

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

We certify that this dissertation entitled "Envisioning Human and Nature Relationship: Biocentric Rendering in American Transcendental Literature " has been prepared by Raju Chitrakar (Shrestha) under our supervision. To the best of our knowledge and belief, this dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person without acknowledging the source. We hereby recommend that this dissertation be accepted by the Research Committee of the Dean's Office, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, for the final evaluation in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

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Supervisor

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Prof. Dr. Amma Raj Joshi
Expert

Head of the Central Department of English

APPROVAL LETTER

This dissertation entitled "Envisioning Human and Nature Relationship: Biocentric Rendering in American Transcendental Literature " was submitted by Raju Chitrakar (Shrestha) for final examination to the Research Committee of the Dean's Office, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English. I, hereby, certify that the Research Committee has found the dissertation satisfactory in scope and quality and has, therefore, accepted for the degree.

Date :.....

.....
Prof. Chinta Mani Pokharel, PhD

Dean and Chairman

Research Committee

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Ph. D. dissertation entitled "Envisioning Human and Nature Relationship: Biocentric Rendering in American Transcendental Literature," submitted to the Dean's Office, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University for final evaluation, is my entirely original work prepared under the supervision of my supervisor Prof. Dr. Arun Gupta and expert Prof. Dr. Amma Raj Joshi. I have made due acknowledgements to all ideas and information borrowed from different sources in the course of writing the dissertation. The results presented in the dissertation have not been previously presented or submitted to this or any other higher educational institute to meet requirements for an award of any degree or for any other purpose. No part of the contents of the dissertation has been published in the form or part of any book. I shall be solely responsible if any evidence is found against my declaration.

15 December 2014

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From the time of doing graduation, I strongly felt that most of the conflict based problems of the world are caused by human beings' going astray from their natural features. From the time I finished Master's degree in English, probably this raised a deep interest in me to do a doctorate research on human and nature relationship. I have been able to materialize this faint hope with the guidance of my guru and supervisor Prof. Dr. Arun Gupta. He offered me his diligent help from the time of writing the proposal to the moment of producing the final result. This dissertation would have never been possible had he not supervised me with his diligence despite his tight schedule of daily life. My veneration goes to him for his profound guidance.

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ABSTRACT

A beginner with philosophical bent may assume that since human being is one of the member species of the biotic community, it must maintain congenial relationship with other fellow members of the larger home. To his/her surprise, they might find just opposite practices in humans as guided by anthropocentric world view, which claims superiority of human beings over nature. At the same time, such a person might also come across mainly two non-anthropocentric world views that appeal humans to be friendly to the biotic community. These views are of American transcendentalism and ecocriticism. The former is no longer in practice and the latter is still in its gaining-maturity phase. I have studied both of these simultaneously so that some clues could be found for making the foundation of non-anthropocentric world views further solid.

The work studies American transcendental literature from the perspective of ecocriticism focusing on human and nature relationship so that some connectivity between the two locations of thoughts on human and nature relationships could be established. American transcendental literature has been studied also as providing methodological orientations to ecocriticism. Ralf Waldo Emerson's *Nature*, Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* and Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* are the selected texts. The dominant concept of Emerson as presented in his paramount work *Nature* is that nature is the spiritual representation of the universal soul. He takes the universal soul as the ultimate reality. Therefore, nature is the source for importing human motivations for him. Similarly, Thoreau's major work *Walden* implicitly claims that human being is no more different from nature. And hence, one can trace one's original relation with nature by being immersed in it. And Whitman's representative work *Leaves of Grass* presents the view that qualities like love and freedom can be conceived as some of the essentials of

nature, and hence humans, being a part of nature, have to apply such natural values in their lives. These views of American transcendental literature are conceivable in ecocriticism to a lesser or higher degree.

Comparatively, American transcendentalists appear to be far more meditative than the ecocritics in establishing human and nature affinity. For instance, whereas the transcendentalists see human being's both physical and spiritual relations with nature, ecocritics see only physical relations between them. Similarly, as the American transcendentalists take human being a part of nature, they plead humans to assimilate with it to experience their true relations with the universe. However, ecocritics effort to make humans realize just intrinsic worth of nature. Furthermore, American transcendentalists openly claim that nature represents truth and hence it should be the inspirational source of human motivations. However, main stream ecocritics have not paid sufficient concern in determining the guiding principles of human conducts. Their primary focus is to replace the prevailing anthropocentric world view with non-anthropocentric or biocentric one so that justice could be given to the environment and also to the environmentally affected people. Environmental justice and social-ecology have received major focus in ecocriticism to date.

Such meditative and creative aspects of American transcendental literature provide motivational ground to ecocritical discourses. Thus the dissertation proposes that the aforementioned dominant features of American transcendental literature could be used as the important clues in strengthening methodological and philosophic guidelines in the body of ecocritical discourse.

Raju Chitrakar (Shrestha)

KEY WORDS

American transcendentalism, (universal) soul, nature, ecocriticism, anthropocentrism, non-anthropocentrism, land ethic, deep ecology, intrinsic value, environmental aesthetics, ecofeminism, green radicalism.

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