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Social Oppression, Class Struggle and Displacement in Lil Bahadur Chettri's *Mountains Painted with Turmeric*

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to address the issues of class inequality, economic disparity and social hierarchy that ultimately uproot the characters from their place of origin and force them to settle elsewhere far from their own motherland in Lil Bahadur Chettri's *Mountains Painted with Turmeric*. The novel in the focus is a piteous tale of its protagonist Dhan Bahadur Basnet (Dhane) who falls prey to the financially strong and socially well-settled rich and *zamindar* (controller of land) of the society he lives in. He becomes the victim of poverty, exploitation, and injustice. He belongs to the lowest strata of the society, and therefore, is deprived of his access to social justice he deserves. Fate also plays a foul game with him, and despite his unswerving attempt to control the situation, he witnesses humiliation and is stripped of his dignity as he fails to pay off the loans to the money-lenders. Situations worsen culminating in a catastrophic strike and his house and land is snatched from him. He, along with his wife Maina and a small son, is forced to leave his ancestral home and sets out on a journey that is not yet planned. There are some other characters like Mote Karki, Jhuma, and Rikute who too have migrated to India in search of a better life. Their movement and mobility is the outcome of economic

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and social aspects prevalent in the contemporary society. Since the study capitalises on qualitative research method, the discussion moves along analysing the narratives, the dialogues, and the characterisation in the text. Additionally, Marxist theory of class struggle is also employed as a tool to analyse and interpret the novel.

Keywords: Bourgeoisie, Class Struggle, Displacement, Exploitation, Migration, Proletariat, Resistance

1. Introduction

Lil Bahadur Chettri's *Mountains Painted with Turmeric* (1957) is his first novel that stands inimitably in the motley gallery of Nepali fiction written in English or Nepali. Originally written in Nepali with the title *Basain* (settlement in a place other than one's own), it was translated into English with the title *Mountains Painted with Turmeric* in 2008 by Michael J. Hutt. The novel is a masterpiece of literary realism, offering a gripping and unflinching portrayal of the struggles of a farmer and his family living in the hills of far-eastern Nepal in the mid twentieth century. Chettri does not offer a solution to the problems of the protagonist, but he empathetically pictures the plight of the poor farmer and his family, and paints the startling and graphic pictures of the condition in which they are dragged to survive.

The novel is a testament to the author's unwavering commitment to social justice and his unparalled ability to craft compelling narratives. The plot of the novel moves around its protagonist Dhane, who is a farmer and stays in a village with his wife Maina, sister Jhuma, and a three-year old son. He fights tooth and nail to maintain his daily life and strives to arrange the marriage of his young beautiful sister, Jhuma. For this, he buys a buffalo hoping to feed his son with milk and earn some money. Unfortunately, both the buffalo and the calf die and he is unable to repay the debt to the moneylender. His dream defers and a strong storm of grief awaits him. Meanwhile, his sister Jhuma is trapped by a *lahure* (a Nepali soldier who serves in a foreign army) and becomes pregnant, inviting another calamity to her family. In an attempt to commit suicide, she is saved by Mote Karki and marries him. Both leave the village and migrate to an unknown place hoping for a better life. Dhane and his family become the victim of series of social disputes and are ultimately forced to leave the village losing everything including ancestral. Hutt summarizes the essence of the novel and states:

> In a haunting prose, Lil Bahadur Chettri portrays the *dukha* or suffering and sorrow, endured by ordinary peasants; the exploitation of the poor by the rich and powerful and the social conservatism that twists a community

> into punishing a woman for being the victim of a crime. Chettri also describes the impoverishment dispossession and banishment of Dhane's family to expose profound divisions between those who prosper and those who are slowly stripped of their meager possessions. (Cover page)

The quotation aptly describes the conservative social order that has been in existence for ages and its harrowing impact on the poor. The protagonist becomes the victim of the *zamindar* and the *zamindari* system. "A *zamindar* was a 'vassal in chief' and z*amindari* was defined as 'the right which belonged to a rural class other than, and standing above, the peasantry" (Dunbar 174). This system was in practice before the Rana rule in Nepal. It was an important instrument of social and economical control over the poor. Dhane and his family, Mote Karki and Rikute are forced to be exiled due to social and economic issues caused by feudal system.

