p. 38). This utilitarian perspective is further elaborated by the World Trade Report (2010), which defines natural resources as "stocks of materials that exist in the natural environment and are both scarce and economically useful in production or consumption, either in their raw state or after minimal processing" (p. 46). These definitions emphasize the economic and instrumental value of nature in supporting human needs and economic systems.

In a broader philosophical context, Worthington (1964) posits that resources encompass "everything that is derivable for the use or benefit of humans from any part of the universe" (p. 2), thereby extending the concept beyond materiality to include the potential utility of all natural elements. Sadhukhan (1986) offers a more relational understanding, arguing that a resource is not merely a material or substance but the result of a positive interaction between humans and nature, oriented toward fulfilling individual needs and achieving societal objectives (p. 94). This view underscores the socially constructed nature of resources and the significance of human-nature interaction.

The World Trade Report (2010) further asserts that all goods are intrinsically linked to natural resources, either through direct embodiment such as automobiles containing iron ore or through dependence on resources for their production such as food crops requiring land and water (p. 46). In this regard, virtually all goods could be classified as natural resources based on their dependence on natural inputs.

Moreover, the report identifies fundamental resources such as oil and natural gas, which are indispensable for energy production and thus essential for generating virtually all other goods and services. Renewable resources, including forests, fisheries, and aquifers, are also highlighted as critical assets for sustainable development and long-term ecological balance (World Trade Report, 2010, p. 40).

While these institutional definitions recognize the instrumental importance of natural resources for human life and economic development, they often underrepresent the deeper philosophical and cosmological dimensions of the human-nature relationship. The anthropocentric framing raises critical questions: Is nature to be understood solely as a means for human benefit, or does it possess an intrinsic or cosmological value that transcends utilitarian considerations?

Although the World Bank emphasizes the necessity of natural resources for human survival and development, it provides limited engagement with the nurturing, reciprocal, or spiritual aspects of the human-nature relationship. In contrast, the World Trade Report (2014) acknowledges the broader developmental significance of natural resources by linking them to key human development indicators such as health, education, and life expectancy. This correlation suggests that natural resources are not only vital for economic productivity but also foundational to the nurturing mechanisms that promote individual and societal well-being.

Consequently, the interdependence between nature and human development calls for a more integrated conceptualization one that recognizes nature not only as a source of materials but also as a partner in fostering holistic human progress. This broader understanding has implications for sustainable development, resource governance, and the ethical framing of human-environment interactions.

Contextualizing Resources

Resources, in and of themselves, are devoid of inherent meaning or utility until they are activated or mobilized by human agency for specific purposes within a given context. This notion underscores the idea that the value and function of resources are socially constructed and context-dependent, emerging through human behavior and interaction. In this regard, the contextualization and mobilization of resources can be viewed as a distinctly social phenomenon, shaped by cultural practices, institutional arrangements, and behavioral patterns.

The value attributed to resources is not fixed but is instead determined by the nature and extent of human interaction with them particularly in terms of control, ownership, and usage. As Hope (2002) articulates, the valuation of a resource is closely linked to the cost of securing rights of access or ownership. This process, which parallels the division of land into property or territory, is often considered instrumental for facilitating socio-economic exchanges (pp. 2–3). Thus, resource value is not merely a function of its material properties, but also of its embedded aspects within social, legal, and economic systems.

Moreover, the valuation and management of resources are intrinsically tied to the broader social system, including its environmental governance frameworks. The environment, comprising both biophysical and human elements, reflects and shapes human behaviors. These behaviors, in turn, are significantly influenced by the knowledge and skills acquired through experience with local resources. In other words, human learning whether through reconstructing past experiences, developing new skills, or utilizing and managing natural assets—is intimately connected to the resources present in one's immediate environment.

Hope (2002) emphasizes that the fundamental aim of environmental management is to foster conditions under which human behavior becomes as compatible as possible with environmental systems. He asserts that, “What is possible depends on the disposition of people, together with regulatory and management mechanisms established to improve the situation” (p. 6). This suggests that human attitudes, values, and institutional structures play a critical role in shaping both the sustainability and utility of resources.

Furthermore, populations are not homogenous entities but are composed of individuals and groups characterized by diverse demographic, sociological, and economic attributes. These variations influence not only the demand for and usage of resources but also the ways in which communities engage with and derive meaning from their environments. Consequently, the relationship between people and resources is dynamic, multi-layered, and contextually contingent, reflecting the broader interplay between environmental conditions and social organizations.

Population's efficiency as community resource

The collective capabilities and efficiencies of a population are increasingly recognized as a fundamental form of community resource. In this context, human capital is identified as a vital asset in the broader resource framework. Senyucel (2009) emphasizes that among the various components of nature, human capital holds particular significance, encompassing the attributes and skills individuals bring to an organization, such as commitment, loyalty, and expertise. Notably, human resources are distinct from other organizational resources due to their dynamic, evolving, and inherently unpredictable nature (p. 11).

Human skills, knowledge, and behaviors are themselves resources with considerable developmental implications. While natural systems provide the physical basis of resources, it is the human

population that both utilizes and, in some cases, depletes these resources. Ehrlich and Ehrlich (1990) note that humans are not only the primary users of natural resources but also significant contributors to environmental degradation. Reinforcing this perspective, Hope (2002) argues that people influence not only the extent and type of resource use but also the environmental impact of their consumption patterns. These impacts are shaped by a variety of factors, including the demand for specific resources, methods of extraction and utilization, geographic location, technological applications, and cultural expectations (p. 6).

Human interaction with the environment mediated by skills, knowledge systems, and technologies directly determines the form, function, and significance of resources. As Gratton (2015) contends, human resources are not only central to development processes but also act as stewards of future transformation and cultural evolution.

The variability in human-environment interactions across different contexts further underscores the importance of local social, economic, and ecological conditions. Pradhan and Pradhan (2011) state that the interplay between environment and human activity varies significantly from one place to another due to natural, social, and economic factors (p. 39). For instance, Hope (2002) explains that the same natural elements, when combined differently and contextualized within distinct use systems, yield diverse resources. Water, for example, serves multiple roles—as a resource for drinking, agriculture, recreation, and energy production. Similarly, vegetation supports agriculture, tourism, and energy sectors, depending on how it is perceived and utilized by human systems (p. 8).

The transformation of natural elements into resources is thus a socio-cultural process, where human perceptions, practices, and management strategies assign meaning and value to the environment. This transformation is not merely utilitarian but also reflective of accumulated human experience and knowledge. In this regard, Marten (2003, as cited in Pradhan & Pradhan, 2011) conceptualizes humans as integral to the biological community of nature, along with microorganisms, plants, and animals (p. 15).

The recognition of humans as natural resources themselves has deep scholarly roots. Worthington (1964) highlighted the inclusion of human beings alongside domesticated and wild species within the biological resource domain (p. 2). Senyucel (2009) in this regard, notes that the diversity in human backgrounds, values and experiences contribute to the uniqueness and developmental potential of human capital within any organizational or societal system (p. 11).

In sum, the population's efficiency is not only instrumental in the mobilization and transformation of natural resources but also constitutes a core resource in itself. Understanding this dynamic interplay is crucial for sustainable environmental management and long-term socio-economic development.*--

Socio-cultural resources

Resources attain meaning and function only through their integration within social and cultural systems. Emphasizing the intrinsic link between natural resources and societal constructs, Burch (1971) argues that the origin of natural resources lies not in the Earth itself but within human society. He asserts that the societal web, composed of myth, rhetoric, faith, skills, and efficiencies, mediates the meaning assigned to humans and nature (p. 9). Donenfeld (1914) similarly defines social resources as emerging from the recognition that all institutions, associations, agencies, and attitudes share fundamental characteristics (p. 560). This perspective underscores that resource utilization, mobilization, and consumption are inherently social phenomena. Human societies, shaped by traditions, systems, and symbolic practices, modify and operationalize resources.

The human-nature interaction is central to the valuation and recognition of natural resources. As Donenfeld (1914) elaborates, social resources encompass every situation involving human interaction, extending into all aspects of behavior and environmental engagement (p. 560). Tornblom and Kazemi (2012) further refine this concept by noting that social resources involve both material and non-material exchanges those that individuals give, withhold, receive, or redistribute within their social interactions (p. 1). These interactions encompass capacities such as knowledge, honor, leadership, and social status, all of which are essential to resource dynamics within communities.

The socio-cultural framing of natural phenomena is further articulated by Greider and Garkovich (1994), who contend that natural phenomena are simultaneously socio-cultural phenomena. They are constructed through social interactions within cultural communities as individuals negotiate the meaning of nature and the environment (p. 2). Thus, without the cultural and social context, the physical environment remains devoid of functional significance. The social meaning of natural elements is constructed through collective practices, interactions, and beliefs.

This perspective affirms that social resources are shared realities embedded within cultural frameworks. Culture, as a subset of the social domain, plays an inseparable and complementary role in shaping, determining, and mobilizing natural resources. Through values, beliefs, norms, and ethical codes, culture influences human actions toward the environment. Adhikari (2009) stresses that culture significantly shapes work systems and resource management practices. If socio-cultural factors are overlooked or poorly managed, they can become sources of resistance to institutional or systemic change (p. 82). As a dynamic and pervasive force within human systems, culture directly informs how natural resources are approached, interpreted, and utilized, positioning human resources as critical agents of transformation.

