

# Narratives of Ageing, Narratives of Nation-building: Ralpa and the Legacy of Dissident Poetry in Nepal

**Mallika Shakya<sup>1</sup>**

---

<sup>1</sup>Department of Sociology, South Asian University, Delhi, New Delhi, India.

---

**Corresponding author:**

Mallika Shakya, Department of Sociology, South Asian University, New Delhi, Delhi 110021, India.

E-mail: mallika@sau.ac.in

**Abstract**

This article reads the work of a publicly engaged poet from Nepal, Manjul, to explore how revolutions age along with humans and nations. His recent work is juxtaposed against his earlier political activism leading a radical movement 'Ralpa' which had spearheaded literary activism against the Panchayati dictatorship. Earlier known for his subversive lifestyle and rebellious literary repertoire, Manjul later turned self-reflective, not only pondering on the ironies of everyday living and the poetics of dissidence but also inching towards a more humanized outlook on the ideals of the nation and the state. Clearly, there are paradoxes in the way the intimate and the public, the accordant and the disruptive, and the conformist and the subversive are played off against one another by those in power. In a poetic tribute dedicated to his forebearer poet Siddhicharan, Manjul contemplates how political slogans may inspire and even serve as cornerstones for certain strands of poetry. However, he emphasizes how these slogans are only one of the many dimensions of society and nation. The flame of revolutionary spirit still burns within Manjul even in his advanced years. Yet, it seamlessly blends into the broader tapestry of life embracing the sanctity of thought, expression and action. The paper situates this corpus within the anthropological de-

bates on the epistemologies of writing culture.

#### Keywords

Nationalism, revolution, dissidence, poetics, ageing, Nepal, Manjul, Ral-pha

#### Introduction

In Nepal, ideas of dissent overwhelmingly dominate the discourses of nation-building across mainstream and the alternative platforms. Like a spectre, public imaginations of dissidence have long cast a shadow over Nepal and its people despite a certain degree of decolonization it achieved since the end of the Rana regime in the 1950s. It is important to acknowledge that the motifs of dissidence which stirred the imaginations resonate differently among the older and younger cohorts. Most recently, ‘revolution’ refers to the armed uprising waged by the Nepali Maoists during 1996–2006. This armed guerilla movement played a central role in guiding the nation towards abolishment of the monarchy and its Hindu-centric governance, ultimately leading to promulgation of a new constitution in 2015. This should be differentiated from the time period 1960-1990 when the term “revolution” referred to unarmed but radical (and prolonged) political struggle against the banning of political parties by King Mahendra who ran the country through a one-party system called the Panchayat. In the preceding decades of the 1930s and 1940s, Nepalis staged rebellions against the Rana regime within its borders; and it was understood that these actions were effectively a part of the regional anti-colonial movement against the British who had supported up the Rana regime in Nepal (Rawal 1990).

It is against these multiple contours of revolutionary imaginations that I read the life and works of the radical band Ralpa, and within it the writings of Manjul as a dissident, communist poet with longstanding public and political engagement since the late 1960s. The anthology I read is a tribute to his predecessor poet Siddhicharan Shrestha whose lifespan allows for a foray into the 1940s rebellion against the Rana regime. The writings of both these poets have been invoked periodically in the more recent popular uprisings, even if Manjul and his poet-singer comrades from Ralpa have retired from active party politics and activism. My proposition in this lecture is that we must look critically into expressions of disenchantment just as we bask in the euphoria of uprisings to ask

ourselves, poetically: Do revolutions age like all lives (and objects) do? This question is situated within the wider context of how paradoxes endure in national ideals, including concepts like revolution and dissidence alongside development and modernity.

I would like to take special care to clarify that my intention is not to caricature fervors of revolution or resistance. I firmly stand on the side of progressive social and political movements, which question authoritarianism, elitism and fascism in all guises and garbs. I do not wish to undermine the reality that social and political reforms do have very long gestation periods, nor do I doubt the sincerity of individual activists or organisations waging further movements. Like development and modernity, revolutionary imaginaries perform specific discursive functions. For me, their discursive power lies in continuing the search for freedom while resisting neoliberal attacks on social justice, and in continuing to valorize solidarity while resisting corporate co-optations of social movements.

Segueing into the anthropological relevance of reading creative writing while discussing dissident imaginaries, I turn to counterculture movements within anthropology which looked for plurality of being and seeing (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997; Harrison, 2008; Nyamnjoh, 2017). One such early movement involved those who identified themselves as the “non-white” anthropologists from within North America who questioned the hegemonic method of stratifying ‘ethnographic data’ under theory-writing. In critiquing Clifford and Marcus (1986), Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon (1996) demanded that the ‘textual’ turn in ethnographic writing should be more respectful when representing lived histories and penned poetics by those in the margins. This demand draws on conversation between marginalized anthropologists and creative writers who boldly protested the fatigue of having to put up with racial (and civilizational) tokenism again and again: Cherrie Moraga (2015) wrote, ‘*How can we this time not use our bodies to be thrown over a river of tormented history to bridge the gap?*’<sup>1</sup> Building on a radical collection of literary texts penned by a diverse set of marginalized writers from the United States and the Latin America, Moraga and Anzaldua (1983) called for a revolution that is both physical and metaphysical, and sought solidarity from the rest of the Third World in developing a viable alternative to white liberalism. This literary

---

<sup>1</sup> In the new edition of its reprinted volume, Kate Rushin (2015) offers ‘The Bridge Poem’ with lines, ‘I’m sick of seeing and touching/Both sides of things/Sick of being the damn bridge for everybody.’ And further, ‘I’m sick of filling in your gaps ... I’m sick of mediating with your worst self/On behalf of your better selves.’

conversation is echoed in Faye Harrison's (1991) pioneering work towards 'decolonising anthropology', calling for an end of 'epistemological imperialism' in the way texts from the Global South, including poetry, are often appropriated against the Euro-American theories.

This paper responds to that call by taking a stance against ethnographising poetry in a reductive way. Instead, it seeks to build on the evocative faculty of poetry to stir emotive discourses on political dissidence in Nepal. By emotive, I am not referring to the dichotomous realms of joy or anger, written as contronyms of (bureaucratized) rationality and logic. Instead, I delve into a contested field accentuating alternative sensibilities at the visceral level (Shakya, 2022). My reading of elderliness resonates with what Edward Said (2004) called "late style" which renders "disenchantment and pleasure without resolving the contradiction between them". I read ontological ageing to situate protest culture within a broader ambit of resistance. The first section of this lecture invokes Manjul's anthological tribute to Siddhicharan Shrestha written and collectively performed in the 1990s. The second section discusses the Ralpa movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, of which Manjul was an integral part, while reflecting on its legacies today. The subsequent section reads this biographical narrative as an anthropology of ageing to ask how revolution looks from the eyes of ageing revolutionaries. What do the ongoing conversations look like, between them and their successors, and whether poetry may serve a navigational function decoding those longitudinal conversations?