The structure of the Nepali society has always been governed by a delicate relationship among its classes stratified according to economic status and social roles. Class distinction based on wealth still exists here and in terms of this distinction, Nepali society can broadly be divided into two groups: the haves and the have-nots or the bourgeoisie and the proletariats. Each of the economic classes tends to have a distinctive identity. The very soul of the working class and the poor is their aspiration for an upward mobility whereas the upper class tries their best to check them from that upward mobility. The novel showcases Chettri's "deep concern with the poverty and squalor, conflicts and suffering, dreams and aspirations of the down-trodden class" (Mishra 2). It is the epic of a desperate struggle of a man for bare subsistence and survival.

2. Theoretical Framework

Marxism is a system of thought developed by Karl Marx, a German philosopher, in the nineteenth century in response to the Western industrial revolution and the rise of industrial capitalism as the predominant economic mode. In other words, Marxism, as an economic, cultural and political theory, came as a reaction against the economic, social and political oppression of the contemporary period. Karl Marx and his close associate Frederich Engels assimilated the intellectual currents prevailing at the time and imbibed the thoughts and ideas of the French materialistic philosophers like Diderot, Helvetius, Holbach and some others, and concluded that material facts were more important than metaphysical abstractions. By the nineteenth century, England had witnessed a rapid industrialization and urbanization bringing radical changes in the society. Marx and Engels painstakingly studied the economic condition,

political power and social structure of the time with intense focus on the relationship between the capitalists and the wage-earner, and formulated a theory. Tracing the origin, history and effects of Marxism, Lane summarises:

> Marxism developed at a time of great economic inequality, and political upheaval, as eighteenth- and nineteenth- century aristocratic regimes were subsumed into newly arisen industrial societies. In the twentieth century, Marxism flourished during the Spanish Civil War and as a reaction against Fascism in Germany and Italy during the Second World War; for many people it also offered an alternative to the increasingly powerful capitalist forces of American society, which the Frankfurt School, in particular, was deeply troubled by. (311)

The quotation verily justifies that Marxism as a movement is a hard-hitting response to the European industrial revolution and urbanization, and it is a fastidious assessment of capitalism. It vehemently criticised the existing bourgeoisie social, political and economic system and envisioned a world of economic equality.

Marxism fundamentally focuses on the concept of material reality. According to Marx, there is no separate world of pure ideas or spiritual abstractions. We are not affected and influenced merely by philosophical, religious, or spiritual beliefs, but we are the products of our own social, economic, political and cultural circumstances. Attesting this fact, Jeremy Hawthorn writes that, "Marxism is a MATERIALIST philosophy, one which insists upon the primacy of material living conditions rather than ideas or beliefs in the life of human beings" (198). It means our life-circumstances and our lived-experiences determine who we are. In the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), Marx argues that:

> In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensible and independent of their will, *relations of production* which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material *forces*. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society... It is not the consciousness of men that determine their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. (qtd. in Eagleton 4)

Marx means to say that the engine that drives society is the economy. Economic forces, what Marxists call 'economic or base structure' are more complex and pervasive than we think. Men's social relations are formed by the way they produce their material life. According to Marx, they even determine how we think. Mazlish

rightly asserts that, "Consciousness is from the very beginning a social product" (94). Marxism, in this sense, is a method of socioeconomic analysis that analyzes class relations and societal conflict using a materialist interpretation of historical development and a dialectical view of social transformation.

Marxism maintains that the different sections of the people are regarded not as 'individuals' but 'classes' who have their pivotal and controlling roles in societies. Defining *class* and its function, Pramod K. Nayar writes:

> *Class* in simple terms, refers to a division within a particular society. In Marxist thought, class refers to the *economic* groups within the society: a class of people controls the factory and the industry (called 'the means of production'), and a class of people works in the factory. In the case of feudal society, we have the land-owning class and the peasants. Thus, we have two main classes here: the owner or the capitalist class, and the working or labour class. (122)

There is a bitter conflict between the classes, where the upper class maintains control and supremacy over working class. Class struggle is the basic tenet of Marxism. It is this struggle between the contending classes at different stages of civilisation that has proved to be the driving force of history. In *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), Marx states that, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (21). The statement implies that the class struggle has been continuing ever since the dawn of civilization and plays a vital role in shaping social progress.