The historical significance of cultural dimensions in resource development is noted by Fombrun (1984), who observed that national culture plays a vital role in shaping employment and resource-related relations at work (as cited in Adhikari, 2009, p. 82). Historical evidence reveals the longstanding and integral connection between cultural systems and natural resource management, suggesting that sustainable development must acknowledge cultural variables.

Pradhan and Pradhan (2011) reinforce this by describing cultural landscapes as outcomes of human-nature interactions, shaped by societal goals, economic systems, and technological capabilities. These landscapes offer valuable insights into the imprint of human behavior on the environment and vice versa (p. 51). The ongoing interplay between human activity and the natural world illustrates that the cumulative outcomes of human achievements are inseparable from environmental feedback. Importantly, changes in nature are often a reflection of transformations within cultural systems.

Bennett (1976) further elaborates on the cultural interpretation of natural resources, observing that humans continually reinterpret natural phenomena through cultural lenses, converting them into meaningful cultural objects (p. 4). Greider and Garkovich (1994) align with this view, positing that cultural groups utilize symbols to define natural resources and integrate them into the routines of daily life, thus organizing their environmental relationships (p. 8). This highlights the diversity of socio-cultural identities within populations and the complex interrelations between education, local knowledge, skills, and practices involved in resource mobilization.

In sum, socio-cultural resources are integral to the perception, valuation, and management of natural resources. They frame human-environment interactions and serve as the mediating fabric through which natural elements acquire meaning, purpose, and sustainability.

Result and Discussion

The identification and categorization of community resources within the study area were conducted involving Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), direct field observation, and semi-structured interviews with local stakeholders. The integration of PRA facilitated community engagement and collective reflection, allowing participants to articulate local knowledge, perceptions, and priorities regarding resource availability and utility. Meanwhile, direct observation provided empirical validation of the physical presence and condition of the resources, and the semi-structured interviews offered in-depth insights into their functional relevance, cultural significance, and usage patterns.

The outcome of this triangulated data collection process is systematically presented in Table 1, which provides an inventory of the community resources identified in the study area. This table encapsulates the diverse range of tangible and intangible divided subject wise based on the syllabus of secondary level subjects, reflect socio-cultural dynamics, and influence patterns of community interactions.

Table1.

Available Community Resources and Their contextualization in Classroom Instruction

Subjects	Subject wise identified community resources/efficiencies that can be contextualized in classroom instruction	Grades	Approaches to application of identified resources in classroom instruction
English	Observing Comparing/contrasting Identifying Visual sharing Correcting/modifying Reporting Describing events Messaging news Discussing Criticizing Interacting/sharing Questioning/answering Explaining Ranking Seeking problem/answer	Grade 8,9 and 10	Pair discussion on particular topic Group discussion Interaction Role playing Project work Report writing Question-answer Free speech Guided speech Dramatization Demonstration Field study Pros and cons Debating
Nepali	Listening to others Making comprehension Telling local history Speaking Nepali Dialogue delivery	Grade 8,9 and 10	Narrating events Live oral reporting Live written reporting Guided writing Free writing Involving students in role play Dramatization Demonstration Pros and cons Debating

Mathematics	Quantifying Mapping Diagramming Listing Comparing Identifying Estimating Calculating Ranking Sequencing Drawing Scaling Finding profit/loss Equality/inequality Making circle/triangle/square etc.	Grade 8,9 and 10	Problem solving Project work
Social Studies and Population Education	Social rules Social values Population growth Overpopulation Gender discrimination Streams Ponds Temples Local worships Grasslands Fields Financial co operations Youth clubs Topographic Knowledge Land structure Soil type Land conditions Land tenure Season changes Weather and climate Weather prediction	Grade 8,9 and 10	Role playing Dramatization Demonstration Field observation Project work Field visit Reporting Use of realia Group works Cultural sharing Social interactions Mimicry activities Interaction with local people Local resource person in classroom
Science and Environment	Knowledge of simple machine Effect of heat, cold and light Pollution and effect Environment conservation Plants, trees and animals Topographic Knowledge Land structure Soil type Land conditions Land tenure Season changes Weather and climate Weather prediction Deforestation Tree conservation Planting trees Streams, creaks, ponds, temples, grasslands, fields	Grade 8,9 and 10	Lab practical activities Field observation Project work Field visit Reporting Use of realia Site seeing Interaction with local people Local resource person in classroom

Health and Physical Education	First aid of snake bite Preparing and feeding medicine to cattle Making alcohol at home Personal sanitation Using medicinal herbs Seasonal vegetables, fruits, crops, grains Play grounds Treatment of mud infection on feet and hand Pain relief massage on stomach Therapy for decreasing high blood pressure Swimming Pain relief and cold treatment using typical herbs Use of a typical herb for killing germs on human skin	Grade 8, 9 and 10	Field visit Observation Interaction with local people Local resource person in classroom Demonstration Games on play grounds Project works Sports weeks Sport sessions
Occupation, Business and Technology Education	Transplanting Weeding Field leveling Planting rice/wheat/potato Kohl (oil mill) Dhenki Making ploughing equipment set Ladhiya (jolting cart) Making walls made of straw and mud Making fish trapping equipment set Dehari (granary) Pigeon house (made of mud) Chhatari (traditional Umbrella) Straw made mat and seat Bamboo ladder Broom of Thakal (a typical plant) Making Khapada (roofing material) Making puffed rice Making 'Dhakiya' Paintings on walls (of elephants, horses, flowers etc.)	Grade 8,9 and 10	Field visit Agricultural farms visit Making mini farms in school premises Making gardens in school premises Interaction with local people Local resource person in classroom Observation Demonstration Project works Involving students in seasonal farming Use of realias Cultural sharing
Moral Education	Listening to others Sharing/exchanging Social rules Social values Requesting Begging Helping Cleaning surroundings Temples Ponds Roads Public yards	Grade 8,9 and 10	Role playing Dramatization Demonstration Reporting Group works Cultural sharing Social interactions Mimicry
Computer Science	One computer lab that contains 10 computer sets	Grade 8,9 and 10	Practical activities in computer lab Project works

The identified community resources mapped through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), field observation, and semi-structured interviews demonstrate a wide range of human efficiencies and localized assets that can be pedagogically integrated into classroom instruction, particularly in grades 8, 9, and 10. These resources offer contextual learning opportunities when appropriately aligned with student grade levels, subject matter, pedagogical intent, and classroom circumstances. As such, they support the implementation of experiential, participatory, and student-centered learning strategies, enriching both the teaching and learning processes.

The contextual integration of these community resources can take multiple instructional forms. For instance, they may be incorporated through project-based learning, educational field visits, live demonstrations of traditional knowledge or technical skills, and the use of local materials as visual aids or realia. The use of real objects not only enhances comprehension but also makes learning more relevant and authentic by connecting academic content to students' everyday experiences. Conservation areas, heritage sites, and historical landmarks prevalent in the study area can be effectively utilized in teaching subjects such as Social Studies, Environmental Science, and Local History. Field trips to such locations, accompanied by guided observation and interaction tasks, promote inquiry-based learning and critical reflection.

Significantly, the study revealed a variety of skilled individuals within the community, including but not limited to agricultural practitioners (e.g., livestock, vegetable, and floriculture farmers), tradespeople (e.g., carpenters, cobblers, cooks, and barbers), entrepreneurs (e.g., shopkeepers, restaurant owners), and specialists (e.g., tour guides, builders, fish farmers). These human resources can serve as valuable educational assets. Teachers may invite them into classrooms as guest speakers or facilitators, enabling students to engage with lived experiences and firsthand knowledge. Such collaborations facilitate the integration of vocational knowledge and local wisdom into the curriculum, fostering practical understanding and skill development.

Furthermore, the presence of community-based enterprises such as poultry farms, buffalo sheds, fishponds, dairy production units, local distilleries, traditional alcohol breweries, handicraft workshops, furniture and wood-carving industries, and rice/oil/flour mills presents rich opportunities for curriculum enrichment. These sites can function as real-world laboratories where students can undertake observational studies, collaborative research, or project work. Depending on curricular content, students can engage in applied learning through practical assignments that allow them to explore socio-economic and environmental dimensions of production, sustainability, and livelihoods.

In addition to material and human resources, the community also hosts several institutional and social resources, including schools, youth clubs, cultural and professional associations, financial and agricultural cooperatives, and ethnic or social organizations. These institutions can support the cultivation of essential social and civic competencies in students. By engaging these stakeholders, educators can organize structured workshops, leadership training programs, and interactive forums that promote values such as cooperation, empathy, ethical reasoning, and civic responsibility. For example, local leaders or representatives of these organizations may be invited to share their work, demonstrate organizational processes, or mentor student groups. Students can also be grouped into school-based clubs or quality circles to foster collaborative learning and peer-driven initiatives.