### **The Anthology Siddhicharanharu**

Siddhicharan recited his poem  
And as he gazed ahead, he felt his eyes welled up  
As he saw ahead the motherless state authority  
The system inflicting violence upon its people.  
'This poem does not sound like Siddhicharan's', erupted a throng from  
the forefront,  
A faint smile graced Siddhicharan  
'This poem does not sound like a Nepali poem,' the crowd declared  
again  
Siddhidharan flashed a smile,  
'Someday, they might declare  
Nepal does not sound like Nepal.'

In a sudden surge of emotion, Siddhicharan felt profound affection for  
all his patriotic songs.

(Excerpt from Manjul (1998), 'Siddhicharanharu', Poem 17)

Manjul penned 48 short poems memorialising a poet he admired, Siddhicharan Shrestha (1912-1992). Published as '*Siddhicharanharu*' (The *Siddhicharans*), the poems are titled only numerically and are published in the same order as they were penned in. The first poem in the anthology was written for the poet's first death anniversary in 1993, and the pen flowed spontaneously for several months before the second anniversary was reached. The anthology has now become a classic. It is not biographical writing: None of the poems discuss the specifics of Siddhicharan's mortal life; instead, they dig deep and bare open the essence of Siddhicharan as a poet, a conscientious citizen, and a dissident. Dissociating his poetics from the narrow cages of party and ideological politics, Manjul identifies the poet in his bare solitude as

Siddhicharan's name is Siddhicharan.

There are no modifiers before or after the noun that his name is.

(Excerpt from Poem 21)

The character 'Siddhicharan' is a common man; like all men he has well-wishers and lovers but also enemies. Siddhicharan loves his wife and children just as his parents and his wife love him. He does this with no modifiers. Siddhicharan's is a life *en totalité*, fully human, nothing but human. 'It is for this much that he is into poetry; it is for this much that he is into politics' reminds his poet-biographer Manjul (Poem 21).

The first six poems in this anthology set the stage to pen the ironies of human life and its universal predicaments. The first poem evokes metamorphosis amid an interpolative narrative: Siddhicharan rises among thousands of citizens discussing the city just as the city reads the newspaper and the newspaper reads the city. This is not a city of nostalgia but a city of vulgarity, caught in the sordidness of neocolonial money, which resembles "the eyes of a wicked cat running away after making a theft" (p1); this is also a city where betrayal may sneak up on you jumping out of any hole on the ground, because, writes Manjul, betrayal has not sworn against holding the hands of any of the social classes. Rightfully then, Manjul's Siddhicharan is one who not only empathizes with the grievances of hungry stomachs but he also feels sorry for the solitary tears fallen on clean suits.

The second poem transforms Siddhicharan into an embodiment of na-

ture. He becomes the melody resounding from the strings of his own body, drawn by the bow of his own hand. Its harmony is such that the sky nestles itself in its musical cavity, lulling with stars while water mournfully hums with its tears and waves surge with its sighs. The third poem sees nature in Siddhicharan nurture the spirits of rebellion: Beckoned by the expanse of the sky's invitation, Siddhicharan extracts its ink and uses it to compose a poem. This composition swells into a myriad of skies so much so that the force of its eruption leaves the universe in a stunned silence. Siddhicharan had never intended to inscribe poems with human blood, yet he finds himself swept into the torrent of his own fervent blood, splattering across verses of his poetry. He had never aspired to being in incarceration, nor had he envisioned enfoldment in his beloved's embrace, writes Manjul, but something within stirred him to plunge headlong into the fervor of both public activism and private passion. And on the final day, Siddhicharan compresses his essence and pens himself as one final poem, an opus that grows larger and larger until it erupts like a supernova, scattering into a thousand skies.

The fourth and fifth poems can be read together, encapsulating the contradiction of harmony and rage. While the fourth poem intensifies tension within this paradox, the fifth poem reconciles these elements, weaving them into a dialectic of anthropocene.

Here come the two Siddhicharans  
Arriving at my door  
If they bring their eyes, they leave behind their hearts  
If they bring their hearts, they leave behind their eyes  
Here come the two Siddhicharans  
Arriving at my door  
Both are poets in their own right  
When one takes a seat to pen poetry, the other longs to traverse the nation  
When one traverses the nation, the other enthuses about penning poetry  
Yet, they walk, stepping with one foot of each.  
And, of the two remaining legs  
One rests in the sky, the other on the earth  
Away from the poets themselves.  
Those who fail to grasp Siddhicharan's poems  
Bring forth the two spare legs and barter them as firewood in the marketplace  
...  
Here come the two Siddhicharans at my door

Hiding in their inner pockets  
The love songs dedicated to [the legendary paramour] Rajmatee  
And pull out revolutionary anthems from their outer pockets  
They declare they wish to sing revolutionary songs  
The two Siddhicharans who arrive at my door  
If they bring their eyes, they leave behind their hearts  
If they bring their hearts, they leave behind their eyes  
Here come the two Siddhicharans

(excerpt from Poem 4)

The poet's dilemma of being torn between the headspace and the heartspace, between the eyes and the heart, and between passion and revolutionary struggle echoes further but it does seek certain reconciliation in the successive poems. Penned with great patience and care, Poem No 6 weaves a dialectic out of the two contradicting feet of his.

These two feet [of Siddhicharan] wrestle themselves out  
    Nearly slipping off the staircase  
    With a resounding crash.  
Despite brewing of the anger within, this Siddhicharan  
He refrains from venting anger upon them  
With great dexterity,  
He guides both feet to his chamber  
Venerating them both.  
...  
Eventually a smile emerges.  
He shapes the smile into seedling and plants them in his emotional  
soil,  
The tree's roots reached out toward the horizon  
Its branches spreading far and wide with the sun's rays.  
The tree sings in harmony with the moon and the stars at night  
Yet, if you observe carefully, you will see the essence of feet  
Siddhicharan cradles that tree  
Embracing in his solitude  
At times in quiet contemplation,  
While other times, he infuses it with ink from his inkpot  
    Within the chest of his pages  
    Within the nib of his pen  
That tree  
Thrives as the most fertile being within his poetic heart.