The class struggle between the bourgeoisie - the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage labour - and the Proletariat - the class of modern wage labourers, who having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour-power in order to live in a society, occurs because of the different interests they have. The capitalists try to control and dominate the wage-labourers for their own benefits. Class, therefore, creates hierarchy within a society. Assessing the nature of the capitalists, Charley Tilly writes:

> Capitalists then are people who specialize in the accumulation, purchase and sale of capital. They occupy the realm of exploitation, where the relations of the production and exchange themselves yield surpluses the capitalist have often existed in the absence of capitalism, the system in which wage-workers produce goods by means of materials owned by capitalist. (256)

Capitalists never bother to uplift the economic condition of working-class people. They are preoccupied with their own personal cares and concerns. And in doing so, the capitalists, the dominant class, possess considerable social, economic and political power.

Marxism insinuates that a work of literature has its form and structure, and survives in time and space, history, and society. Therefore, it manifests the hopes and aspirations, sense and sensibility, and social and historical dimension of the period in which it is produced. A work of art witnesses a social experience in one way or another and tells the story of human history. In this context, Michael Ryan mentions that, "Marxism combines an understanding of the social roots of literature with a sense of its political ramifications" (52). Ryan's statement sanctions the view that Marxist approach to literature is essentially economic and political. The longing and aspirations, and tears and laughers of the upper-class are not the only expressions that a work of art radiates, but they are the manifestations of the exploitations meted upon the working class and should foreground the untold and unrecorded sufferings of the lower-class. Wifred L. Guerin et al. opine that, "Lukacs and his followers stressed literature's reflection, conscious or unconscious, of the social reality surrounding it - not just reflection of a flood of realistic detail but a reflection of the essence of a society. Detriments to social wholeness reveal themselves in the literary work as aspects of capitalism" (328-29). For Lukacs, literature must reflect the underlying forces - material circumstances, and the social, political and ideological atmosphere of the society.

Marxist literary criticism works in two different ways. First, it locates literature within the social, historical, economic and political milieu in which it is produced, and thereby attempts to recognise how the ideas projected in the piece of literature connects to the hopes and aspirations, and ideals and values that circulated in the society of that time. It fundamentally relates literature with class struggle. And secondly, it attempts to understand the role of ideology to mask social contradictions. Lois Tyson indicates that,

> The fact that literature grows out of and reflects real material/historical conditions creates at least two possibilities of interest to Marxist critics: (1) the literary work might tend to reinforce in the reader the ideologies it embodies, or (2) it might invite the reader to criticize the ideologies it represents. Many texts do both (66).

3. Discussion

3.1 Social Oppression and Class Struggle

The novel centers around the acutely suffering poor peasant Dhane and his family. They represent thousands of poor peasants living in hills under the oppression of the rich and landlords. The very opening page vividly records the bleak picture of Dhane's condition. The novel reads:

> From a distance, Dhane Basnet looked as if he were asleep, bundled up from his feet to his head in a dirty quilt that was torn in places. But he was not sleeping. He was trying to set aside the flood of emotions that was tumbling down on him, so that he could welcome the goddess of sleep. But his efforts were all to no avail. One moment he would shut off the flow of thoughts and try to sleep, but the next second . . . he sank back into his thoughts. (Chettri 1-2)

Dhane, a young man of twenty five, is trapped in the whirlpool of thought and is afraid of taking a buffalo from the old *baidar* because the latter asks for a sharp price and high interest to be paid off each month. He dreams of bringing happiness in the family by earning some money. He works hard for every single penny and "longs to restore the foundations of the roofpoles and posts that the termites of his debts to the moneylenders have made rickety" (Chettri 3). The land lords and money lenders of the village charge high interest rates and do not hesitate to seize the security pledge if the promise is broken. Dhane constantly suffers from the sharp blows from them. He suffers deeply and silently. Chettri observes Dhane and writes that, "his face is always darkened by clouds of worry" (3). There is no beacon of hope for him from anywhere.