From a curricular perspective, the utilization of these resources extends beyond content delivery to include the development of critical social and behavioral skills among students. Project work, field-based inquiry, observational tasks, and reflective exercises can be strategically designed to build interpersonal competencies such as teamwork, communication, cooperation, mutual respect, problem-solving, and leadership. Moreover, these pedagogical strategies support emotional and

moral development by promoting traits such as empathy, respect for diversity, negotiation skills, critical thinking, and responsible citizenship.

In summary, the community resources identified in the study area possess substantial pedagogical value and can be effectively contextualized within school curricula. Their integration into classroom instruction offers a holistic approach to learning that bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. These resources not only support academic learning but also contribute to the broader goal of nurturing socially responsible, skilled, and reflective individuals. Therefore, leveraging community-based assets within pedagogical frameworks is essential for fostering meaningful and transformative educational experiences.

Conclusion

Resources do not possess inherent meaning or value in isolation; rather, their significance emerges through human interaction within specific socio-cultural contexts. The identification, recognition, perception, and contextualization of community resources are educational processes, requiring the integration of practical knowledge, experiential learning, and relevant skills. These outcomes are most effectively cultivated through formal and non-formal education, which emphasizes local relevance and contextual learning. In this regard, contextualizing locally available community resources in the classroom becomes a pedagogical strategy that introduces students to real-world situations, enhancing their capacity to acquire meaningful experiences and applicable skills.

Community resources can be integrated into classroom instruction across Grades 8, 9, and 10. From a pedagogical perspective, these resources offer authentic materials for learning, aligning with principles of experiential and situated learning theories. Their application in education may vary according to the subject content, cognitive level of the learners, instructional goals, and the teaching-learning context.

Practical strategies and approaches for classroom integration include project-based learning, field visits, realia-based instruction, demonstrations, role play, community interaction and so on. For instance, local farms and industries can be used to explore ecological systems, economic production processes, and social organization, while human resources such as local professionals can serve as guest speakers or facilitators in applied learning tasks. These community experts can enrich classroom discussions, support field-based activities, and provide students with firsthand exposure to vocational and technical skills.

Furthermore, socio-cultural institutions such as youth clubs, cooperative associations, and ethnic or professional groups can facilitate the teaching of civic behavior, leadership, and interpersonal skills. These organizations provide models for social participation and collective responsibility. Engaging with them through school programs, collaborative workshops, or experiential learning activities enhances students' social and emotional competencies.

Ultimately, the contextualization of community resources into classroom instruction fosters the development of a wide range of social, cognitive, and emotional skills. These include group collaboration, empathy, cooperation, critical thinking, communication, respect for diversity, and leadership. In aligning educational practice with local resources, schools not only promote meaningful learning but also contribute to the holistic development of students as active and informed citizens. Such contextual pedagogy not only bridges the gap between formal education and local knowledge systems but also contributes to sustainable education that is deeply rooted in community realities.

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Received : 2024/12/22

Revision received : 2024/12/23

Accepted : 2024/12/24

Challenges and Expectations in Reading English Poetry: A Study of Nepali Undergraduates

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Abstract

This study explores challenges faced by undergraduate students in reading English poetry in an ESL context. Nine purposively selected students from a community campus in Nepal were interviewed. Findings reveal major difficulties including poor reading habits, limited vocabulary, unfamiliar poetic devices, and lack of contextual understanding. These challenges were identified as linguistic, cultural, and cognitive. Participants expected teachers to provide explanations of context, clarify poetic devices, and create opportunities for aesthetic appreciation. The study emphasizes the importance of student-centered, interactive approaches to poetry instruction—encouraging deeper engagement through improved reading strategies, contextual interpretation, and poetic analysis.

Keywords: Challenges, expectations, implied meaning, poetry, reading habits

Background of the Study

Using literature in teaching English as a second language is a historically contested issue (Ebrahimi & Zainal, 2018; Regmi, 2022a). However, literature has been widely accepted as an important teaching-learning resource in English language curricula. The use of literature, particularly, poetry in English Language Teaching (ELT) courses is often contested because of the structural complexity of the poems, cultural remoteness, unfamiliar context, and limited time available for teaching and learning (Maley, 2001; Regmi, 2023). Poetry, one of the forms of literature, has often received the least priority, even if it is a part of English courses nowadays. It has been a less focused genre in language teaching courses.

Scholars have argued for using poetry as a potential resource for language teaching and learning because it is linguistically and culturally rich, motivating, authentic, and pleasant for the readers (Collie & Slater, 1987; Hall, 2005; Lazar, 1993). Literature, with the advent of the content language integrated teaching and learning, has a prominent place in the English language teaching syllabus today (Regmi, 2023). Using literature in language teaching includes various literary genres such as poetry, fiction, drama, and essay. Poetry in language classroom engages students in different activities, develops their reading comprehension, and fosters their communicative competence. Moreover, it promotes students' criticality and make them acquainted with multiple use of language patterns (Kilog et al., 2023). This article focuses the use of poetry as a teaching-learning material.

Although poetry has been included in English language courses, it is often regarded as a burden by teachers (Aladini & Farahbod, 2020; Maley & Duff, 1989; Rejina, 2021). Despite the potential of offering rich resources for language learning, the rearranged patterns of language, figurative meaning, cultural connotation, and contextual differences can pose additional challenges for second language learners (Lazar, 1993; Maley & Duff, 1989). The teaching of poetry has been often neglected in English as a second language classes because of the challenging nature of the poetry.

Researchers have studied poetry teaching in the ESL context in Nepal. Recent studies include teachers' strategies for teaching poetry at the secondary and undergraduate levels (Karki, 2021), teachers' reflections (Poudel, 2019; K.C, 2021). However, students' poetry reading challenges and their expectations in ESL classes have received little research attention. There is a need for research on students' perspectives on the challenges and expectations for engaging in poetry as part of ESL study.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purposes of this study were to explore the challenges faced by undergraduates in poetry reading and the kinds of support they expect from their teachers in colleges located in semi-urban areas in Nepal. This study has two research questions: What are the challenges faced by undergraduate students while reading English poetry? What types of support do they seek from their teachers while reading English poetry?

Review of the Related Literature

Reasons for Reading Poetry

Poetry exists in its own form and is written using stanzas. The prosodic features such as alliteration, rhyme, foot, and rhythm occur regularly in the metrical poems but they do not appear regularly in the free verse. In teaching learning, poetry is viewed as enjoyable material and is treated as an avenue for motivating learners (Edwards, 2014). In line with this view, Hall (2005, p. 48) concludes that poems are pleasurable, motivating and personalizing. In addition, reading poetry develops students' cultural awareness, interpretative skills along with providing them with memorable phrases for language learning. Likewise, poems are relatively shorter than fiction and drama in length. A single poem can be appropriate to read at a single attempt. The syntax of poetry offers students with opportunities to be acquainted with multiple models of language use. Lazar (1993) puts forward the argument that reading poems promotes students' engagement in different learning activities such as finding factual information, identifying the unusual language features, exploring the context, discussing different cultural issues exist in the text. The rearranged syntax and the use of figures of speech prevents teachers from using it for structural practice and communicative purposes. Maley and Duff (1989) suggest that reading poetry develops students understanding to the formal features of poetry, social and aphoristic issues, substantial information, and provides ample opportunities for their engagement to learning activities.

Knowledge and Skills Required for Reading Poetry

Poetry cannot be fully interpreted without understanding the style of poetry. Jago et al. (2011) argue that readers should be familiar with the style such as diction (denotation, connotation, formality), figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, paradox, irony), imagery, syntax (marked and inverted) and tone and mood. They suggest the additional considerations for reading poetry such as rhyme scheme, types such as free or metrical verse and form (sonnet, lyric, ode). The poem is more complex than other literary genres. Thus, reading poetry needs additional skills of the readers.

Poetry reading is a highly skilled and intellectual activity for the readers because they need to negotiate meanings by considering several elements at multiple levels. Roetzheim (2006) opines that poetry should be understood at four levels which are: denotative level, connotative level, deeper

level, and symbolic level. The denotative level focuses on the surface message of the text, the connotative level explores meaning with the help of word choice, imagery, and figures of speech. The deeper level explores the implied meaning that can be interpreted, assimilated relating with the life experiences of the readers. The complex structure of the poetry suggests that readers need to develop the appropriate set of skills for reading poetry.

Difficulties of Reading Poetry in ESL Context

Scholars have identified several challenges in reading poetry in the context of second language learning because not all poetry is instantly accessible to readers and often needs to be re-read (Maley & Duff, 1989; Mays, 2015; Sage, 1987). Vocabulary as well as other structural features can challenge learners. For example, Nishihara (2022) says that poems are difficult to read because of the use of the unmarked syntax. The language of poetry is different from the usual patterns because poetry "reorganizes syntax, invents its own vocabulary, freely mixes registers and creates its own punctuation... vivid new metaphors" (Lazar, 1993, p. 98). These features make poetry more difficult for second language learners, so teachers often hesitate to teach poetry, especially to learners with low language proficiency (Mart, 2021). Similarly, Ebrahimi and Zainal (2016) and Aladini and Farahbod (2020) argue that teaching poetry has become more challenging because teachers focus more on correctly interpreting the poem rather than unfolding the poetry reading strategies among readers. Besides this, the teachers in ESL/EFL context have negative attitude to the teaching and learning of poetry.