It is with enviable grace and command that Manjul mightily delivers 48

compellingly eloquent and achingly expressive poems on one abstract(ised) theme - Siddhicharan. The collection progresses with great composure, (com)passion, dare, desire, rage, defeat, grief and their overcoming. Readers wonder if these poignant poems are his reflections on the shortcomings of his own party and limitations of his own activism associated with left politics. The profound sadness one feels in his verses might be about the old revolutions whose legacies he now considers inadequate. But one is also touched by how he reconciles with the human predicaments and fallibilities. "Whichever party that your mother belongs to, you must give her that space and respect her choice," Manjul was once heard advising his party followers.<sup>2</sup> In this anthology, however, Manjul's Siddhicharan is the child of a mother raped and killed, and who searches maternal warmth in the cuddles of an imaginary bunny, bathes in the warmth of the sun, shades of the trees, cool of the moon rivers, and feels taunted by all those (Poem 8). At times, Siddhicharan is outraged, even our emotions are now corporatized and monetized, writes Manjul: "...where there used to be heart, now lies an aluminum plate" (Poem 9). At times, he yearns for the rural and the remote (Poem 11), pens his resolve to separate himself from the deeds of his own communist party (Poem 18), mourns the death of an aunt in blue sari (Poem 23), marvels at purposelessness of poetry and love (Poems 24 and 25) and Marx's fetishised beard (Poem 32).

This anthology never mentions the year of Siddhicharan's birth or death, nor are we told about any of the milestones in his life.<sup>3</sup> A rare mention of his son is to express the limits of his renunciatory sensibility, which cautions his readers not to romanticise a wannabe guerilla's dilemma as a Buddhist *mahabhiniskraman* (the great going forth from home). Another individual mention is that of a 'Sushila' who Manjul writes as not only his

---

<sup>2</sup> Based on conversations at his home in February 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Manjul never felt it necessary to inquire and broadcast about Siddhicharan's mortal life. He said he was not quite sure whether Siddhicharan had eight or nine offspring, and that his idea of this poetic project had never necessitated a fact-finding mission on Siddhicharan's life and deeds. Among Siddhicharan's offspring, Ravicharan was the one who was most engaged in terms of his father's literary activities. In fact, it was through him that a writer and literary critic Jagadish Shamsheer heard about the project on writing of the anthology Siddhicharanharu and approached Manjul. Eventually he ended up writing a passionate, 23-page-long preface upon its publication. When I asked if he would tell me more about the people especially women scattered in the anthology, he chuckled along his wife Sushmita, 'that's a top secret'. We all burst into a long, child-like laughter! (Telephone conversation, 1 June 2021)

romantic quest but also his dilemma of dissent as in her welled-up eyes  
(Poem 37):

Susheela sighed with the breeze like a pine twig swaying  
The breeze whispered, 'I am thirsty  
I want to swallow an entire river.'  
Siddhicharan said, 'Drink. Drink as much as you desire  
If you drank one river  
The Himalayas will give you ten  
If you drank ten, they will give you a hundred.'  
...  
Susheela became the earth and stood still  
Siddhicharan's gaze fell upon the earth  
He saw multitude of entities there  
Most prominently appeared  
Two lofty mountains  
Two big eyes  
One eye shed the flow of blue tears  
The other, red  
...  
The breeze declared,  
'I want to step outside  
I want to see Susheela unobstructed.'  
Siddhicharan helped him to come out into the open  
By crafting a door of letters.

(Excerpts from Poem 37)

If Susheela embodies his romantic quest and political quandary, Goma of  
Poem 44 becomes an infatuation, a yearning to 'escape to a distant land,'  
and Vidhya of Poem 42 holds the role of being the designated initial reader  
of his poetry.

'The sky has no colour  
The sky has no shape,' says Vidhya  
Siddhicharan smiles, he is assured  
His sky is blue  
His sky is circular  
Siddhicharan does not like this notion  
That all seven shades of the rainbow coalesce into one, white  
Siddhicharan's rainbow unfurls with forty-nine distinct hues  
Siddhicharan's rainbow unfurls with forty-nine lakh hues.  
Vidhya grips her tresses, plaiting them with her fingers,

And uses it to play with a bow of her hand  
Her music resonates with a hushed hush  
Emanating from every reed.  
Siddhicharan erupts into an exuberant dance.

Both Manjul and his wife Sushmita recall that journey of writing this anthology was relatively effortless, unlike the other anthology he penned on 'Mrityu' (death) immediately after. The writing of Mrityu began after they shifted to their permanent home on the southern district of Lalitpur within the Kathmandu Valley as they both recalled as their temporal and spatial reference. 'Writing Mrityu was lot more solemn an affair,' explained Sushmita sharing how engrossed her husband was in that writing: He would ask for endless cups of tea, which would be provided but having gulped them all one by one he would not recall drinking any. At the end of the day, Manjul would still be craving for that cup of tea; his thirst for poetry yet to be fully quenched. Once the anthology was published, several readers reached out to Manjul and shared with him their suicidal contemplations. Manjul won the prestigious Sajha Puraskar for this anthology Mrityu but later the poet was drowning in depression, losing much of his speech and almost the will to live, and was gripped in writer's block for well over a year (Rasik 2017/2074).

Compared to the darkness surrounding the anthology Mrityu, the envisaging and writing of Siddhicharanharu were jovial, and the whole experience was encapsulated in the rhythms of everyday life. Even so, it captured Manjul's post-youth introspection as he slipped into the life of a householder, weighed down by realisations that his life-long public activism was torn in tatters as his friendships soured, party loyalty got questioned and the inner quest seeking to stir a social revolution slowly dimmed away even if he remained committed to his communist ideologies. The internal journey he underwent is etched in the binary evoked at times: The 'public' Siddhicharan we read in Poem No 1 who populates the city with his conscientiously pluralistic spirit is no longer public by the time we reach Poem No 19. Here, he morphs into a fragile being who reconciles with the vulnerability of getting caught between the subversive and the valentine. At times (Poem 9) he talks about Siddhicharan who lamented the void of modernity, as in 'these days, eyes ooze out of tears and fall on those very spots where there is money', which enrages him so much so that,

Siddhicharan remarks  
'These days, bellies trample while footsteps slumber

Private parts of the body shifted to where once hands lay, and hands  
pasted where private parts should be  
These groping fingers crawl in places both permissible and forbid-  
den – and unstoppably.

(excerpts from Poem 9)

Reality feels like narcosis to Siddhicharan  
Because he is a politician  
With each quaff of wine  
Intoxication registers as true intoxication to him  
Because he is not only the drinker but also the drink itself  
Is Siddhicharan the embodiment of the night, or has night become  
the Siddhicharan?  
Difficult to say at times,  
Like when he grins  
It is difficult to say  
Whether Siddhicharan is evolving into a dawn or dawn has mani-  
fested as Siddhicharan.