The relationship between Dhane and his rich villagers depicts the true picture of the contemporary Nepali society in which there is a class system existing on the base of money. The people having the high social order are regarded as big things, and people who do not have the resources to prosper are considered as small things and hence exploited by the bourgeoisie. Karl Marx and Engels argue that, "epoch of Bourgeoisie has simplified class antagonism. The society has split itself in two different as well as hostile camps, into two classes directly standing against each other: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat" (243-55). The bourgeoisie is the class that creates the breaches between the classes because it divides the classes of society and exploits them. In the same way, this class of society creates an antagonistic environment where every individual thinks to have a high social pedestal and high

status of society. He is eager to control the means of production and this struggle gives rise to the class struggle and the society may not come out of the monetary conditions.

The current of social oppression and class struggle runs throughout the novel. Dhane believes that he can rise on social pedestal only through economic base. He works hard and tries to strengthen his financial root, "but his hardships do not change. The rotting posts of his house just go on rotting...the land owners and moneylenders of the village add to his problems" (Chettri 3-4). He survives without any positive change in his life. He is unable to arrange the marriage of his sister Jhuma and fails to provide good food to his family members. Dhane mournfully laments his inability to provide good clothes, food and care to them. Festivals come and go but Dhane and his family members remain untouched by the festive environment. Dhane "looked pensively at his son's vest, which was torn at both shoulders" and "looked up and saw that Maina's blouse was in far worse conditions. Their eyes met, and then two miserable people understood each other's feelings" (Chettri 47). These heart-wrenching lines from the text expose the cruelty of class domination where working class people are forced to live naked or semi-naked. Dhane, whose name suggests 'wealthy one', witnesses acute poverty and lacks basic means of subsistence. The terrible condition he lives in justifies "how bourgeoisies powerfully show their control over proletariats" (Adhikary 30). The upper-class exercises their power upon the lower-class very subtly and makes them believe what the upper class wants them to believe. Dhane initially does not blame the social system for all this, but he believes that it is his own fate and *karma* that make him suffer. In order to buy clothes and celebrate Dashain, Maina is forced to sell her *pewa* (dowry) that she has saved ever since her marriage.

Dhane becomes the victim of Baidar's cruelty. Baidar is a money lender who "did not forget to crank up the interest when someone borrowed a rupee or two, and the wages for all his hard work were earned by extracting high rates of interests from his creditors" (Chettri 5). Although Dhane knows all about Baidar, he has no choice but to buy a buffalo worth 120 rupees on the condition of sending the interest to Baidar's house at the end of each month. Baidar warns Dhane of removing the oxen and the buffalo from his shed in case interest is not paid on time. Baidar is a true capitalist who charges high interest rate and earns huge amount of money. Regarding the high interest rate, Hein and Schoder write, "In Marx's economics the interest can therefore not be taken to determine the rate of profit" (13). While everyone is celebrating Dashain, Dhane and his family have no grains of rice to eat.

In the meantime, Baidar humiliates and threatens Dhane saying that, "If you don't send Hariram's interest in a few days' time, I'll empty out your cowshed" (Chettri 23). Dhane promises to pay the loan after the buffalo bears the calf, but to his dismay the calf is stillborn. Baidar, with the help of Mukhiya and Dobate Sahinla, dispossesses Dhane of his oxen and buffalo. Two of Baidar's herdsmen untether the animals and drive them away from there. The seizure of Dhane's animals by Baidar and his associates paint the real picture of class domination where the rich are callous to their poor fellows. Poor are always helpless and silent. Chettri writes that, "Unable to hold back her tears, Maina ran into the house. Dhane thought of falling at the Baidar's feet and grasping his legs to beg for a few days' grace" (46). His cattle are his capital. After they have been confiscated, Dhane's patch of land will stay fallow that will further deteriorate his conditions and cause his family starve. Despite his best attempt to uplift his financial condition and leave a life of satisfaction, Dhane fails. His failure is not an individual's failure. Rather, it is a struggle between the haves and the have-nots. The dominant class works in myriads of invisible and subtle ways to crush and control the lower class. Baidar's inhumane treatment towards Dhane and his family is the symbol of the bourgeoisie's vicious vision towards the proletariats.