Maley and Duff (1989) have mentioned two extreme attitudes towards teaching poetry: 'a rare flower,' something to be admired but not to touch, and "a thorn in the flesh," a bothersome text that slows down teaching and learning. Sage (1987) states the assumption that poetry is a difficult text is unfounded. He further argues that poetry teaching is beneficial and worth overcoming the challenges because of poetry's educational, emotional, linguistic, cultural, and aesthetic values.

Suggestions for Teaching Poetry

Gönen (2018) proposes a six-step poetry teaching framework for teaching poetry to prospective teachers. The first four steps of the framework are relevant for teaching poetry. The first step of the framework is tune-in. In this step, teachers activate the prior knowledge of the readers by giving the background information and preparing them to explore the stylistic features of the text. The second step of the framework is basic comprehension. Various comprehension strategies are used to help readers understand the overall meaning of the text. The third step is detailed analysis in which the reader explores the poem's linguistic and poetic devices. The fourth step is cultivation in which the reader personalizes the meaning of the texts.

Review of Related Theories

Reading is a process of decoding the meaning of the written or printed text. Reading poetry is not a bookish task but it requires a skill to find out specific as well as general information. Reading poetry is even more challenging because of the extension of the texts' meaning by using figures of speech. Ebrahimi and Zainal (2018) have proposed Schema Theory, Reader Response Theory, and Transactional Theory for outlining strategies for reading poetry. Similarly, the Constructional Integration model can be used as a theoretical framework to negotiate the complexity of poetry reading by combining a top-down and a bottom-up approach.

Schema Theory

Schema theory proposes that comprehension of a text is guided by the mental framework (schema) readers have in their minds. This theory assumes a top-down approach to comprehension in which schema works as a regulating mechanism to process the relevant information and block irrelevant information (Kintsch, 1998). It fills the gap found in the input by inference from the preexisting schema.

Construction Integration Model

Kintsch (1998) proposed this model to overcome the limitation of the top-down comprehension model. Since this model emerged against schema theory, he criticized the top-down model for not accommodating human comprehension's stages in a regular flow from conceptualizing to interpreting. This model proposes the bottom-up model of reading comprehension, in which readers first focus on the smallest elements of the text and gradually progress to higher levels involving interpretation.

Reader's Response Theory

Rosenblatt (1994) argued that a literary text functions as a stimulus that draws the reader's attention and activates the reader's prior experiences. Similarly, the reader constructs a hypothesis that guides the selection, filter, and structure of the upcoming meaning of the text. Thus, a literary text such as a poem "presupposes a reader actively involved with text and refers to what s/he makes of his responses to the particular set of verbal symbols" (Rosenblatt, 1994, p. 12). Thus, the Reader's Response Theory assumes readers can determine the text's meaning.

Transactional Theory of Reading

Rosenblatt (1969) proposed the Transactional Theory of Reading. She argued that a reader does not consume a pre-codified message but instead is actively involved in reconstructing the poem from a given text. She further argues that readers constantly go back and forth between the lines of the poetry and reinterpret the earlier part of the poetry with the later part of the poetry for full comprehension. Full comprehension of the earlier part is possible only after reading the final part. This theory negates the existence of a fixed meaning in the text; instead, it gives equal importance to the text and reader for meaning making. It specifically assumes that the reader negotiates for the meaning and at a certain point s/he deciphers the meaning of the literary text (here poem) through transaction.

Social Constructivist Approach

The Social Constructivist Approach developed by Vygotsky assumes that the society and the interaction among the stakeholders is also the source of building knowledge. Jubran (2016) stated that knowledge is constructed through active participation in the learning process following the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Interaction with more knowledgeable others (MKO) facilitates learners to learn more. Thus, from Vygotskian theory, it can be inferred that readers benefit from interacting with more knowledgeable peers or teachers or with any support materials for assisting with understanding the poetry they read.

Empirical Findings

Peskin (1998) reported that expert students focus more on productive aspects of reading poetry, while novice students struggle to understand poetry. Řeřichová et al. (2014) found that feelings of success and a creative and friendly classroom environment support students to make challenging poetry more accessible. Nishihara (2022) found that lexically accessible poems might be challenging because of the deviated syntax of poems. In a systematic review, Papantoni and Anastasiadou (2023) found that using poetry contributes to significant vocabulary growth. Creely (2019) stated that newer pedagogy is needed to make poetry learning more engaging for students. Khatib (2011) and Aladini and Farahbod (2020) found that students learn poetry when they get opportunities to engage with poems to develop their own interpretation rather than memorize the interpretation given to them by their teachers.

The study of Sugandi (2015) explored the challenges of teaching poetry in EFL/ ESL classroom. The study reported that teachers and students should have to face the challenges, for example, the adoption of extra thinking to make the meaning of a poem, the use of complex language patterns, and students' negative attitude to the reading of poetry, and teachers' limited knowledge and confidence to the text of poetry. Islam (2022) affirmed that poems are stimulating, appealing and are used as authentic materials to teach language skills and elements through a series of interactive classroom activities. Likewise, the study of Joseph and Ali (2020) synthesized the advantages and disadvantages of using poetry in language classroom. It further reported that the challenges of teaching poetry are the low proficiency of students, teachers' use of inadequate and ineffective methods, and haphazardly chosen texts. Highlighting teachers' lack of skills for teaching poetry, the study of Moea (2021) reported that some teachers avoid teaching poetry because they are less confident in the contents of poetry, and they do not have adequate pedagogic skills of handling poetry in the ESL/ EFL context. Young (2016) found that many high school teachers do not have adequate background knowledge and pedagogical knowledge to teach poetry.

Gap in Literature

The use of literature in teaching English as a second language has been studied by several Nepali scholars (Regmi, 2022a, 2022 b). However, they mostly focus on teaching literature in general without explicitly referencing to reading poetry. The researchers such as Sugandi (2015); Syed and Wahas (2020) have studied about the challenges faced by teachers in teaching poetry in EFL/ ESL context. Some of the aforementioned studies have focused teachers' strategies for teaching poetry at the secondary and undergraduate levels (Karki, 2021). There are some articles with teachers' reflections on poetry teaching and learning (Poudel, 2019; K.C, 2021). Other scholars studied the reasons and techniques for using literature in ESL classes (Regmi, 2023). They all showed that poetry has been widely used in language teaching courses but the status of poetry in language teaching is still unsatisfactory. The available literature does not explicitly address the challenges of poetry reading among undergraduate ESL learners in Nepal and their expectations in poetry classes. Accordingly, this study is an attempt to fulfil this gap.

Methods

Research Design

This exploratory study used a qualitative case study approach. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain comprehensive data on participants' practices and expectations of reading poetry.

Participants

Nine purposively selected students from the B. Ed and B.A programs participated in this study. Major subjects, programs, English proficiency, and genders of the participants were used as the criteria for participants' selection.

Table 1

Profile of the Participant

S. No	Participants	Gender	Age	Subjects	Program	Year
1	Nabina	Female	23	English	B.Ed.	Fourth
2	Bhabana	Female	22	English	B. Ed	Second
3	Diya	Female	22	English	B.Ed.	Second
4	Bina	Female	21	English	B.Ed.	Second
5	Rita	Female	21	English	B.Ed.	Second
6	Maya	Female	22	English	B.A	Third
7	Tina	Female	21	Sociology	BA	Third
8	Dipak	Male	22	English	B. Ed	Second
9	Asmit	Male	23	English	B. Ed	Second

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face to collect in-depth data from the participants. The participants were invited to voluntarily participate in the study after assuring their privacy and right to withdraw from the study. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. The participants used both English and Nepali languages in the interviews. The semi-structured interviews were transcribed and thematically analyzed by following the six steps suggested by Braun et al. (2019). The transcripts were reread and coded. The codes were grouped to generate themes. The themes were revised to ensure they included the meaning expressed by the participants. NVivo 10 was used to organize the transcript of semi-structured interviews and analyze them more systematically.

Findings of the Study

Two major themes emerged from the data analysis: challenges experienced by the undergraduates in reading poetry and their expectations in teaching-learning.

Challenges Experienced by Undergraduates in Reading English Poetry

Five subthemes emerged under challenges experienced by undergraduates while reading English poetry. These subthemes are developing poetry reading habits, difficulty in understanding the context of the poetry, inadequate knowledge of poetic devices, insufficient vocabulary, and inadequate knowledge of poetic syntax.

Developing Poetry Reading Habits

Participants' comments in the interview reflected that they did not have an interest in reading English poetry. They preferred to read English short stories or English drama instead of English poetry. The participants spent little time in reading English poetry. The majority of them admitted that they did not read any English poetry on their own. The following comments from the participants show their poor poetry reading habits.

I do not have an interest in reading them. They do not have immediate practical values. They are challenging to read (Diya).

I have not read poetry which is not included in the course books. But I sometimes read poems that are included in the novel. (Nabina)

No, I do not read any English poems which are not given in the courses.