(excerpts from Poem 20)

As we journey through this anthology, a sense of calm begins to arise  
from the midst of a conundrum, and eventually we reach a juncture  
where we arrive at death, and mortal separation is accepted as inevitable  
(Poem No 23),

His aunt has already taken flight, and Siddhicharan remains on the  
precipice  
What recourse exists but to offer a smile and wave?  
His aunt cannot linger, nor can Siddhicharan join her journey  
In the end, as the aunt in her blue sari soared away  
Siddhicharan perceived with clarity  
That a solitary tear drop of hers radiated countless cosmic rays, ig-  
niting the entire universe.

Later, the tension between grievance and haughtiness ultimately yields  
to an air of thoughtful reconciliation, as in Poem No 27,

Siddhicharan tucks himself into his bag  
And sets off to wander the city streets  
...  
Walks Siddhicharan being a stone

Takes flight as a leaf  
Stands Siddhicharan firm as a wall  
Slumbers as the road beneath

....

Siddhicharan multiplies into Siddhicharans  
Leading a [protest] march of his myriad bodies.

Poems 43 and 44 pen Siddhicharan calmly as the dust, rising from the tensions of earlier poems and enjoying life in its reconciliatory totality,

‘This Siddhicharan  
Comes with the dust and leaves with the wind  
This Siddhicharan  
Comes with the flowers and leaves with the dew  
The full moon night is the other name of this Siddhicharan’  
‘Dust does not age or acquire youth  
Dust does not shrink or expand in size  
Dust remains nothing but dust, Siddhicharan’.

And finally, in the closing Poem 48, Siddhicharan is summed up as ‘the sentimental Siddhicharan,’ one who distinctly radiates from the laughter of his wife and friend; much like the crescent moon adorning the poetic skies expanding above Kathmandu.’

### **The ‘Ralpha’ Manjul**

So how does Manjul of Siddhicharanharu fare when compared with the Ralpha Manjul of just few decades ago? I briefly revisit the poet’s younger self in this subsection. Manjul was born in the eastern hills of Bhojpur in Nepal in 1947, as the youngest of the four children in a Brahmin intellectual family.<sup>4</sup> (Manjul 2068: 9). He has won over 20 national literary awards, the most prominent ones being Sajha Puraskar and Chhinnalata Geet Puraskar. He has written 23 books including 19 anthologies and four travelogues. He has also translated Japanese and Chinese poems from English into Nepali and has declared himself an admirer of the work of Pablo Neruda. While young,

---

<sup>4</sup> Manjul emphasized his Brahmin roots to remind the readers of his autobiography that he already had the door of knowledge open to him which he considered a privilege. However, being Brahmin also meant that he had to live within the constraints of the Hindu theological imaginations of Swarga (heaven) and Narka (hell), interspersed with the coercive norms of caste and patriarchy.

he took salaried jobs as a school teacher and a bank clerk but still wrote poems and sang in the state broadcasting service as an amateur artist. The stint with Radio Nepal however ended bitterly for Manjul and his friends,<sup>5</sup> stirring perhaps the first of the anti-establishment streaks in him, and eventually, he joined hands with few friends to launch a musical band 'Ralpha' declaring it as a public challenge to Radio Nepal (Manjul 2068: 196–98).<sup>6</sup>

The Ralpha movement was founded in 1967 and was formally disbanded just ten years later, but its creative undercurrents continue to anchor mass protests even today. The first People's Movement in Nepal (Jana Aandolan I) in 1990 which forced King Birendra to disband Panchayat regime and lift the ban on political parties, and the second People's Movement (Jana Aandolan II) in 2006 which ended the Maoist civil war bringing the former rebels into the democratic fold while ousting the Hindu king altogether. Both these movements borrowed several Ralpha songs as their popular mouthpieces.<sup>7</sup> There have been several speculations as to what does the word Ralpha mean? One of the Ralphais reflected that the

---

<sup>5</sup> Manjul and his friends would record their songs in state-owned Radio Nepal but got no royalties. After several inquiries, they learned that some other individuals had been routinely forging their signatures and collecting their royalties. They lodged a complaint against this fraudulence, but it never got resolved; thus, souring their relationship with Radio Nepal forever (Manjul 2068: 197).

<sup>6</sup> Reflecting on the pragmatics of their tour as Ralpha, Manjul (1998: 2) wrote in his travelogue in detail, 'Radio Nepal would not allow our songs to be aired. Perhaps they were afraid of our conscious voice and creations.... After all, how would it digest our novel songs when all it did was to delude people with provocative and reckless songs, forcing artists to sing appeasement, making people melancholic with songs of pessimism and airing songs of religiosity turning the public into traditionalists blindly following conservative faith and belief.... So what do we do then, produce our own records? How are we poor artists to have that kind of money? Even if we did, majority of Nepalis who need to listen to our songs clearly did not have the money to buy such records.... Hence we decided to go straight to villages. What even if only twenty people listened to us? That would still be a happy and beneficial thing for us. There is a sky and earth kind of difference between indulgent singing for a closed group and singing in open and to new audience even if it is only twenty every day but urging them to reflect on the right and wrong of our art, is it not?'

<sup>7</sup> One of the most popular songs associated with Ralpha is 'Rise from every village, rise from every settlement, rise to change the face of this country (*gaon-gaon bata utha, basti-basti bata utha; yo desh ko muhar fernalai utha*). This song was actually penned by Shyam Tamot and composed and voiced by Raamesh and Manjul. Recalling the making of this song, Tamot shared that he was only 10 years old when he had first heard about Ralpha, but later he became acquainted with Raamesh and Manjul in person who invited him to join Ralpha and composed and sang his songs during Ralpha events (Tamot interview 2018).

band was initially rooted in nihilism. Under the influence of Albert Camus and John Paul Sartre, they rejected traditionalist values and considered life a void. Manjul's first and only novel *Chhekudolma*, dedicated to a feminist poet-writer Parijat, alludes to this nihilist sensibility. According to one of the Ralphas, comrade Norem (2018), *Chhekudolma* was an 'unbreakable walnut. A nut too tough to crack. It made your head spin.' Abstractism defined one of the early Ralpa songs where melody blended with nonsensical texts.<sup>8</sup> Just as this song, the word 'Ralpa' itself is one that does not mean anything in Nepali. The word acquired its own meaning from the (revolutionary) engagement of its affiliates, recalls Norem (2018) in his memoir:

a colleague came and told [another Ralpa comrade] Niran something strange. That the word Ralpa stood for 'royal fire' [*raja falne*] and that this was a group working to oust monarchy in Nepal.