In the world governed by the capitalists, millions of working and starving people struggle desperately for bare subsistence. And Dhane is one among them. He represents thousands of poor folks who live indignantly under the control of landlords. In the village he lives, the rural folk are divided into two groups: the upper class, the landlords and the money lenders on the one hand and the poor tenant farmers and labouring class on the other. Dhane belongs to the latter group. He does not have much land to plough and feed his family. Schmitt observes that, "the workers do not have plots of land that would support them and their families, so it is hard for them to refuse to work even if they are being exploited. The workers do not even own wealth that would support them so that they can turn down work that for whatever reason they do not like" (91). In a conversation with Mote Karki, Dhane expresses his plight and concern saying, "these children of mine will be lost" (Chettri 50). His oxen are already seized by Baidar. In order to buy oxen, he must pledge his house as security. With the advice of Mote Karki, he takes the land of Nande on crop-sharing rental basis. But very soon, Dhane becomes the victim of the social oppression and hierarchy. Sane Gharti, the Sahu's plowman, shuts off the water running into Dhane's field to be planted tomorrow. When questioned, Gharti retorts, "Other people only get a turn after the Sahu's fields are full" (58). Dhane gets infuriated and slaps

Gharti that makes him mewl. Vengefully, the Sahu's youngest son leaves his buffalo in Dhane's six-inch seedlings to graze. Seeing his dream blown, and future and fortune destroyed, he goes insane and charges the buffalo madly with a hoe, causing the buffalo die after three days. A gathering of the *mukhiya*, the *subba*, the *baidar* and the good gentlemen of the council declare that, "Dhane was to pay 150 rupees, the value of the buffalo, plus a 75-rupee for killing a pregnant buffalo" (66). Including all that the Sahu had given to Dhane, he must pay to the Sahu a total of 575 rupees. And Dhane is given only 15 *pathi* of rice for his loss. Reiss aptly describes this discrimination and says that, "workers are exploited if they get the compensation which is not appropriate to the products they produce" (45). If Dhane had been rich and powerful, he must have been paid an equivalent amount of grain. There is no one except the *mukhiya* who speaks for Dhane. Everyone favours Nande, the rich one. Temaja et al. write:

> Society is a mixture of the upper class and the lower class. Due to the imbalance of wealth, the lower class often experiences different fates in life, while the upper class enjoys advantages. . . Class distinctions and injustices create inequalities that lead to class struggle, with negative impacts especially on the survival of the lower classes. It gives license for the dominant upper class to oppress and exploit their subordinates as they see fit. (75)

A new agreement is made and Dhane is given two and a half months to pay, failing which his house and livestock would be sold to raise the money by Nande.

As the date to pay the loan comes closer, Dhane is getting anxious. He is visiting the Sahus for help, but "met with no more success than a child who clasps his hands to make a star fall from the sky" (Chettri 103). He has lost all his hopes and ultimately decides to give up his property. Nande is waiting for this opportunity because he wants to set up one of his nephews on it. He has taken the situation and the villagers in his control and thereby determined to displace Dhane from the village. He says to Dhane, "If you sell your property, you'll get a little for your travel costs. If you go into Madhes, you'll get some work to feed you! Or will you head for Muglan?" (Chettri 104). His statement reflects his character and intention. The whole lot of fate of Dhane depends on Nande, and he can save Dhane from the impending catastrophe. But he is a ruthless landlord and merciless moneylender who hardly comes ahead to save a poor man like Dhane. Ultimately, Dhane is dispossessed of his land and house, and all the contents of the house. He is uprooted from his ancestral land and travels to an undefined place he himself is not certain of. He

says, “I don’t know where we’ll go when we leave. Wherever the Lord takes us” (Chettri 104). Dhane and his wife Maina undergo unfathomable pain as they have lost not only the physical property but also the emotional bondage they had with the house. Maina’s statement “We have to leave the place where we have lived for ages? This house is still damp with the sweat of your fathers!” graphically ventilates their pang for leaving the village (Chettri 106).

