

Personal as public in Rohit's *Letters from Jail***Tara Lal Shrestha, PhD¹** 

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This study explores how Rohit's *Letters from Jail*, addressed to his wife, illuminates a larger politico-cultural history of contestation and compromise. Employing Antonio Gramsci's notions of 'hegemony,' and 'resistance,' Nancy Fraser's 'subaltern publics,' and Carlo Ginzburg's 'microhistory,' it investigates how his micro-level personal letters connect the macro-level politico-cultural contexts. It analyzes how his letters articulate an alternative public sphere depicting the hidden history of the community, whose contribution in nation building remained invisible in the elite public sphere, and locate the invisible-looking community as an insurgent intellectual. It attempts to substantiate how his letters depict his community, in Gramsci's terms, as a 'constructor,' 'organizer,' and 'permanent persuader.' As subaltern studies members and microhistorians emphasize, his letters embody the story of resistance and resilience pertinent to rewriting the history from below movement. Readers realize how a small unit, an individual, or a community reflects a larger whole while reading his personal letters and reflecting the geo-political history. To support my argument, this study also uses insights collected between July 2025 to June 2026 when I participated *Tamunjhya* Literature Festivals in Bhaktapur, Thimi, Kathmandu and Kirtipur along with attending a dozen of social gatherings in which Rohit and his few supporters were present as literary and cultural critics rather than merely political activists. These literary and cultural public spheres articulated from the community offered a platform for collecting primary data through observations, reflections, interactions, and interviews supportive to this study. The finding and conclusion demand further inquiry to explore hidden history of Bhaktapur and its dynamics from microhistorical subaltern studies perspective.

Keywords: microhistory, subaltern, resistance, resilience, indigenous aesthetics, ethical politics

1. Introduction

Bhaktapur remained a center of resistance for centuries. Intellectuals often give example of Bhaktapur while speaking on state and resistance in Nepali context. States can be defined in terms of economics, politics, or morality (Gellner, 2007, p. 2; Shrestha, 2011, p. xii). This study explores how Narayanman Bijukchhen Rohit's *Letters from Jail* (2025)

portrays the geo-politico-cultural resistance and resilience history through his autobiographical expressions. After identifying an important issue remained hidden in the mainstream history, this study aims to explore and expose the contribution of Rohit and his community in politico-cultural transformation with reference to his *Letters from Jail* as primary text in manageable size. The critical conversation concentrates on how Rohit fails to limit his personal experience and his twenty-one letters turn to public property. It aims to expose how his letters further articulate alternative public sphere supportive to ethical political culture from the microhistorical subaltern studies angle. It also analyses how his letters and critical conversations as such not only carry counter-hegemonic consciousness but also support to expand subaltern publics.

When Jurgen Habermasian “public sphere” remain exclusionary, and marginalized groups are ‘hegemonic’ in Antonio Gramscian notion, as thinkers like Nancy Fraser suggests, people need alternative public space (Habermas, 1992). Fraser (1992) argues, unlike official bourgeois public sphere, subaltern counter publics are discursive alternative space of the oppressed against exclusion and oppression. Gramsci (1999) further argues that bourgeois public sphere is an instrument of forming and maintaining the structure of ‘hegemony’ (Forgacs, 2000, p. 190) and to counter it, we need to form counter hegemonic subaltern publics (Fraser, 1992; Caouette & Kapoor, 2016). Unlike the Habermasian singular public sphere, subaltern counter publics recommends to multiple public spheres.

The letters help to understand the complexities of the past and present where microhistory appears as macrohistory. Magnusson and Szijarto (2013) argue, “Microhistory simplifies the complexities of the past with personal narration” (p. 30). Alike this claim, Rohit's letters take a way to present the idea that a small unit or a small community can reflect a larger whole. When Rohit was arrested, his wife Shova Pradhan had to take care of four-year-old son and her aged mother-in-law. She was pregnant then; she had to take care of the home, teach at school, and visit her husband. Her brothers-in-laws and supporters (activists) were either imprisoned or underground. The letters document how the police broke through her front door, came into her home repeatedly, threatened her, and confiscated books and belongings.