As their movement gained prominence, their writings became less abstract and less nihilist; instead, they began to spell out concrete demands for radical social transformation. As Manjul later routinely explained during anchoring of the Ralpa concerts, 'Ralpa means the people; the Ralpa songs are songs of the people'. Beyond populist mavericking, this was possibly the practical conclusion drawn from their nihilist-abstractist stint (Manjul 2068). Even if its comrades foregrounded its nihilist roots when talking about how Ralpa was originally conceived, it goes without saying that Ralphas were people of the left ideology. One of the early songs they sang was 'a little girl from Volga', dedicated to the Soviet comrades visiting Nepal at the time (Manjul 2068: 223). So, nihilism might have been a passing phase they went through later.

It seems that they eventually felt burdened by their nihilist quests as the left ideology became more defined for them. A leading left politician Raghuj Pantu recounted how he and Manjul sat together one afternoon and burned hundreds of copies of *Chhekudolma*. Pantu recalled Manjul saying, 'I [Manjul] must erase all traces of this kind of [elitist, abstractist] writing' (Setopati 2078). Ralpa later chose to follow the trend of protest poetry set by their predecessors Gopal Prasad Rimal, Laxmi Prasad Devkota and to some extent Siddhicharan Shrestha. These poets who wrote in the 1940s had

---

<sup>8</sup> 'Gavazera aangevaralo; peppimosa chhinchhinkayaro; javagelma ho javagelma ... seri ...; ringlabembo' (*Manjul 1998: 81*).

registered their dissidence against the Rana dictatorship (and by extension, the British colonization) while the new generation protested the one-party Panchayat regime under King Mahendra and King Birendra. As their political movement gained significant following especially in the rural hinterlands, Ralpa clarified their stance away from 'I' towards 'we', away from individual pursuit for life's meaning in void towards a collective call for freedom and social justice:

The songs I sing are not those of the mountains, not the Himalayas  
No, no not those of the rhododendrons flourishing on cliff edges  
Nor the clouds meandering across the sky  
The songs I sing....  
...  
The songs WE sing  
Are of those rotting in the prison still waiting for justice  
The pitiable souls forsaken by protection, violated and hurt  
The orphans who succumbed to the freezing grip of frost  
The squatters and migrants, raising their voices  
Yearning for a home to shelter within  
A nation to call their own ....

A significant surge in Ralpa's popularity occurred when, in 1969, Manjul and his friend Raamesh set out on a nomadic journey, traversing the Eastern hills of Nepal. This was the time when people reminisced about Alberto Granado and Che Guevara's motorcycle journeys across South America. In Nepal, Manjul and Raamesh's odyssey ended up building an impressive repertoire of revolutionary songs, which are invoked until today for their political and poetic legacies.<sup>9</sup> One of the songs that got the biggest traction was about the poor being denied social and legal justice (*gariba ko chameli nisaapai haraayo*). Another song protests British and Indian imperialism exploiting Nepali mercenary soldiers to fight foreign wars (*bhaiko juni bideshi hunalai, rel ko jhyalma basera saailo runalai*). Most of their concerts began with this particular song about the messengers of rebellion embodying the islands of voices bigger than borders, bigger than nations (*bi-droha ka muharharu Ralpa hamiharu; onthai onthka tapuharu Ralpa hamiharu; simana bhanda thoola*). These were instant hit numbers in the countryside, and as the state tried to intimidate them into some degree of

---

<sup>9</sup> See Ramaswamy (2022) and Farzad (2022) for discussions on the visceral essences of resistance poetry in Sri Lanka and Afghanistan which I differentiate from the ethnographised accounts of audio-visual performances which cover contemporary urban protests in Nepal (Kunreuther, 2018; Duffy, 2018; Mottin, 2017).

conformity, the Ralpa became even more subversive, calling the state a Kansha the villainous uncle who tried to assassinate an infant Krishna only to fail miserably and eventually be killed by the divine Krishna avatar.<sup>10</sup> (Manjul 1998: 16, 68, 30, 130).

The band was of course bigger than the travelling duo, Manjul and Raamesh, but was there ever a structure within Ralpa and its public associates, or was it always an anarchist gathering? While Ralpa songs have left important legacies, very little has been archived or analyzed on Ralpa. Wading through the media coverage as well as the biographical and vernacular sources, I gathered that Manjul was originally the songwriter while the four others – Raamesh, Raayan, Arim and Ganesh Rasik – composed music and sang. Later, Ganesh Rasik left the band<sup>11</sup>, and Manjul was invited to be the songwriter-cum-singer in his place. ‘I was hesitant to sing but others assured me,’ recalls Manjul as he reflected on how the name ‘Ralpa’ came into being: ‘One day I wrote an essay spontaneously coining a word from void, “Ralpa: the melody floating in a guitar” (*Ralpa: Geetaarma salbalaundo dhoon*).<sup>12</sup> Raamesh totally loved the word ‘Ralpa’ as soon as I spoke it. He said, “OK, let’s call our band Ralpa.” We all readily agreed (Manjul 2068: 221).’<sup>13</sup> Everyone in the band liked the newness of the word and the idea that it was free from the burdens of etymology. Following the popularity of their concerts in the hinterlands, the band began to make its presence felt among the circles of writers and artists within

---

<sup>10</sup> Manjul and Ramesh sang to the audience that had gathered challenging the curfew imposed hours before, and the crowd roared with support as they spoke, ‘Eh Kansha! Your atrocity has crossed the limits; Kansha, your atrocity is inviting your own end, beware’ (Manjul 1998: 131).

<sup>11</sup> See Bhattarai (2019) to learn how another radical music band *Lekali* was founded by Ganesh Rasik and Hiranya Bhojpure with Urmila Shrestha, Stirr (2021) for an account of a communist cultural group *Raktim Pariwar* and Giri (2022) for translation of the work of feminist-Marxist poet Sarita Tiwari.

<sup>12</sup> Dr Hari Shrestha ‘Norem’ (2018) recalls how everyone took notice of a guitar melody Manjul produced one day, almost by accident. As they talked, Manjul gave it the name Ralpa which reproduced as the title of an essay he wrote. Gradually that name Ralpa became the name of their band.

<sup>13</sup> Manjul goes on to explain his contributions in forging Ralpa, that he also penned literary names of most early Ralphali artists Raameshwor Shrestha became Raamesh, Narayan Bhakta Shrestha became Raayan, Dr Hari Prasad Shrestha became Norem Nigesa, Niranjana Chapagain became Ninu, Niranjana Sapkota became Niran, Khagendra Basnet became Simos, Kedar Neupane became Shirish etc.