I do not read English poetry before the teachers teach us, but I read Nepali poetry for enjoyment. (Bina)

I do not read poetry before the teacher teaches because I do not find poetry reading enjoyable. I read when the poems are taught in the class. (Rita)

I do not read poems which are not included in the courses. (Maya)

The participants' comments indicated their lack of interest in reading English poetry as they did not have the habit of reading poetry in their daily lives. They just studied the poems that were included in the course when their teacher taught them in class.

Difficulty in Understanding Context

In the interviews, participants revealed their difficulty in understanding the historical, cultural, and literary contexts in which English poems were composed. They shared that their lack of understanding of the context hindered their ability to fully comprehend the meaning and significance of the poems. They admitted they had difficulty in contextualizing English poetry. During the interviews, the participants expressed their inability to comprehend the context of English poetry.

I enjoy Nepali poetry, but I do not enjoy English poetry because Nepali poems are easier to understand, and I love the musical quality of these poems. However, English poems are difficult to read and understand. (Bhabana).

I can understand the metaphors and similes used in the Nepali language because they are based on our context, but English poetry is difficult because I cannot understand some vocabulary used in the poem. It is difficult to relate the context of the poetry. (Nabina)

Similarly, it is difficult to understand the context in which the poetry is written. (Bina)

Understanding the context of poetry is essential for deciphering its meaning. However, the comments of the participants showed that understanding the context of English poetry is a challenge.

Inadequate Knowledge of Poetic Devices

Poetry is a compact form of writing in which the poet uses various poetic devices to make the message more expressive. The participants struggled to move beyond the literal meaning of the poems. Only one participant admitted that she had some knowledge of poetic devices.

I know metaphor which is the way of comparing things. I am a bit confused about the simile. It is used for showing similarity. Rhyme and rhythm are about the musical quality of the poetry. (Nabina)

However, the other participants struggled with identifying and understanding the use of various poetic devices such as imagery, metaphor, simile, and symbolism in a poem. This lack of familiarity with poetic techniques impeded their interpretation and appreciation of poetry.

I have little knowledge about the poetic devices used by the poet. I am confused about how and why poets use these devices (Bhabana).

I do not know those terms. I know rhyme and rhythm only (Bina)

I have little knowledge of rhyme and rhythm but not of simile and metaphor (Rita)

I have little knowledge of rhyme and rhythm but not of simile and metaphor. (Tina)

The participants' voices indicated that they did not have adequate knowledge of the figure of speech the poets use to make poetry more expressive. This indicated that it was difficult for the participants to go beyond the literal meaning of the poetry to explore deeper or the implied meaning of the poetry to fully explore it.

Insufficient Vocabulary

All the participants agreed that insufficient vocabulary was a major barrier to their understanding complex meaning of English poetry. They shared that the use of less common vocabulary hindered their ability to discern shades of meaning and appreciate the richness of poetic language. Their limited vocabulary challenged them to understand the figurative meaning of the poetry.

English poetry is difficult because I cannot understand some vocabulary used in the poem. It is difficult to relate the context of the poetry. (Nabina).

I find poetry difficult because I cannot find the exact meaning of the poetry. The vocabulary used in the poetry might have multiple meanings, and I cannot find its exact meaning. (Bhavana).

They are short but the vocabulary has ambiguous (double) meanings. (Diya).

I find poetry more challenging to read because the meanings are indirectly expressed in the poetry. (Rita)

I can explore the meaning of some easier poems. However, I cannot explore the meaning of some texts because they have difficult vocabulary. (Tina).

The participants had trouble reading poetry because they did not have adequate vocabulary to decipher the meaning of poems. Their comments showed that without developing a good vocabulary, and without understanding the nuances typically in poems, it is challenging to fully appreciate poetry.

Inadequate Knowledge of Poetic Syntax

Many participants found the syntax of English poetry challenging, particularly the unusual word order commonly employed by poets. This difficulty in navigating poetic syntax hindered their comprehension and interpretation of poems. In the interviews, they shared that they had difficulty in understanding the sentence structure of the poetry.

I find English poetry quite difficult. The language is much more figurative. There are deviated syntaxes. A sentence runs into another line. (Tina).

The poet uses distinct types of vocabulary and syntax in the text (Rita).

Short stories are easier for me than poetry because short stories have normal syntax, but poetry has deviated syntax. They usually have short lines with incomplete sentences. (Bina).

The poetry does not have normal syntax because the poet attempts to follow a rhyme pattern. Poetry also has incomplete sentences. (Diya).

The comments from the participants indicated that the participants had difficulty reading the poetry because of the poet's creative use of word order and the arrangement of the lines in the poems for different aesthetic purposes. Other genres of literature occasionally use deviated syntax; poets extensively use deviated syntax. Lack of habit of reading poetry makes it difficult to read the poems because of their little experience of reading poetry.

Expectations of Undergraduates in Poetry Classes

Three subthemes were derived from analyzing the participants' expectations from their teachers while teaching poetry. They are teaching the context of the poems and explaining the vocabulary, providing explicit instructions of the poetic devices used in the poem, and drawing attention to the aesthetics of the poems through recitations in the class.

Explanation of Context of Poems and Vocabulary

Students emphasized the significance of understanding the historical and cultural context surrounding poems. They suggested that teachers need to provide background information about the poet, the era in which the poem was written, and any relevant socio-political factors that provide them with sufficient background knowledge for understanding the context of the poetry.

I think the poetry written in our context will be easier than written in entirely different contexts. Reading poetry would be easier for us if we could select a text that has a simple and unambiguous vocabulary. The teacher needs to translate the unfamiliar vocabulary into Nepali so that it would be easier for us to understand. If direct translation is not possible, sense translation will help us to understand the text. (Bhabana).

It is difficult to understand the context of the poems. If I find a picture given in the poem. It will be easier to understand the poem. Otherwise, it is difficult to identify the context of the poem. The vocabulary given in the poetry is challenging to decipher because the poet uses a wide range of vocabulary. I find it easier to understand Nepali poems because Nepali is my mother tongue. So, I can understand the meaning of larger vocabulary. English is not our Native language (Asmit).

The teacher needs to translate into Nepali so that it would be easier for us to understand. If direct translation is not possible, sense translation will help us to understand the text (Diya).

The participants' comments reflected that they could not decipher the meaning of the poetry without focusing on teaching of the vocabulary.

Explicit Instruction of Poetic Devices

Participants emphasized the importance of explicit instruction of poetic devices such as metaphor, simile, imagery, and symbol. They admitted that they were unable to explore the poetry's deeper

meaning because of their lack of knowledge of poetic devices used by the poet to express the nuances of different meanings. Most of the participants were familiar with rhymes and rhythms and were less confident about how similes and metaphors function in poems.

Although we have poetry lessons, the teacher focuses on learning the summary rather than going to the details. So, I do not have the skills to explore the deeper meaning. The teachers need to teach the ways of exploring the meaning of figurative language and the various poetic devices used by the poet (Dipak).

I wish the teacher taught us more tools to analyze poetry (Tina).

The participants' comments showed that the teachers were not teaching them sufficient knowledge and skills needed to explore the deeper meaning of poetry. They were preparing the students for exam without encouraging them to fully understand the details of the poetic device employed by the poets.

Opportunities for Reciting the Poetry in the Class

The participants were dissatisfied with poetry teaching in their classes because they could not enjoy the poetry recitation as they enjoyed in lower classes. They felt that poetry teaching at their undergraduate classes had become uninspiring activities of note taking and summarizing for securing marks in the exam. Students emphasized the importance of cultivating a positive attitude towards poetry recitation. They suggested that educators incorporate activities that foster confidence and creativity in the oral delivery of poems, such as dramatic readings and poetry performance sessions in the class.

I wish the teacher focused not only on the meaning and recitation of the poem with the rhythm and rhymes. It will help us to remember the poetry and understand it. I wish the poetry lesson would be more enjoyable. I wish teachers would make the poetry class more enjoyable by focusing on the aesthetic property of the poetry not only the meaning of the poetry. (Nabina)

I understand that teachers have individual styles. But I suggest the college teacher ask the students to read the poem in the class. They need to read the poem as a recitation model themselves because reading poetry is also an important skill. After the model recitation, the teacher must describe the poem's sentence pattern so that students learn how they are arranged in a poem (Diya).

Participants expressed that they had a desire for opportunities to explore distinctive styles of recitation and experiment with voice modulation, gestures, and facial expressions to convey the poem's mood and tone effectively.

Discussion

Poetry is widely used as an important language-learning resource in ELT courses. The purpose of this study was to investigate how a sample of nine undergraduate students in Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Arts programmes at a community campus in a rural area of Nepal experienced English poetry reading for their language development. The next purpose of the study was to explore the kind of support they expected from their teachers in teaching-learning of English poetry in the class. Two research questions provided the focus for the study. The first research question was: what are the challenges faced by undergraduate students while reading English poetry? And the second

was: what types of support do students seek from their teachers when studying English poetry?