Rohit was imprisoned twenty-two months in the final years of the Panchayat (Sahitya Post). Bhaktapur remained a hot spot of resistance history then. Rohit recalls how the Panchayat supporters tortured them. Males were compelled to be underground. Only women and children were left at home in Bhaktapur (Ratopati). When Shova Pradhan was extremely traumatized, Rohit wrote letters addressed to her from the jail seeking resilience. But, these letters contain broader socio-cultural activities (The Rising Nepal) apart from personal issues.

The addressee of the letters, Shova Pradhan, died of cancer on June 22, 2022. Rohit recalls how she preserved those letters and they could publish it. Rohit confesses, “I put on my feelings from the dark prison-cell...I didn’t want to publish these letters” (qtd. in Thimi Times & Nagarik). But, he failed to keep them private. His letters from jail published in a book form in Nepali have been translated into English and Chinese. Furthermore, the English version has been included in the curriculum, MA in English Forth Semester, Tribhuvan University (CDE, 2025, p. 68). The following sections further examine how his letters erase the boundaries between personal and public.

2. Methodology

This study employs microhistorical subaltern studies approach to study Rohit’s *Letters from Jail*. The concept of microstoria (microhistory) came into being from the tension between social and cultural historical discourses in Italy, where prominent political activist Antonio Gramsci propounded the concept of ‘hegemony,’ and ‘subaltern.’ Rohit was active in the Marxist-based politico-cultural activism in Nepal. Influenced from Gramsci’s (1999)

Prison Notebook, the historians initiated subaltern studies movement from India since 1970s. Rohit was active in politics after he was released then. His politico-cultural activism, lived experiences, and jail journals stand as microhistorical texts suitable to address wider politico-cultural questions.

Italian scholars with a Marxist background invented the concept of microhistory in the decade when different historical approaches, i.e. cultural history and subaltern historiography came into being. Cultural history and subaltern studies evolved since the 1970s. When the Subaltern Studies Group was planning to form the Subaltern Studies movement, influenced by Gramsci's *The Prison Notebook*, Rohit initiated politico-cultural activism from Bhaktapur. His *Letters from Jail* appears as a normal exception to address such a wider politico-cultural context.

One of the cornerstones of microhistory is the concept of *normal exceptions*. It highlights the importance of politico-cultural contribution of an individual, a small unit, or a community by demonstrating their significance in historical debate (Magnusson & Szijarto, 2013, p. 388). It uses a text in manageable size.

Rohit has published dozens of books on multiple themes. But, this study primarily takes references from his *Letters from Jail*. Apart from desk review and library research, insights have been used drawn through observations, reflections, and personal interviews, which were conducted during *Tamunjhya* Literature Festivals in Bhaktapur, Thimi, Kathmandu, and Kirtipur; the researcher, furthermore, participated a dozen of socio-cultural meetings between July 2025 and June 2026 and used these public spheres as a platform to collect information supportive to this study.

3. Rohit's *Letters from Jail*: Macrohistory in microhistory

Rohit's *Letters from Jail* features twenty-one letters, which he wrote from Nakkhu Jail between 1988 and 1989. Addressed to his wife, Shova Pradhan, when she was a primary school teacher and a mother of a son, Rohit's letters contain diverse public issues within private matters. The letters at the core capture the stories of resistance, resilience, and ethical politics. As Bargh (2007) affirms that colonial hegemony continues in new forms, the letters appear as an indigenous response to capitalism and neoliberalism.

Subaltern studies, as Gramsci (1999) and Guha (1997) emphasize, collect the stories of the oppressed and connect them with national history. Subaltern studies group members attempt to rewrite elitist history from the bottom by keeping the contribution of the subaltern actors in nation building. In this study emphasis has been given more on microhistory of Rohit and his fellow activists with reference to his *Letter from Jail*.