Kathmandu as widely read literary magazines such as *Sameeksha*, *Matribhumi* and *Rooprekha* covered their activities prominently.<sup>14</sup>

Manjul nostalgically recalled the warm response his first Ralpha essay received from the leading feminist writer Parijat. As their friendship blossomed, Parijat ended up being possibly the most famous name affiliated with Ralpha. I have discussed Parijat's literary transition from Freudian absurdism (*shunyataवाद* and *nissarta*) towards radical public activism elsewhere (2017, 2021). Many have equated Ralpha's success with Parijat's public endorsement. Responding to some who might have implied that it was Parijat who had founded Ralpha, Manjul sets the record straight:

There is no truth in that saying. It is like shooting in the dark. [Parijat] and we were together, that is true; we had her love, that is also true. But she had not become Ralpha for the whole three years of its founding. We were full of hope, full of life, marching ahead with great enthusiasm and optimism at that time. Parijat *did* (elder sister) was still a nihilist and existentialist in those days who would call our enthusiasm a mirage. But association with us had effect on her gradually. She was deeply touched by our love and respect for her. She saw common people's love for us, and she gave us back the respect. She was an honest person; hence she wrote a Foreword in my novel *Chhekudolma* where she publicly announced herself to have joined Ralpha. Ah! How happy that made us! Parijat *did* was very respectable for all of us, she still is, even more so now than ever before. I wish we only had the ability to express it truly. But, the reason why I wrote this passage is because that was the fact of that time. That was the truth. (Manjul 2068: 222)

## Ageing Revolution, Ageing Poetry

Manjul of Siddhicharanharu has come a long way from the Manjul of Ralpha and a follower of Parijat. The anthology *Siddhicharanharu* was published in 1998, five years after Parijat died and 25 years after Ralpha was formally disbanded. This also marks the era when Nepal embraced political liberalism arguably with a revolutionary twist: The mid-1990s saw neoliberal capitalism dig its roots within parliamentary democracy,

---

<sup>14</sup> *Sameeksha* at that time was run by an established writer Madan Mani Dixit, *Matribhoomi* was edited by Govind Viyogi and *Rooprekha* by Uttam Kunwar and Bal Mukunda Dev Pandey.

and its (partial) undoing came the decade after: Launched in 1996, the Maoist armed rebellion took 20,000 Nepali lives until the major political parties reached a peace agreement in 2006. As the Maoist rebels joined the new government, an interim constitution thereby dethroning the Hindu King and declaring Nepal a republic while taking a radical position on secularism, pluralism and devolution of power through state federalisation. These political gains were consolidated through promulgation of the new constitution in 2015. In choosing to read Siddhicharanharu against Manjul's life and work as a Ralpha revolutionary, my attempt has been to understand this anthology's reflexive gaze on the paradoxes of liberalism and revolution in Nepal. The post-cold-war tectonic shift was clearly a time of a deep intellectual disquiet for Nepal, as manifest in discourses about cultural modernism (Liechty 2003; 2017) and political transition (Bhushal 2007; Hutt 2006; Hutt and Onta 2017; Lawoti and Hangen 2013; Mishra 2014; Shakya, 2018). But a country so deeply rooted in left dissidence way beyond the party mechanics, Nepal does not have a socio-cultural theory on everyday sensibilities of left dissidence.<sup>15</sup> My attempt in this paper is to read poetry to explore the vernacular imaginations of revolution and its paradoxes within the left movement in Nepal.

Manjul once lived a life where dissidence was both political and poetic, public and personal. He once publicly recalled how he often hid the love songs he had pinned and sang revolution on public stages. True, he was bound by ideological commitments as a Ralpha but his creative energy with his fellow band members, and the connections they collectively formed with the masses were beyond the direct rulings of the party, which differentiates them from other communist music bands which operated as party outfits<sup>16</sup>. In his later years post-Ralpha, Manjul continued to uphold his allegiance to left-wing politics but he also began reflecting on contours of life (and death) with a deeper sense of contemplation, as we see in his

---

<sup>15</sup> There are interesting works done on ethnomusicology of the post-conflict intimate politics (see Stirr 2017), sounds of democracy and resistance (Kunreuther, 2018), and urban theatre performances (Mottin 2017), which inform my work although their epistemologies are different from mine.

<sup>16</sup> The Ralpha are preceded by many, ranging from city-based writers such as Gopal Prasad Rimal and Parijat to travelling poet (*yayavariya kavi*) Gokul Joshi. Equally, there have been successors to this tradition of protest singing, with names like Sankalpa, Kshitij, Raktim Pariwar, Aastha, etc. Some of them were more closely affiliated with various wings of communist party, including Raktim Pariwar led by Jeevan Sharma and the Cultural Wing of the Maoist party led by Raktim Pariwar.

two most popular anthologies ‘Siddhicharanharu (The Siddhicharans)’ and ‘Mrityu (Death)’. The metaphysical gaze here celebrates the aesthetics and aspirations of what Sudipta Kaviraj (2014) might have called ‘private life’ or a shift away from external ties of kinship and bureaucracy wishing to sanctify the domain of individuality. Manjul does not write his concern in terms of public-private dichotomy however.<sup>17</sup> If there is one recurrent theme running through the 48 poems in the anthology Siddhicharanharu, it is that the paradox of the private and the public – the two Siddhicharans – are irreconcilable yet they form a unison, like the two sides of a coin, two legs belonging to two distinct bodies morphing into a harmonious unity of essence. It almost lends to the ontologies of deliberate irreconcilability in the form of knowing, being related, and in pursuit of a multi-layered understanding of being human. Those who fail to grasp life’s paradox, or the *nabujhneharu* as Manjul writes, may trade these two legs as mere firewood in the market but those who grasp its essence recognize that the two legs must be reconciled into a productive dialectic that gives meaning to life. For Manjul, the process of personalizing is not about succumbing to life’s contradictions and binaries, but to rise above fragmented experiences and seek full valorisation of living. The anthology celebrates the affective bonds of ‘love, friendship and moments of joy’ infusing meaning to the intensity of revolution. It subtly commemorates human imperfections with a touch of irony and a tinge of melancholy, all observed through the perspective of ageing (Manjul 1998: 106).

It is not that Manjul discards emotions as facet of ageing. The fiery spirit of Ralpa endures within Siddhicharanharu. Rather, that rage has discovered its position within a greater fabric of being.

‘In the past, tears would gently flow from the eyes  
Perhaps even today they might, one cannot say it absolutely doesn’t  
Yet, remarks Siddhicharan  
“These days we see eyes welling in the tears  
Only to fall on the very places where money resides”  
Siddhicharan is a university professor  
He voices this opinion as his own.