Dhane becomes the victim of class domination. Nande alone is not responsible for his cruel act. He is the byproduct of his social environment. He is rich and powerful, and is always ready to dominate and exploit the poor. He controls over the villagers and keeps them in his favour. No one dares to go against him. Rather, the village council supports him and Dhane is sidelined. The web of social structure works together in an invisible way to control the working class, and Dhane is the victim of this class design. Dobie believes that:

> The Marxist is aware that the working class does not always recognize the system in which it has been caught. The dominant class, using its power to make the prevailing system seem to be the logical, natural one, entraps the proletariat into holding the sense of identity and worth that the bourgeoisie wants them to hold, one that will allow the powerful to remain in control. (91)

Dhane’s life has been controlled by several labyrinths of capitalism that operate and oppress on various levels and layers. His displacement symbolizes the serious grip that the bourgeoisies have on the proletariats. The text further reveals the evidences about the tendency of bourgeoisie to cling on economic profit being indifferent towards the social relations. The capitalist are always concerned about their material prosperity without caring for the human values and relations.

3.2 Dhane’s Resistance against Oppression

It is said that people generally learn to live out his misery with calm submission until the onset of real disaster. Dhane’s calmness and serenity of mind is disturbed by the exploitation and hostility generated from the class domination and the hegemony. Dhane resists against the bourgeoisie’s system that has created havoc in his life. If he had fallen at the feet of Baidar, he would have got a few days’ grace to pay the loan. But his dignity does not allow him to do so. The statement “His self-respect could not submit to his poverty. So he just stood there in silence” is a testament to his resistance, though a passive one (Chettri 46). He resists but modestly.

Dhane plunges into problems one after another. However, he never gives up. He rises every time he falls. The fatal blow he gets from the money lenders and feudal lords does not silence him. Chettri writes, "But despite all this he has not admitted defeat. He hides his sorrows and goes on treading the path of labor" (4). He attempts to resist violently but his low economic status incapacitates him. In response to an unfair penalty meted upon him, he questions the judgment and shows his disapproval. The novel reads: "From a corner at the back a low voice was heard to say, 'If that's so, a penalty should also be paid by the person who knowingly let a buffalo loose on someone else's seedbed in the middle of the planting. It's not a bull, this buffalo, is it?'" (Chettri 66). It shows that he challenges the verdict of the village council with great courage amidst the presence of all powerful landlords. There are several occasions when Dhane resists to the capitalists. Sane Gharti who is the agent of the Sahu, the capitalist, is heavily slapped on his face by Dhane fearlessly. It can also be interpreted as a slap on the bourgeoisies by the proletariats. At one occasion, he fearlessly blames Nande, the Sahu, for his displacement from the village. He says, "You people have wiped out my place to live" (Chettri 103). But his low economic status forbids him to give serious jolt to the exploiters like Baidar and Nande. Tyson's remark "Economic power always includes social and political power as well" aptly suits here (54). Nande's economic power gives him an advantage over the poor like Dhane.

Despite all his resistance, Dhane loses the battle against the organised force of capitalism. The gruesome and degrading form of class division uproots him from his place. He restrains himself from undertaking violent rebellious actions and protests by leaving the darkest social zone ruled by the money mongers.

3.3 Migration as a Survival Strategy

Chettri has delineated the story of migration and displacement from the rural area to an unknown place not only of Dhane and his wife, but also of the minor characters like Rikute, Jhuma, and Mote Karki. They too are the victims of agonising situations and poverty that force them to migrate. Commenting on the drives of migration, Czaika and Reinprecht observe that, "Growing social and economic inequalities, and consequently, unfulfilled life aspirations trigger the migration intentions of millions, if not billions of people around the world" (49). It suggests that migration is a decision taken in the context of personal needs, livelihood challenges and opportunities, stress, and urgency. Similarly, displacement refers to the movement of people from their original homes or places due to conflict, war, violence, and disasters. In place of the word 'displacement' Marco Codebo uses the term 'deterritorialization', a concept

elaborated by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Codebo sums up that "deterritorialization consists in the movement by which 'one' leaves the territory [. . .] the operation of the line of flight. The persons, things, and words that have been deterritorialized in our time have indeed left their traditional territories, be they countries, national markets, or original texts" (4-5).