Rohit's persisting struggles appear supportive to the microhistorical study, which showcases complex politico-cultural contestations and compromises in a simple form that is what "microhistorians", as Ginzburg and Poni (1991) claim, "often like to lose the complexity of the relationships connecting individual to a particular society" (p. 5). Microhistorians often seek the historical actor's experience as a reflection of an individual's macrohistory from microhistory. They take small reference of an individual, community, or institution to address big question.

Rohit wished to keep his letters personal. He writes, "I had told to keep them confidential and not to publicize them..." (p. 5). These letters ultimately turned to public property. As Paula Gunn Allen in "The Autobiography of a Confluence" writes, "My life is history, politics, geography. It is religion and metaphysics. It is music and language" (Qtd. in Smith and Watson, 2024, p. 11), Rohit's autobiographical letters appears as politico-cultural history.

Born in Bhaktapur in 1939, Rohit remained prominent socialist leader deeply engaged in lifelong commitment on ethical politics. He preferred cultural and literary everyday

grassroots practices. He appears as a versatile person. As an autobiography carries multiple “I”s (Smith and Watson, 2024, p. 12), his letters capture his autobiographical “I”s imbedded with his historical, narrating, narrated and ideological “I”s in such a way that sometimes it appears hard to separate them from one to another. As Shrestha (2025) writes, “Despite his substantial political responsibilities, Rohit has consistently prioritized intellectual pursuits, including extensive reading, writing, and cultural engagement.” As a political prisoner, Rohit’s ‘narrating I’ carries his ‘ideological I’ in such a way that in each piece of letters in his ‘narrated I’, the personal matters appear as public property.

In one of the letters Rohit narrates how he was carried on a *doko* (bamboo basket) through Chandragiri-Bhimphedi to Gaur, where his father was a customs office. An Indian teacher, Chitaharan Singh, planted in him the seeds of simplicity and compassion, while communist activist Leelaraj Upadhyaya installed the ideas of communism. In 1954, when he saw leftist members serving flood victims in Gaur, he became a member of the Communist Party (Acharya, p. 5). He first became active in National Students’ Federation in 1958/59. Then, he joined the Nepal Communist Party (banned). He started his active political career in the late 1960s as a student leader and a central committee member and zonal committee in-charge of Nepal Communist Party in 1971. In 1962, he was elected a ward member of the municipal body Bhaktapur Nagar Panchayat uncontested, and was re-elected in the year 1964. He founded Nepal Workers & Peasants Party (NWPP) on 23rd January 1975 (Bijukchhen, 2015, *Bhaktapur After A Century*, p. 129). His ‘narrated I’ turns into ‘ideological I’ in such a way that his personal narratives depict political history (which I actualized through personal observations & reflections, too).

In “Author’s Note,” Rohit writes, “My wife, and our four-year-old son were extremely terrified and scared at the sudden horrendous sight of police brutality” (*Letters from Jail*, p. 3). Rohit recalls, “She deliberately avoided sorrows and humiliations; I had sensed the ‘threats of our son’s kidnap’ but she...” (p. 4). She could feel a sense of insecurity in her deeper heart when he wrote, “...I can visualize... political turmoil all around the world” (p. 4-5). Rohit wrote such political letters from jail that looks “very personal in nature” (p. 5) but they contain public issues.

The letters document the history of how they established NWPP showing his involvement in Nepal Students’ Federation (member, 1957), Nepal Communist Party (member, 1958), Marxist Literature Group (member, 1959), Progressive Literature Group (secretary, 1959), Bhaktapur College Students’ Union (chairperson, 1961/62), District Committee Bhaktapur (chairperson, 1961/62), Bhaktapur Municipality (member, 1963/65), Bhaktapur District Nepal Communist Party (in-charge, 1965), Nepal Communist Party (central member, 1968), Bagmati, Janakpur and Narayani (zonal in-charge, 1971), excluding many socio-cultural and literary engagements (Joshi, 2025, p. 6-7).