---

<sup>17</sup> Manjul differentiates his poetic agency from the way his favourite poet Pablo Neruda wrote “personal” to be an ownership of a temporal realm in search of a free or an unowned domain. See Merwin(1969)’s translation of Pablo Neruda’s anthology “Twenty Love Songs and a Song of Despair”, specifically the poem “Thinking, Tangling Shadows: XVII” with the lines “the hour that is mine” differentiated from the “Hour of nostalgia, hour of happiness, hour of solitude” (p49).

Who are these moneyed eyes that are welling in tears? Candidly, not alien cells but the organs of your own anatomy; not distant colonial powers but rather opportunists and lumpens nestled within fields of the communist movement. Manjul points finger at the current state of the nation in front of his eyes, an outcome of his own movement. However, he no longer engages in battles; he instead accepts alienation and lives with it. This presents a marked contrast between Ralpa songs and the anthology *Siddhicharanharu*: in the past, the line between dissident and oppressor was distinct; now, these boundaries have become obscured. After Ralpa disbanded and the armed struggle began and ended, Manjul remained a communist, yet he carries a profound awareness of his movement's betrayal, particularly as his former comrades ascend to positions of power and transform into the very oppressors they once fought. It's this 'paradox of victory' (Buhlungu, 2001) or the affliction of incumbency that casts a shadow of sorrow upon him as he journeys through ageing.

The anthology *Siddhicharanharu* forged an immediate connection with readers of all ages, evoking a sentiment as if the very evolution of revolution had matured in tandem with the ageing poet Siddhicharan. Prakash Ramghali and other fellow young poets spent months engaging in a spontaneous, experimental performative where they would individually declare each as a Siddhicharan, the common man, as they went around doing their everyday chores. This was not quite a mass social movement but its experimental symbolism was stark.

While sociological discourses on ageing have centered on aspects such as identity, stratification, life cycle rituals and caregiving (Lawrence Cohen 1998; Tom Kitwood and Kathleen Bredin 1992; Sarah Lamb 2000), occasionally adopting an auto-ethnographic approach (Gregory Bateson 1974), studies in literature have concentrated on the thematic elements of narratives and their creation (Raja 2004, 2010). What Ira Raja called a 'narrative turn' could potentially uncover sociological dimensions of biological ageing, to the extent that the maturation of a character within fiction or poetry might symbolize a nation coming of age (James Phelan 2005; William Randall and Gary Kenyon 2004; Timothy Brennan, 1989). The narrative turn is cautious about lending the framework of ageing to write disruptions to conventional linearity. We see a reverse teleology while connecting the two junctures in Manjul's life: one that revels in personal desire and the other that solemnly embraces public duty. Interestingly, it's the elderly Manjul who contests the confines of communist dogma of keeping desire out. This is not to suggest that he is distancing himself from his ideological commitments; rather, he is merely reconciling with the ironies that revolution (and life) presents. In choosing to write about the process of ageing, both of his predecessor poet

Siddhicharan but also allegorically the nation's now corrupt communist movement, he calls on the younger comrades to remain ideologically committed and keep their active public engagement while ALSO exercise caution against falling into the pitfalls of dogma. He is candid in suggesting that dogmatic approaches have inadvertently fueled political opportunism and corruption, especially as the broader public becomes more estranged from the rhetoric of dissent due to the lack of tangible transformation. His writings bravely hold the left accountable for its complacency, which inadvertently paved the way for the rise of neoliberal populism.

If metanarratives hold any value in illuminating the intricacies of ageing and estrangement, it is worth noting that Manjul himself was entangled in familial conflicts stemming from his first marriage, while Ralpa never managed to regroup even as acquaintances, let alone as comrades or friends. Consequently, numerous threads of its historical and artistic narrative remain fragmented and contested. A series of public allegations levied by Manjul's former spouse also shed light on the patriarchal undertones within the communist movement's intervention in comrades' domestic disputes. Manjul has opted to maintain his silence on this matter. At one point, As Manjul descended into the stillness of clinical depression, debilitating his poetic output, many were swift to ascribe his condition to old age, relying on the stereotypical link between old age and insanity.

Amidst these trials, it emerges with time that Manjul's demeanor is one of weariness. I bring my paper to a close with these delicately nuanced words, which encapsulate ageing as a form of weariness, potentially stemming from the weight of revolutions and the weight of life itself (Poem No 14):

Siddhicharan continues walking, bearing both his legs upon his shoulders  
He walks forth stepping on his pain  
He walks on stepping on his sighs  
Siddhicharan is wearied beyond measure, yet there goes his unending odyssey  
of walking  
Leaning his entire body into weariness, he walks on stepping on his weariness  
There goes Siddhicharan, walking the walk of weariness....

#### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

## References

- Behar, Ruth, and Deborah Gorden. 1996. *Women Writing Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bhattarai, Yubaraj. 2019. 'Rasikko Samjhanama Ralpa ra Lekali' (Ralpa and Lekali in the Memories of Rasik). *Farak Dhaar*. January 14, 2019. <https://www.farakdhar.com/story/8172/> (Accessed on 1 September, 2023).
- Bhushal, Ghanshyam. 2007. *Aajako Marxvaad ra Nepali Kranti (Today's Marxism and Nepali Revolution)*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Nepal Adhyayan Kendra.
- Buhlungu, Sakela. 2001. 'The Paradox of Victory: South Africa's Union Movement in Crisis.' *New Labour Forum* 8. Spring-Summer: 66–76.
- Chapagain, Ninu. 2067/2010. *Mārxvādi Samalochanā-Paddati* [Marxist Critical Appreciation Process]. Kathmandu: Bhrikuti Academic Publications.
- Chatterjee, Partha. 1993. *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories, 4*. USA: Princeton University Press.
- Clifford, James, and George Marcus. 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cohen, Lawrence. 1998. *No Aging in India: Alzheimer's, the Bad Family, and Other Modern Things*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Duffy, Owen. 2018. 'Collectivize, Co-operate, Collaborate: The International Context of Ashmina Ranjit's Artistic Activism,' pp 117-123. In *Silence No Longer: Artivism of Ashmina*, edited by Ashmina Ranjit. Kathmandu: Vajra Books
- Farzad, Habib. 2022. 'Women Writing Poetry in Afghanistan: A Conversation with Raha Azar.' In 'Poetic Imagining(s) in South Asia: Writing Nation Through Sensibilities of Resistance,' edited by Mallika Shakya. *Society and Culture in South Asia*. 8(2): 263-273.
- Giri, Itisha and Sabitri Gautam. 2022. 'Introducing the Poetry and Prose of Sarita Tiwari.' In 'Poetic Imagining(s) in South Asia: Writing Nation Through Sensibilities of Resistance,' edited by Mallika Shakya. *Society and Culture in South Asia*. 8(2): 278-288.
- Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson. 1992. 'Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference.' *Cultural Anthropology*. 7(1): 6-23.
- Harrison, Faye, ed. 1991. *Decolonizing Anthropology: Moving Further Toward an Anthropology of Liberation*. Virginia: American Association of Anthropology (AAA).
- Harrison, Faye. 2008. *Outsider Within: Reworking Anthropology in the Global Age*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Herzfeld, Michael. 2002. 'The Absent Present: Discourses of Cryptocolonialism.' *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 101(4): 899–926.
- Hutt, Michael, ed. 1994. *Himalayan Voices: An Introduction to Modern Nepali*