The novel poignantly narrates a tale of migration and displacement. Rikute, a *lahure* serving in Indian army, has moved from Nepal to India at a very young age in search of some achievable livelihood opportunities. He says, "I can have been only about fourteen when I left the hills, and now I have been in the army for three years. At first I suffered a lot to make ends meet. I herded other people's cows and buffaloes, I did any work I could" (Chettri 18). Rikute's narration attests the fact that financial conditions compel people or individuals to dislocate or to stay away from one's land for the sake of survival. They are deprived of family bond and care due to poverty. It reminds us of Margaya of R. K. Narayan's *The Financial Expert* when he says, "Money alone is important in this world. Everything else will come to us naturally if we have money in our purse" (Narayan 17). In the case of of Jhuma and Mote Karki, economic aspect does not play a direct role in their displacement. They migrate due to social factors like class, caste, and culture. Rikute allures Jhuma and traps her in his ugly motive by promising to marry her. She is raped, impregnated, and left. Unable to survive the public shame and sense of guilt, she attempts suicide. However, Mote Karki saves her from throwing "her body from the Rage cliff" (Chettri 95). In order to save her dignity, Karki marries her. But the prevailing caste system and differences in religious and social hierarchy are serious impediments to their happy conjugal life. Therefore, they decide to leave the village secretly and go to a safer place where nobody would humiliate and taunt them.

Jhuma feels economically insecured and is troubled at her future provision. It is natural that she should be worried about migration prospects and possible outcomes because both belong to the unprivileged working class. Jhuma's query, "But where will we go, what will we do?" is a clear indication of her fear and uncertainty about future (Chettri 101). Her fear is the outcome of her low economic status. Had she been economically strong, she would not have all these insecurities. Patil and Trivedi appropriately opine that:

> The people most seriously affected by the problem of forced displacement are often the most marginalised members of society: minority groups, stateless people, indigenous populations and others who are excluded from their governments or by other members of their society, many find themselves living in a state of constant insecurity and uncertainty. (127)

All the characters who migrate from the village are the victims of cruel class division. Economic force is the most powerful drive that has displaced them from their place causing physical and psychological wound in them. They are victimised by the bourgeoisie who have "centralised the means of production, and has concentrated property in a few hands" (Habib 528). Dhane, Maina, Jhuma, Rikute, and Mote Karki show great hope and resilience, and move forward hopefully in order to realise economic and social opportunities. Neupane believes that, "The title *Mountains Painted with Turmeric* connotes the dim yellow sunlight, which has double meaning. It refers to either dawn or evening; Dawn indicates optimism whereas evening pessimism" (223). Quoting Hutt's words, he further writes "Perhaps it will be better than their past, or maybe it will be worse. It shows that whether they meet fortune or misfortune, one thing is certain that their new life will begin" (qtd. in Neupane 223). All the characters who are forced to migrate hope for a better world where they would have economic security and social harmony.

4. Conclusion

Mountains Painted with Turmeric ends with a note of defeat and despair on the parts of the working class. A traumatic scene of exodus and the effect of socio-economic condition are presented with great care. The novelist graphically characterises rural poverty, vicious cycle of class domination, and the moral depravity of the money lenders and feudal lords. Dhane and other poor folks are the product of their economic condition. This paper has examined their suffering as the outcome of the capitalist social structure they live in. Each action and decision taken by them is shaped and determined by economically advanced class. Hence, it can be concluded that the novel is a pathetic tale of class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariats in which the poor are exploited, crushed and forced to displace. It subtly challenges the readers to consider the impact of the social class system on individual lives and raises awareness of the desire for social justice.

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