The letters also depict the history how Rohit had to get an audience with King Mahendra then, as the first step towards the ‘Back to the Village’ national campaign. After he was imprisoned, the situation turned different. Through letters, he writes to his wife from the Nakhhu jail, “During that period, I got an audience with King Mahendra, collectively...within the framework of Land Reforms Law, I dedicated myself to scientific measurement of land; simplification of payment of tiller to the land owner, and acquiring receipt of the payment; and other activities pertaining to peasants’ benefits” (p. 49). He also writes a letter informing how in the year 1966-67 King Mahendra expressed concern over the US attack on Vietnam.

The letters switch local to global issues. Rohit recalls those days before he was imprisoned in jail when he went to India, starting to work with Pushpa Lal, the pioneer leader of Nepal Communist Party (banned), in which he was a central committee member until

1974. He further writes from Nakkhu Jail on 2 September 1989 recalling those days of leaving the party and forming a new political organization:

Owing to many ideological and political differences with the party leadership, I left that party and founded NWPP (banned) in 1975. Struggling against many anarchistic and terroristic ideologies, I came back to Nepal after proclamation of General Amnesty, a result of Political Movement in 1979. (p. 50)

The letters record how Rohit became active in the National Referendum. He keeps on switching to various topics from domestic to geopolitical issue. He expresses how he left home in 1963 due to excessive non-political pressure from his father. He writes,

Almost every day or week, my place to eat or to sleep kept changing. That was the time I was most active in my entire life...I never felt difficult, fearful and tired. Reading newspapers and studying new books as well as listening to news and views from Radio Moscow, Radio Peking, BBC, Voice of America and All India Radio Aakasbaani became integral part of my life. I used to read and write till 2-3 am at night or even until 6 am sometimes. I was completely out of my family's control. I wholly and totally became people's activists, and (as if) all the people became mine. Those were turbulent times – I became an unsolved problem for police and administration; a subject of study of the intellectuals; and an ideal person for the general people. (p. 84-85)

Panchayat supporters were working on their own method with positive views on Panchayat System's Land Reforms program, Non-aligned Foreign Policy and *Muluki Ain* (The National Code). Communist leaders in jail and exile in India were their opponents and enemies. Rohit's father, Madhav Shankar Joshi, and Ashalal Sahu (merchant) concluded that Rohit should be sent outside to stop social disorder or peasant uprising (These contexts echoed during interactions and interviews, too). He writes, "Inside Panchayat System, we were lively and true representatives of people. In literary symposiums and sports competitions, we were always in forefront" (p. 87-88). Rohit while writing to his wife about his relationship with teachers, colleagues, and even with girls, he never fails to intrude broader politico-cultural issues.

While preparation for his marriage, Rohit shifts his focus towards peasants' uprising of Bhaktapur. The uprising against corruption turned to arrest, including ward representatives and even the *pradhan panch* (municipality mayor). Leaving his marriage procedures aside, he moved to the Bangladesh Movement of 1970. In India, he went on rejecting several marriage proposals, one after another, due to his rush in activism (p. 93). He engaged more as an insurgent intellectual.

The formation of the intellectuals, which is simple as Gramsci (1999) argues, "The notion of 'the intellectuals' as a distinct social category independent of class is a myth" (p. 131). According to Gramsci, "All men are potentially intellectuals in the sense of having an intellect and using it, but not all are intellectuals by social function" (p.131). Intellectuals in the functional sense, Gramsci argues, fall into "traditional" and "organic". He favors collective intellectual force having conscious responsibility to liberate the subaltern from "the more advanced bourgeois intellectual strata" (p.133). In the words of Gramsci, "All men are intellectuals...but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals" (p. 140). Gramsci was seeking the new intellectual that could no longer consist in eloquence, not an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, "but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organizer, 'permanent persuader' and not just a simple orator..." (p.141-142). Rohit's letters present him as a constructor, organizer, and permanent persuader (Shrestha, 2020, p. 61). Before, during and after his imprisoned life, he looks not just a simple orator.

He shifts his writing from the present to the past and the future. He keeps on reading, writing, and disseminating ideas.