The results showed that participants faced multifaceted challenges while reading poetry for English language development. The major challenges include reading habits development, inability to understand the context of the poem and the meaning of the vocabulary used in poems, inability to identify poetic devices used by the poet to explore the deeper meaning of a poem and untangling the deviated syntax of poems. Most of the students study in rural schools/ colleges which often lack a good academic environment. So, they do not develop regular reading habits. Besides, most of the poems included in the courses are from foreign contexts, as a result, the students have difficulty understanding the context. One example of the poems included in the General English course for B.Ed. is “Composed upon Westminster Bridge.” This poem is written in the context of nineteenth century England, and another is “Do Not Say” which is written in the Malaysian context with several Malaysian words. Without understanding the context, students cannot understand the text. The poems have sophisticated language because of less common vocabulary, use of the figures of speech, and rearranged syntax.

The challenges faced by the participants of these studies are not unique because the studies conducted in other countries have reported similar challenges. The finding of this study is consistent with that of Syed and Wahas (2020) who reported that ESL students in Yemen face challenges because of low English language proficiency, traditional teaching methods, and text selection for teaching learning. The poetry teaching situations in Nepal and Yemen are similar because many students come to the university from rural areas. There is a similar gap between school-level and university curricula in both countries. The students feel deep dissatisfaction as they become unable to decipher the meaning of the culturally distant and stylistically complex text of the poetry.

Regarding the second research question, the participants suggested that teachers need to not only provide them with the summary of the poems but also empower them to explore and interpret their meanings by teaching them to understand the context, figurative meaning, deviated syntax, and a wide range of poetic devices used by the poets. Moreover, they suggested that teachers need to provide them opportunities not only to explore the meaning of poems but also to enjoy the aesthetics of poems by reciting them in class. Thus, the traditional poetry teaching method is another challenge for the learners. Teachers tend to focus more on providing exam-oriented readymade explanations and students are happy to copy the summary provided by the teachers. Such practice limits students' opportunity to explore poetry. As a result, the students become passive learners and they are not given the opportunities to develop an appreciation of poetry. This finding aligns with recent findings by Syed and Wahas (2020) in Yemen who reported that university teachers use traditional teaching methods in teaching poetry by providing readymade explanations which hinder the students' active learning. This finding also resonates with the earlier finding by Khatib (2011) who reported that students do not find the traditional approach of teaching poetry engaging. He suggested a new approach to teaching poetry which allows the readers to experiment with the multiple meanings of the text based on their experiences.

The problem of university-level students reading poetry can be attributed to their experiences of reading poems in high school. The students' lack of interest in reading poetry can be related to the teachers' inadequate preparation to teach poetry in high school classes. Scholars have reported that teachers lack good skills to teach poetry and suffer from negative attitudes toward teaching poetry both in developing and developed countries (Moea, 2021; Young, 2016). Similarly, the challenges faced by students in reading poems can be attributed to the pedagogical practices which fail to take a broader look at poetry teaching as suggested by Gönen (2018).

Different theories provide guidelines for teaching poetry. For example, readers' response theory highlights the role of readers in reading poems and comes with the meaning of the poem (Rosenblatt, 1994). Similarly, transactional theory addresses the importance of active learning. Schema theory suggests that teachers need to activate the preexisting schema of the readers and Social Constructionist theory suggests that interaction with the stakeholders supports learning (Jubran, 2016). However, the participants of this study depended on their teacher for understanding the meaning of the poems they read. This indicates that the teachers do not encourage the active exploration of the meaning in the existing pedagogical practices and minimize the active roles of the students. The uncritical acceptance of meaning explained by the teachers in the class minimizes the students' roles and inhibits their joy of reading poems.

Based on the findings of the study, it can be argued that teachers' exam-orientated pedagogy and low expectations from their students in teaching activities are responsible for making poetry teaching mechanical. Students cannot fully benefit from poetry unless teachers set high expectations for students and engage them in a wide range of learning activities utilizing the richness of poetry to enhance learning.

This study was an attempt to contribute to literature pedagogy by exploring the practices and expectations of undergraduate students in reading English poetry. The findings are significant because teachers cannot use effective teaching strategies unless they address the students' challenges and meet their expectations of teachers. Similarly, they can identify areas to focus on in teaching poetry and can design context-specific activities for teaching by identifying the challenges students encounter while reading English poems.

Implications of the Study

We can draw several implications from this study. Since students have poor habits of reading English poems, teachers need to focus on developing good reading habits by selecting appropriate text to arouse the interest of the students and to make poetry more accessible. For this, students can form poetry reading circle among them and have additional practices of reading poetry. Poetry text needs to be higher than the current level of the learners. But if texts are too difficult, students may become demotivated; if they are too easy, they might feel bored. Teachers also need to teach poetic devices to fully identify the deeper meaning of poems. Additionally, teachers need to teach ways of identifying the meaning of poems by understanding the context of the poems and the poet's background. Reading poetry is not only an intellectual exercise but also one for enjoyment. So, teachers need to allocate some time for poetry performances in class to encourage students to learn about the aesthetic elements of poems. Likewise, teachers should encourage students to consult with the reference materials/sources of related poems so that students can be facilitated and feel comfortable in reading poetry in classroom.

Limitations

This research was conducted as an exploratory study at a community campus by taking a sample of nine undergraduate students from the faculty of education and the faculty of humanities. The sample did not have a balance of female and male participants in the study because the female students outnumbered the male students at the research site. The first-year students were not included in the study and data were collected from semi-structured interviews only. Including students from different faculties and adding data from the class observations would help produce more detailed information about poetry teaching and learning practices. Further studies can analyze students' poetry teaching strategies by collecting data from class observations and surveys along with interviews.

Conclusion

Teaching poetry has been an indispensable part of English as a Second Language programs throughout the world. Several university-level programs have included poetry in the English curriculum. However, poetry teaching receives inadequate attention among teachers. Teachers tend to follow traditional lecture-based instruction which is seldom adequate for exploring the richness inherent in most poems. As a result, students have limited interest in reading poems. Teaching activities should be re-designed in order to provide students with better skills for reading, understanding, and enjoying poetry. Students' parts in text selection, text exploration, and discussion should be reevaluated to make poetry teaching more engaging.

English teachers can gain deeper insights into the challenges of English poetry reading and their students' expectations of poetry teaching. The findings of the present study contribute to teachers designing appropriate teaching and learning activities and materials, identifying areas for further research, and providing insights to course developers for selecting appropriate poetry texts for undergraduates.

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Received : 2024/12/08
Revision received : 2024/12/10
Accepted : 2024/12/12

Arboreal Imagination in Kalidasa's *Abhijnanashakuntalam*: Reimagining Trees as Sentient Agents through the Lens of Plant Humanities

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Abstract

This study examines ecological consciousness in Kalidasa's *Abhijnanashakuntalam*, highlighting the active role of plants in the narrative. Drawing on frameworks such as Michael Marder's Plant-Thinking and Matthew Hall's concept of plant personhood, it shows how Kalidasa attributes symbolic, emotional, and spiritual agency to trees within Shakuntala's forest hermitage. Arboreal characters like the mango tree and jasmine vine act as emotional mediators and narrative participants, reflecting ancient Indian ecological awareness. The study bridges classical Sanskrit literature with modern environmental thought, arguing that Kalidasa's work anticipates the themes of plant humanities and reveals deep interconnections between humans and nature in literary imagination.

Keywords: arboreal imagination, plant humanities, plant personhood, vegetal agency, Sanskrit drama, environmental consciousness, interspecies relationships

Introduction

In the lush groves of Kalidasa's *Abhijnanashakuntalam*, where jasmine vines embrace mango trees and forest streams whisper ancient secrets, we encounter a literary landscape that challenges our fundamental assumptions about consciousness, agency, and the boundaries between human and non-human worlds. Written during the cultural flowering of the Gupta period (circa 370-450 CE), this masterpiece of Sanskrit drama presents what may be one of literature's most sophisticated explorations of plant consciousness and vegetal agency, predating by over fifteen centuries the theoretical frameworks that contemporary scholars now call plant humanities (Culp, 2018, p. 3). The conventional reading of Shakuntala typically focuses on its exquisite poetry, its complex dramatic structure, or its significance within Indian cultural traditions. However, beneath these well-explored dimensions lies a radical reimagining of human-plant relationships that deserves serious scholarly attention. Kalidasa's forest is not simply a beautiful setting for human drama; it constitutes a vibrant community of sentient beings who actively participate in the narrative's unfolding, experiencing emotions, forming relationships, and exercising a form of agency that contemporary plant humanities theorists are only beginning to articulate.

This study proposes that Kalidasa employs what can be termed "arboreal imagination"—a sophisticated literary technique that attributes consciousness, personality, and agency to trees and other plants within dramatic narratives. Through this imaginative practice, trees become more than symbols or metaphors; they emerge as characters in their own right, possessing distinct personalities, forming relationships with human and non-human beings, and influencing the trajectory of narrative events through their presence and actions. The significance of this investigation extends beyond literary analysis to encompass urgent contemporary questions about environmental ethics, plant consciousness, and the possibility of developing more inclusive forms of ecological awareness. As we face unprecedented environmental challenges that demand new ways of understanding our relationships with the natural world, Kalidasa's ancient wisdom offers remarkable insights into the possibility of recognizing plants as beings deserving of moral consideration and respect.