- Literature*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass.
- Hutt, Michael. 2006. 'Things that Should Not Be Said: Censorship and Self-censorship in the Nepali Press and Media, 2001–02.' *Journal of Asian Studies*, 65(2): 361–92.
- Hutt, Michael, and Pratyoush Onta. eds. 2017. *Political Change and Public Culture in Post-1990 Nepal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kitwood, Tom, and Kathleen Bredin. 1992. 'Towards a Theory of Dementia Care: Personhood and Well-Being.' *Ageing and Society*. IO: 177–96.
- Kunreuther, Laura. 2018. 'Sounds of Democracy: Performance, Protest, and Political Subjectivity.' *Cultural Anthropology*, 33(1): 1–31.
- Lamb, Sarah. 2000. *White Saris and Sweet Mangoes: Aging, Gender, and Body in North India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lawoti, Mahendra, and Susan Hangen eds. 2013. *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nepal: Identities and Mobilization After 1990*. London: Routledge Politics and International Relations Series.
- Liechty, Mark. 2003. *Suitably Modern: Making Middle-class Culture in a New Consumer Society*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Liechty, Mark. 2017. *Far Out: Countercultural Seekers and the Tourist Encounter in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Martin Chautari.
- Manjul. 1998/2055. *Siddhicharanharu* (The Siddhicharans). Balkhu: Dabli Press.
- Manjul. 2011/2068. *Pahad Jasto Baato Ma* (Me Like a Mountain, Like a Path). Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar.
- Maskey, Mahesh, and Mary Des Chene. 2008. 'Constituent Assembly and the Revolutionary Left in Nepal.' *Economic and Political Weekly*. Commentary. 43(12–13). <https://www.epw.in/journal/2008/12-13/commentary/constituent-assembly-and-revolutionary-left-nepal.html> (Accessed on 2 June 2021).
- Mishra, Chaitanya. 2014. *Poonjivaad ra Nepal* (Capitalism and Nepal). Kathmandu: Phoenix Books.
- Moraga, Cherrie. 2015. "Catching Fire: Preface to the Fourth Edition". In *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, xv–xxvi. New York, NY: SUNY Press.
- Moraga, Cherrie, and Gloria Anzaldua. 1981. *This Bridge Called My Back*. New York: Kitchen Table Women of Colour Press.
- Mottin, Monica. 2017. 'Protests, Space and Creativity: Theatre as a Site for the Affective Construction of Democracy in Nepal.' In *Political Change and Public Culture in Post-1990 Nepal*, edited by Michael Hutt and Pratyoush Onta, 170–96. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Neruda, Pablo. 1924. *Poemas de amor y una Cancion desesperada*. Translated by Merwin, W.S.. 1969. As *Twenty Love Songs and a Song of Despair*. Grossman Publishers: USA.
- Norem, Hari Shrestha. 2018. 'Euta Brand-Name (A Brand-Name).' Kantipur. 28 July. 2018.
- Nyamnjoh, Francis B. 2017. *DRINKING from the COSMIC GOURD: How Amos Tutuola Can Change Our Minds*. Cameroon: Langaa RPCIG.

- Phelan, James. 2005. *Living to Tell About It: A Rhetoric and Ethics of Character Narration*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Raja, Ira. 2004. 'Signifying the Nation: Identity, Authenticity and the Ageing Body in Post-Independent Hindi Short Story.' *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 39(3): 25–43.
- Raja, Ira, ed. 2010. *Grey Areas: An Anthology of Indian Fiction on Ageing*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Ramaswamy, Anushiya. 2022. "'Once Upon a Time in the Land of Grave-Holes': Cheren's Poetry in Sri Lanka." In 'Poetic Imagining(s) in South Asia: Writing Nation Through Sensibilities of Resistance.' *Society and Culture in South Asia*, edited by Mallika Shakya. 8(2): 174-197.
- Randall, William L., and Gary M. Kenyon. 2004. 'Time, Story, and Wisdom: Emerging Themes in Narrative Gerontology.' *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 23(4): 333–46.
- Rasik, Ganesh. 2017/2074. 'Mero Ralphali Manjul (My Ralpa Manjul).' *Nepal Weekly*. 11 May 2017 (28 Baisakh 2074).
- Rawal, Bhim. 1990/1 (2047 v.s.). *Nepalma Samyavadi Andolan: Udbhav ra Vikas The Communist Movement in Nepal: Emergence and Development*. Kathmandu: Pairavi Prakashan.
- Rushin, Kate. 2015. "The Bridge Poem". In *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, xxxiii–xxxiv. New York, NY: SUNY Press.
- Said, Edward. 2004. 'Thoughts on Late Style'. *London Review of Books*. 26(15): 3-7. [www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v26/n15/edward-said/thoughts-on-late-style](http://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v26/n15/edward-said/thoughts-on-late-style). (Accessed on 1 September, 2023).
- Setopati, 2021/2078. 'Manjul ko Ralpakaleen "Samjhana ka Pailaharu" ("Footsteps of Memories" by Manjul of the Ralpa Era). Setopati. 18 June 2021.
- Shakya, Mallika. 2017. 'Reading Parijat and BP Koirala: Belonging and Borders in 20th Century Nepali Novels.' *Economic and Political Weekly*, LII(5): 53–60.
- Shakya, Mallika. 2021. 'Reading Parijat in Nepal: The Poetics of Radical Feminism Negotiating Self and Nation.' In *South Asian Borderlands: Mobility, History, Affect*, edited by Farhana Ibrahim and Tanuja Kothiyal. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shakya, Mallika, ed. 2022. 'Poetic Imagining(s) in South Asia: Writing Nation Through Sensibilities of Resistance.' In *Society and Culture in South Asia*. 8(2): 163-314.
- Stirr, Anna. 2021. 'Raktim Pariwar's Red Lanterns: Dance and Cultural Revolution in Nepal.' *Asian Theatre Journal*. 38(2): 395-423.
- Team Fuzzscape. 2018. 'Bhojpur: Culture, Music and Ralpa. Interview with Shyam Tamot.' *Fuzzscape*. 14 August 2018.