The letters take us to participate literary symposiums and meet national figures (poets and writers). Rohit keeps on writing through letters to his wife Shova Pradhan about the books he read, songs he listened, movies or documentaries he watched. At home (in Bhaktapur), his uncle used to write poems and organize literary symposiums. Established poets and writers would join, including Laxmi Prasad Devkota, Balkrishna Sama and others. He writes recalling how he first met poet laureate Devkota and Sama in a literary symposium in Gaur and later again at the Brihat Nepal Bhasha Literature Festival called *Tamunjhya* in and outside Bhaktapur. I found the literature festival ceaselessly continued for more than four decades through volunteering support from community.

Rohit also writes about his engagement with the writings of world literary figures like Dostoevsky, Yasunari Kawabata, Premchand, Rabindranath Tagore, Sharat Chandra Chattopadhyay, Bhishma Sahni, etc. he listens songs and ghazals. Pakistani ghazals are more meaningful compared to Indian movie songs. Sanskrit verses with romantic touches are far better than these ghazals. Sanskrit literature supersedes them in imagination and simile. Compared to Sanskrit poems, even the most popular Nepali or Indian songs feel like sub-standard imitations” (p. 25-26). He uses writing and reading as a script-therapy. When he feels helpless writing about geo-political issue-based book under the rigid censorship in the prison, whose all reference books were confiscated, he writes poems as:

The descendants of people
Who built the golden water-spouts,
They don't have a drop to drink!

The descendants of those
Who build palaces with golden gates
Are home-less today!....

The new generations
That can consolidate the culture,
Glorify Nepal's image,
They are imprisoned here for reasons unknown!.... (p. 27)

Rohit wrote it on August 14, 1989 from Nakkhu Jail with a note at the end, “Shova! This poem is not for publication” (p. 28). This letter appears as a public issue. He wishes political change apt to regenerate root culture. In the next letter (on 19 August 1989), he writes about Nepali art and culture with reference to Nyatapole temple, Nyatapajhya (55 windows palace), Lundhwaka (Golden Gate), Krishna Mandir, ancient buildings with *sanjhya* (traditional window) that foreigners prefer to engage with. He narrates how ancient specialties are associated with the interesting Newar culture:

While *doko* and *khukuri* represent life of Nepal, Newari art and culture is the adornment of Nepal and Nepali people. Beauty without adornment is like a rough diamond without sparkle. Adornments enhance the charm of beauty and lead human beings to the doorstep of civilization. Unquestionably, Newari art and culture is the perfection and sparkle of Nepali's culture.... Capitalist mentality of getting rich or getting financial benefit in any way possible is gaining dominance over the ancient culture and national identity...we need serious thinkers rather than profit-mongers. (p. 33)

Rohit also talks about the richness of Bengali culture. He looks influenced with their way of speaking their mother tongue (Bengali), listening to melodious music, reading books,

wearing clean clothes, maintaining cleanliness, following a studious lifestyle, traveling culture, etc. He gives references of celebrity artists, writers and directors like Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhosle, Kishore Kumar, Mithun Chakraborty, Nirad Chaudhuri, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarad Chandra Chattopadhyay, Subhas Chandra Bose, Ajoy Ghosh, Jyoti Basu. In the letter, he informs his wife (a teacher) about geopolitical and cultural history. He writes,

Shova, do you know? Every Bengali boy or girl wants to be a scientist, advocate, judge, doctor, engineer or an economist. Graduate or post-graduate in every household is the identity of the Bengalis. They say proudly, “What Bengali says today, India will say tomorrow!” The history of India and Bengal tells the same—British imperialism first colonized Bengal and then the whole India. Coincidentally, Bengal became independent first, followed by whole India. (p. 35)

Glorifying the Bengali culture, he connects the Newari culture of Nepal, saying, “In our country, urgency of serious discussions is required on how to preserve and timely update our traditional cultural performances like ‘ghintanghisi’, ‘khyalah’, khya pyakhan’, ‘devi pyakhan’, ‘kepay fenegu’, gainchaa, and many other songs and dances” (p. 35). He feels self-identity and harmonious diversity lie in the art and culture of each race and country, which are expressions of a country’s history and geography (p. 36). In the prison, he hears about ‘bhoto jatra’ of Krishna Mandir, which is near to jail in Lalitpur 937). He appears to be influenced by Buddhism and Marxism simultaneously (p. 39). As a political prisoner, he spends much time reading, writing, watching cultural programs, films, listening music in Nakkhu jail (p. 45). The letters reflect his hidden habits of reading culture beneficial to resistance, resilience and the collective wellbeing.