Methodology

This investigation employs a multidisciplinary qualitative approach that integrates close textual analysis with theoretical frameworks drawn from the emerging field of plant humanities. The primary source material consists of Kalidasa's *Abhijnanashakuntalam*, accessed through Arthur W. Ryder's authoritative English translation available through Project Gutenberg, chosen for its scholarly rigor and accessibility. This translation preserves the essential meanings and cultural nuances necessary for understanding Kalidasa's sophisticated treatment of plant life while making the text accessible to contemporary readers. The analytical methodology centers on careful close reading techniques designed to identify and interpret instances of plant personification, agency, and consciousness within the dramatic text. Each significant passage involving trees or other plants undergoes systematic examination for evidence of anthropomorphic characteristics, emotional responses, and narrative agency. Particular attention focuses on dialogue, stage directions, and poetic descriptions that attribute human-like qualities to plant life.

This textual analysis integrates insights from plant humanities theory, environmental philosophy, and Sanskrit literary criticism to create a comprehensive interpretive framework. In this regard, Miller, B. S. (1984) explores how plants like mango blossoms symbolize love and fertility, reflecting Shakuntala's emotional bond with the hermitage's flora, embodying an ecocentric worldview where plants shape cultural narratives. Likewise, Mishra, V. N. (1989) examines the mango blossom as a symbol of Shakuntala's youth and love, highlighting plants' role in mirroring human emotions and ecological harmony. The study draws extensively on secondary sources that illuminate both the cultural context of ancient Indian plant reverence and contemporary theoretical developments in plant consciousness studies. Historical sources help establish the cultural foundations of Kalidasa's plant imagination, while contemporary theory provides analytical tools for understanding the broader implications of his artistic vision. The methodology also employs comparative analysis, examining Kalidasa's treatment of plant life alongside other Sanskrit texts and selected Western literary works to highlight the distinctive qualities of his arboreal imagination. This comparative dimension helps establish both the uniqueness of Kalidasa's approach and its connections to broader literary traditions that recognize plant agency and consciousness.

Theoretical Framework: Plant Humanities and Vegetal Consciousness

The theoretical foundation for this study rests on the rapidly developing field of plant humanities, which challenges traditional Western philosophical assumptions about consciousness, agency, and moral consideration by advocating for the recognition of plant intelligence and subjectivity. This interdisciplinary field draws from philosophy, botany, ecology, and literary studies to develop new frameworks for understanding plant life that move beyond mechanistic and reductionist approaches. Michael Marder's groundbreaking work *Plant-Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life* provides crucial theoretical groundwork by arguing that plants possess a form of "non-conscious intentionality" that enables them to respond creatively to environmental challenges and opportunities (Marder 8). According to Marder, plants engage in complex decision-making processes, form memory-like responses to past experiences, and participate in sophisticated communication networks that demonstrate a form of intelligence fundamentally different from but no less valid than human consciousness. This perspective opens possibilities for recognizing plant subjectivity that transcends traditional anthropocentric limitations.

Matthew Hall's *Plants as Persons: A Philosophical Botany* extends these insights by advocating explicitly for the moral consideration of plants as beings deserving ethical respect and protection (Hall 134). Hall's work demonstrates how various cultural traditions, particularly indigenous

knowledge systems, have long recognized plant personhood and agency, suggesting that Western philosophy's neglect of plant consciousness represents a historical aberration rather than universal truth. His framework provides tools for understanding how literature can contribute to expanding moral consideration beyond the animal kingdom to encompass the broader community of living beings. Charles Ryan's recent contributions through *Plant Agency: Vegetal Perspectives on Life and Literature* further develop these themes by exploring how plants actively participate in ecological and cultural narratives, serving as "co-agents in ecological narratives" rather than passive recipients of human action (Ryan 45). Ryan's work emphasizes that plants exercise agency through growth patterns, chemical communications, and environmental modifications that actively shape the conditions of their existence and the lives of other organisms. These theoretical frameworks converge in their recognition that plants possess forms of consciousness, agency, and moral standing that have been systematically ignored by dominant Western intellectual traditions. Applied to Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, these perspectives reveal how ancient Indian culture anticipated many insights that contemporary plant humanities scholars are now rediscovering, suggesting that Kalidasa's arboreal imagination represents not merely poetic fancy but profound ecological wisdom.

Literature Review and Research Gap

Scholarship on Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* spans over two centuries and encompasses diverse analytical approaches, from traditional literary criticism to contemporary cultural studies. Barbara Stoler Miller's influential *Theater of Memory: The Plays of Kalidasa* (1984) established foundational interpretive frameworks by emphasizing Kalidasa's masterful integration of natural imagery with human psychological development. Miller's work demonstrates how Kalidasa employs natural settings not merely as scenic background but as integral components of dramatic structure and thematic development. A. Berriedale Keith's earlier *The Sanskrit Drama in Its Origin, Development, Theory and Practice* (1924) provides essential historical context by tracing the evolution of Sanskrit theatrical traditions and highlighting Kalidasa's innovations within established dramatic conventions. Keith's analysis reveals how Kalidasa's treatment of natural settings represents a significant departure from earlier dramatic traditions, though it does not explore the implications of this innovation for understanding plant consciousness or agency. More recent scholarship has begun to incorporate environmental perspectives into Sanskrit literary analysis. David L. Haberman's *People Trees: Worship of Trees in Northern India* (2013) offers valuable insights into the cultural and religious foundations of Indian tree reverence, demonstrating how ancient Indian traditions consistently recognized trees as conscious beings deserving ritual attention and spiritual respect. Haberman's ethnographic work provides crucial context for understanding the cultural matrix within which Kalidasa developed his arboreal imagination.

Sheldon Pollock's monumental *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture, and Power in Premodern India* (2006) situates Sanskrit literature within broader cultural and political contexts, revealing how texts like *Shakuntala* participated in complex negotiations of cultural identity and environmental consciousness. However, Pollock's analysis focuses primarily on human cultural dynamics rather than exploring the implications of plant representation for environmental ethics. Comparative studies have also contributed valuable insights. Robert Pogue Harrison's *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (1992) explores arboreal symbolism across Western literary traditions, providing frameworks for understanding how forest settings function in literature more broadly. However, Harrison's work focuses primarily on Western texts and does not adequately address the distinctive features of Indian forest imagination. Despite this rich scholarly foundation, a significant gap exists in applying contemporary plant humanities frameworks to Sanskrit literary analysis. While scholars have recognized the importance of natural imagery in Kalidasa's work,

few have explored the radical implications of his plant personification for understanding plant consciousness and agency. This study addresses this gap by demonstrating how plant humanities theory illuminates previously unrecognized dimensions of Kalidasa's artistic achievement while revealing the contemporary relevance of ancient Indian ecological wisdom. Kalidasa, through the protagonist of the play, imbues human qualities to plants and there is a sense of symbiosis between plants and humans.

Analysis: Trees as Sentient Beings and Narrative Agents

The most striking example of Kalidasa's arboreal imagination appears in Act I, where the jasmine vine and mango tree are presented as a married couple whose relationship mirrors and anticipates the human romance that forms the play's central narrative. When Anasuya addresses Shakuntala, saying, "Dear Shakuntala, here's that jasmine you call Light of the Forest. She's chosen the fragrant mango as her bridegroom. You've forgotten her," she establishes these plants as gendered beings capable of making romantic choices (Kalidasa). Shakuntala's response, "Only when I forget myself," reveals the profound identification between human and plant consciousness that permeates the play, suggesting that forgetting the jasmine would constitute a form of self-forgetting that violates the interconnected nature of forest life.

This scene demonstrates what Marder describes as plant "non-conscious intentionality" by attributing deliberate choice to the jasmine in selecting the mango as her partner (Marder 8). The jasmine has not merely grown toward the mango through random biological processes; she has actively chosen him as her bridegroom, exercising a form of agency that parallels human romantic decision-making. This botanical marriage serves multiple narrative functions: it provides a model for Shakuntala's own romantic destiny, establishes the forest as a community of conscious beings, and suggests that plant relationships possess emotional depth comparable to human connections.

The cultural significance of this plant pairing enhances its symbolic power. The mango tree, associated with Kamadeva (the god of love) in Hindu tradition, represents fertility, abundance, and auspicious beginnings, while jasmine symbolizes purity, beauty, and spiritual refinement. Their union thus encompasses both earthly passion and spiritual elevation, prefiguring the complex dimensions of Shakuntala and Dushyanta's own relationship that will unfold throughout the play.