Bhaktapur is a city of dances and performances – a city of arts and architecture as he envisions *Bhaktapur after a Century* (2015). He does not want to see, as Ferguson (1990) points out, failed developmental acts in his heritage city. His personal feelings transform into a public problem. His *Letter from Jail* reflects his inner wish to regenerate Bhaktapur. In a letter from Nakkhu Jail addressed to Shova Pradhan on 17 December 1989, he writes, “I become emotional while writing letters to you; forget that I am in jail; feel like home, talking with you” (p. 175). He talks about his son Subeg’s interest in art (drawing), recalling how he used to draw. He connects his family matter with wider cultural question:

Do we want to see him as an artist in future? The question arises, how can we ask our son to become an artist who might barely be able to earn a livelihood, instead of a doctor or an engineer or a businessman who would earn not only sufficiently for comfortable living, but also erect buildings with golden roofs? But, more often than not, I am obsessed by feeling – what else do we Nepalese have, except nature-gifted beauties and man-made arts! No doubt, every piece of wood in Bhaktapur represents an art; every stone an image; and every brick architecture. (p. 175-176)

Rohit further asks, “Shouldn’t we keep this tradition alive? Do we intend to send Nepalese citizens to universities, museums or private museums in UK, France, America and Germany to study our own Nepali art, in future?” (p. 76). He looks decolonizing learning and research as Smith (1999) imagines. As Schumacher (1973) wished, he envisioned small Bhaktapur as beautiful and its economics as if their people matter. He longs to create environment for the rebirth of many more Arniko in Nepali soil (p. 77). He prefers cultural and spiritual peace and prosperity. He writes to Shova, “...hundreds of thousands of Nepalese have gone abroad to do manual work. But, ‘intellectual labors’ are very scarce. 2500 years ago, or, after Siddhartha (Gautam Buddha), no great philosopher has taken birth here.... All

thinks of the world have become so by their dedication to study and thinking....What should we do for our children?” (p. 192).

Rohit never lost any of the elections he has contested (Ojha and Pradhan; Onlinekhabar). However, Shrestha (2025) writes, “He was never tempted by the lure of power.” He looks aware of what Foucault (1972a; 1972b) feels about power. He gave up the interest of winning the election. He began his writing in the early 1970s and even after five decades he has continuously been serving people through political and literary writings and social activism. These legacies of intellectualizing the society look supportive to establish Bhaktapur as the center of cultural heritage. The aesthetics of education in the era of neoliberalism and globalization need alternative way that Spivak (2012) realized from imperial center. Rohit and his fellow realized it but as Baral writes, “corrupt politicians do not want to adopt it.” In the local level, Rohit is taken as selfless mentor for decades. As Prajapati (2025) expresses, “many people take his writings as a symbol of unity” (00:16:35-00:16:55). Bhaktapur municipality has institutionalized his vision.

Malla (2025) as a medical person takes his *Letters from Jail* useful to psychological healing (00:55:00-00:55:25). I heard rhetorical questions, too. Shaijyu (2025) shares her wish: “We feel the absence of the protagonist while reading these letters... Shova Miss is an equal contributor to this book - equal to the author, translator, and editor” (02:30:32-02:30:59). The way Shaijyu uses the emotional aspect while uttering the absence of her Shova Miss, she wishes to read the reply letters, too. In her words, “Rohit was a litterateur and a politician. For him, writing looks normal. But, Shova Miss saved them, where readers find themselves in these letters” (02:33:00-02:36:00), where personal appears as public.

Shaijyu (2025) seeks hidden history from the perspective of gender subaltern. She feels absence of Shova Miss. The silences or ellipses offer space to initiate the discourse on muted subaltern, where subaltern historians seek stories of the resistance and resilience. Shova Miss speaks within silence. She survives in silence and heard in silence. Spivak (1988) asserts, “If in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history, and the subaltern cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (p. 28). Her absence is her presence. As Gosai (2025) points out, preserving the letters to the public itself is her existence (02:55:15-02:57:23). Subalterns and sovereigns, as Sundar (2009) imagines, demand devotion in the journey to freedom. The need of new transnational activism, as Tarrow (2005) asserts, persists. The letters from jail help to educate, agitate, and organize the community blending macrohistory in microhistory, within contestation and compromise, as Ginzburg (2015) writes,

The relationship between an experiment and its potential implications is always asymmetrical...alternatively, on behalf of the colonizers and the colonized can be inscribed in a much larger phenomenon. An individual case may contribute to the reformation of an infinitely larger question: what made Europe’s conquest of the world possible? Microhistory and macrohistory, close analysis and global perspective, far from being mutually exclusive, reinforce each other (p. 471-472).

Microhistory, like subaltern studies and cultural history, puts stress on the lived experiences of the actors, who themselves form alternative space to interpret their own experience with a distinct hermeneutical character. Rohit’s lived microhistorical experience as a normal exception addresses wider politico-cultural debates in its own public sphere. Microhistory became popular along with cultural and subaltern studies in the 1990s. It brings social and cultural history together by explaining social history and grasping the meanings of cultural history within a single very circumscribed investigation (Ginzburg, 2015, p. 29). As Cleffie (1993) claims, Rohit’s life and his letters appear alongside his activism as “permanently active persuaders” (p. 508). Like Bolaria and Hier (2006) write, he is “a special

kind of intellectual activist to influence and inspire, who engaged in everyday activities to evoke feeling and passion in oppressed populations on shared social location” (p. 79). His letters subtly represent larger public matters, though they have meager impact in elite center, and support to sustain indigenous aesthetics and ethical politics.

4. Conclusion

This study explored how Rohit’s *Letters from Jail* depicts wider politico-cultural history of contestations and compromises from a microhistorical subaltern studies angle. His letters from jail not only celebrates the public issues while narrating private affairs, they also articulate alternative public sphere in order to showcase politico-cultural macrohistory within microhistory. Rohit remained active in various politico-cultural and literary movements through out his life. Giving emphasis on intellectualizing society, he appears as a permanent persuader in protecting and promoting art and literature and regenerating indigenous culture and heritage from the bottom. Rohit always won the elections after he was released from the prison. His letters from jail narrate how he set foundation to the establishment of politico-cultural activism and continued versatile movements from below for more than six decades. His activism prioritizes the politico-cultural awakening respecting the root values of collective culture supportive to the subaltern communities. He records, as Ginzburg (2015) emphasizes, microhistorical evidences, which ultimately appear as the politico-cultural history. His life history of resistance and resilience as a small unit, an individual, or a community reflects issues of a larger whole. His *Letters from Jail*, in this regard, appears as a solid example of “a normal exception” to recover people’s hidden history supportive to educate, agitate, and organize the subaltern community. His letters, though meagerly visible in bourgeoisie public sphere, substantiate to wider politico-cultural discourses. They are supportive to sustain community agency. As Fanon (2005; 2008) affirms, Rohit and his followers reject any forms of hegemony that attempts to harm his territory, culture, and community. Nor they bear any forms of dominance without hegemony that Guha (1997) discussed during subaltern studies campaign throughout his life. The study, therefore, demands further research to explore and expose hidden history in and out of Bhaktapur from microhistorical subaltern studies perspective. The finding and conclusion demand alternative “public spheres” and “permanent persuaders” as Gramsci (1999) and Fraser (1992) recommend to recover and regenerate.

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