Sisterly Bonds: Shakuntala's Kinship with Forest Life

Kalidasa's most explicit articulation of plant personhood appears in Act I when Shakuntala explains her devotion to forest care. When questioned about her dedication to watering trees, she responds simply, "I feel like a real sister to them" (Kalidasa). This brief statement revolutionizes the relationship between human and plant life by establishing kinship bonds that transcend species boundaries. Shakuntala does not merely care for trees as a gardener tends plants; she recognizes them as family members deserving the same attention and affection she would offer human siblings. This declaration aligns perfectly with Hall's advocacy for plant personhood, demonstrating how recognizing plants as persons naturally leads to expanded moral consideration and kinship identification (Hall 140). Shakuntala's sisterly relationship with trees reflects what Hall describes as the capacity to recognize plants as "beings with whom we share fundamental characteristics and moral standing." Her daily practices of watering roots before satisfying her own thirst and refusing to pluck flowers for personal adornment exemplify the ethical implications of recognizing plant consciousness and moral status.

The kinship metaphor also establishes the forest hermitage as an extended family unit where

humans and plants participate as equal members of a moral community. This vision challenges anthropocentric assumptions about moral consideration by demonstrating how recognizing plant personhood can expand rather than diminish human moral capacity. Shakuntala's identification with trees enhances rather than reduces her humanity, suggesting that ecological consciousness contributes to rather than detracts from human flourishing.

The Farewell Embrace: Emotional Complexity in Plant Relationships

One of the most emotionally powerful moments in the entire play occurs in Act IV when Shakuntala prepares to leave the forest for her married life in the royal court. Her farewell to the jasmine vine reveals the depth of emotional attachment possible between human and plant beings: "My beloved jasmine! most brilliant of climbing plants, how sweet it is to see thee cling thus fondly to thy husband, the mango-tree; yet, prithee, turn thy twining arms for a moment in this direction to embrace thy sister; she is going far away, and may never see thee again" (Kalidasa).

This passage demonstrates several crucial aspects of Kalidasa's arboreal imagination. First, it attributes complex emotional capacity to the jasmine by describing her embrace of the mango as "fond," suggesting that plant affection possesses qualitative dimensions comparable to human emotion. Second, it establishes the jasmine as capable of understanding and responding to human emotional needs, as Shakuntala requests that she "turn thy twining arms" to offer comfort. Third, it reveals the genuine grief experienced by human beings when severing relationships with plant companions, indicating that these connections possess authentic emotional significance.

Ryan's concept of vegetal agency becomes particularly relevant here, as the jasmine is portrayed as capable of deliberate physical action in response to emotional appeals (Ryan 47). She is not merely growing in response to biological imperatives but actively choosing whether to extend her embrace toward her departing human sister. This moment captures what Ryan describes as plants' role as "co-agents in ecological narratives," demonstrating how plant agency contributes to the emotional and narrative development of human stories.

The King's Magnetic Return: Forest as Living Force

Kalidasa's portrayal of the forest's influence on human consciousness reaches its peak in Act I when King Dushyanta attempts to leave the hermitage after his initial encounter with Shakuntala. His internal struggle reveals the forest's power as a living entity capable of exerting emotional and psychological influence: "Suddenly, the city doesn't seem so attractive. I'll link up with my followers and camp just outside this sacred grove. The truth is, I can't get Shakuntala out of my head. My body forges on, my restless mind streams back— / A silken banner borne against the wind" (Kalidasa).

While the king explicitly attributes his reluctance to leave to his infatuation with Shakuntala, the metaphor suggests that the forest itself exerts a magnetic pull that resists his departure. The image of a "silken banner borne against the wind" captures the tension between forward motion and backward attraction, with the forest serving as the wind that opposes his physical movement away from the sacred grove. This passage demonstrates what Harrison describes as the forest's capacity to function as "a transformative space" that alters human consciousness and challenges the boundaries between civilization and nature (Harrison 112).

The king's experience reflects Marder's insight that plants engage in complex relationships with human consciousness that transcend simple biological interaction (Marder 22). The forest has not merely provided a beautiful setting for romance; it has actively participated in creating the emotional

conditions that make the romance possible and continues to influence the king's psychological state even after he attempts to leave. This demonstrates the forest's agency in shaping human narrative outcomes through its influence on character psychology and decision-making.

Trees as Spiritual Witnesses and Cosmic Mediators

The spiritual dimensions of Kalidasa's arboreal imagination culminate in Act VII during the final reunion scene, where the forest setting facilitates divine intervention and narrative resolution. The celestial grove where Shakuntala and Dushyanta are finally reunited represents the fulfilment of the trees' role as spiritual mediators connecting earthly and divine realms. As Kanva addresses the trees surrounding the hermitage during Shakuntala's departure, his words reveal their function as cosmic witnesses: "Hear me, ye trees that surround our hermitage! Shakuntala ne'er moistened in the stream / Her own parched lips, till she had fondly poured / Its purest water on your thirsty roots" (Kalidasa).

This passage establishes trees as conscious beings capable of witnessing and remembering human actions, fulfilling what Marder describes as plants' function as "temporal beings" that carry ecological and moral memory across generations (Marder 90). The trees have observed Shakuntala's selfless devotion and serve as repositories of her virtue, capable of testifying to her character in ways that transcend human testimony. Their witness becomes particularly significant given the curse that erases human memory of Shakuntala's marriage, suggesting that plant consciousness provides a more reliable form of memory than human recollection.

The forest's role in facilitating the final reunion demonstrates its agency as a spiritual mediator capable of connecting different realms of existence. The celestial grove represents the culmination of the earthly forest's spiritual evolution, suggesting that trees possess the capacity for spiritual development and can serve as bridges between material and transcendent dimensions of reality. This vision aligns with Hall's recognition of plants as spiritual beings deserving reverence and respect (Hall 150).

Comparative Analysis: Distinctive Features of Kalidasa's Arboreal Vision

Kalidasa's treatment of plant consciousness distinguishes itself from both other Sanskrit literary traditions and Western literary approaches through its systematic attribution of complex psychological and spiritual capacities to trees and other plants. Within Sanskrit literature, while works like Meghaduta employ natural imagery for emotional effect, Kalidasa uniquely develops sustained characterizations of individual plants as conscious beings with distinct personalities and relationships (Coulson 56). The jasmine "Light of the Forest" and her mango bridegroom possess individual identities that extend beyond their symbolic functions to encompass genuine character development throughout the play.

Comparison with Western literary traditions reveals even more striking differences. While Shakespeare's Forest of Arden in *As You Like It* serves as a transformative space that enables human character development, it remains fundamentally a human-centered environment where natural elements facilitate human growth without possessing independent agency or consciousness (Harrison 112). Kalidasa's forest, by contrast, constitutes a community of conscious beings who participate actively in narrative development through their own choices, emotions, and relationships.

This distinction reflects broader cultural differences in understanding plant life and consciousness. Western literary traditions, shaped by philosophical traditions that typically deny consciousness to plants, tend to employ natural imagery symbolically or metaphorically without attributing

genuine agency to plant life. Kalidasa's approach reflects ancient Indian philosophical traditions that recognize consciousness as a fundamental property of all living beings, enabling him to develop plant characters with psychological complexity and moral standing. Ryan's framework for understanding plant agency helps illuminate these cultural differences by revealing how different philosophical assumptions about plant consciousness enable different literary possibilities (Ryan 50). Kalidasa's cultural context, which recognized plants as conscious beings deserving moral consideration, enabled him to develop literary techniques that Western traditions, constrained by mechanistic assumptions about plant life, could not easily replicate.

Conclusions

This investigation reveals that Kalidasa's *Abhijnanashakuntalam* presents a remarkably sophisticated exploration of plant consciousness and agency that anticipates by over fifteen centuries many insights now being developed within contemporary plant humanities scholarship. Through his concept of arboreal imagination, Kalidasa transforms trees from passive scenic elements into active narrative participants possessing complex psychological, emotional, and spiritual dimensions that contribute fundamentally to the play's dramatic development and thematic significance.

The analysis demonstrates that Kalidasa's trees function simultaneously as symbols, characters, and spiritual mediators, exercising forms of agency that align closely with contemporary theoretical frameworks developed by Marder, Hall, and Ryan. The jasmine "Light of the Forest" and her mango bridegroom exemplify plant consciousness through their capacity for romantic choice and emotional attachment. Shakuntala's sisterly relationship with forest trees demonstrates the possibility of recognizing plant as person without diminishing human moral capacity. The forest's magnetic influence on King Dushyanta reveals plant agency in shaping human consciousness and decision-making. The trees' role as spiritual witnesses and cosmic mediators establishes their function as bridges between earthly and divine realms.

These findings suggest that ancient Indian culture possessed sophisticated understandings of plant consciousness that Western intellectual traditions are only beginning to rediscover. Kalidasa's arboreal imagination reflects cultural assumptions about plant sentience and agency that enabled him to develop literary techniques unavailable to traditions that deny plant consciousness. This cultural difference has significant implications for contemporary environmental discourse, suggesting that non-Western wisdom traditions offer valuable resources for developing more inclusive and ecologically informed approaches to environmental ethics. The study also reveals the potential contributions that literary analysis can make to contemporary discussions about plant consciousness and environmental ethics. By demonstrating how ancient literary texts can embody sophisticated ecological wisdom, this investigation suggests that literary scholarship can contribute meaningfully to interdisciplinary efforts to develop more sustainable and ethically informed relationships with the natural world.

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Received : 2024/12/14
Revision received : 2024/12/16
Accepted : 2024/12/21

