MOLUNG EDUCATIONAL FRONTIER

Disclaimer
The views expressed in the articles are exclusively those of individual authors. The authors should not hold the Editorial Board and the publisher responsible for any controversy and/or adverse effects from the publication of their articles.

Molung Educational Frontier

Editorial

Having realized the situation that quality education is the demand of the day, universities and higher education institutions as well as their faculties are engaged in research activities other than the ones they are awarded with PhD degrees. The findings of their research have been published in scholarly/periodical journals which have improved their standards over the years. Many articles published in peer reviewed/indexed journals have been cited and some of the journals have had a significant impact. This is certainly a matter of hope and happiness.

However, the achievements are still limited, only a small number of scholars have got access to those journals as there is inadequate budget to operate research activities. Even as scholarly journals are coming out, they may not have undergone the rigorous process of peer review which is the heart of any journal. Considering the way journals are published, the task of research and publication is not satisfactory.

In this context, Molung Foundation, a research institution based in Kathmandu, has been involved in research and publication for the last ten years. It has been publishing a journal named *Molung Educational Frontier* on annual basis. It is an interdisciplinary journal that accepts research papers from any field - nature, society, and culture which can be linked to the governance/management, development, and prosperity in some way.

This **Special Issue**, however, includes the articles on **language, literature, and culture** which have inextricable relationship with one another. This is valuable in the context of multicultural setting where indigenous languages, literatures, and cultures are being subjugated by the more power cultures. Researchers, therefore, have concentrated on these pressing issues this time. As result, this volume specifically includes the articles which are more concerned about Nepali language, literature, and culture. This is why Molung Foundation realized its significance and published it as a Special Issue.

The Editorial Board is thankful to the leadership of Molung Foundation which has provided the space and logistics for the publication of this volume as before. We would also like to thank our article contributors and expect them to continue with their research activities and support us in ways they can.

June 15, 2020
Kathmandu, Nepal

Molung Educational Frontier

Volume 10 (Special Issue), June 2020

Table of Contents

Reading Trauma in History through Post-Conflict Narrative: Thakuri's "The Descending Mountain"

Badri Prasad Pokharel, PhD[*]

Abstract

Maya Thakuri's "The Descending Mountain," is a testimony of an event that might have happened during the People's War instigated by the Maoists towards the end of the 20th century. It has unfolded the truth hidden behind the curtain, that is, how Nepal's geopolitical development in the post-democratic movement has made one mass depart towards the forest and raise the voice against those who were still marginalized in the name of caste, gender and ethnicity; which ultimately caused the death of more than fifteen thousand Nepali citizen and hundreds of thousands other displaced from their own homes. The theme of this article is to show a bitter truth that happened in history - the compulsion of perpetrators and victims to sabotage physically and to mourn in trauma. It is to bring the fact of Nepal's hinterlands' people's history of traumatic life – how much traumatic their life was, as well as the reluctance of the civil society to such grave tale. The end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the new era, in political development to grab the power from the elite group have been remarkable to heed for the historians and academicians to knit the very emotional facts in the form of narratives, which is called here post-conflict narrative. Mrs. Thakuri, to some extent, is successful to weave a plot of a mother and her daughter on the background of the People's War – a historical turning point in the history of Nepal and narrativize the painful traumatic story to the readers.

Keywords: History, People's War, post-conflict narrative, testimony, trauma

Introduction

Nepal had been a site of some of the bloodiest conflicts in the recent past including many invisible wars, visible ethnic conflicts and protracted conflicts in many hinterlands. Mass displacement, attack on civilian populations, mass losses of homes and belongings, amputations, child soldering and rape had typified in many parts of Nepal. Even following the signing of a ceasefire, the environment remained more

---

[*]Dr. Pokharel has done PhD from Lumbini Buddhist University, Nepal and currently has been working as the Associate Professor of English at Saraswati Multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

violent owing to the rise of banditry and crime. This situation undermined a sense of security that was a prerequisite for psychological well-being and building of peace in the country. The political and economic disenfranchisement of a large number of youths and other people enabled their participation in the armed conflict. It was grounded in an unpredictable mixture of poverty, poor governance, and fragile political and economic system. Different kinds of conflict and violence produced different patterns of psychological distress that would lead them to suffer from trauma. Rape and other forms of gender-based violence were also integral elements of armed conflict. Even among the combatants, the main actors in the conflict, those who survived gender-based violence showed great prevalence of mental health problems. The organized and prolonged armed conflict and its aftermath bring enormous psychological and social burdens to individuals who experience them. As such, for the last two decades, Nepal witnessed the suffering and the life threatening experience that caused individuals go through traumatic reactions, which is termed as 'post-traumatic stress disorder' and 'collective trauma.' These unhealed traumatic experiences may contribute to linger the ongoing cycles of violence and further thwart peace building efforts.

The narrative written after the conflict and war would be a tremendously valuable tool for identifying the condition of people during and after periods of the violent conflict. The narrative genre and the voices serve as alternatives to portray their pathetic life they were compelled to lead along with their family and expose how violence affected the people. The post-conflict narratives let the reader know the suffering and understand the dynamics of the problem and to be moved to respond. Most narratives of the conflict have identified such linguistic devices that would help create the polarization between the victims and victimizers as protagonist and antagonist that would affect the understanding of the reader. Therefore, literary texts are fundamentally about human intention organized with the help of as much as possible intelligible anecdotes, humans or human-like characters to accomplish intentions generating a sequence of actions and reactions extended as a plot according to time period. Choosing literary texts for imbibing the past experience in written form is a way of entering psychological and physical spaces where the factors i.e. weaving plot, characters along with time period and past painful experience are drawn into complexity and can be retrieved through creative reconstruction of the importance phenomenon – with the help of mind or psychology. Maya Thakuri's "The Descending Mountain," is a post-conflict narrative which is written about an event that might have happened during the war. It has been analyzed to bring a fore how much the war was destructive to human being and how much traumatized people had been and how a post-conflict narrative can be a medium to portray the history.

Theoretical Discussion

Writing trauma in History

The post-1990 Nepali polity was expected to look upon the underprivileged and down-trodden proletariat who were strongly responsible to bring political change in the nation. But it engaged in making governments with petty and selfish activities and corruption undermining the inherent role of the people. Having penetrated with the messy predicament, the elites or neo-elites remained in power and the ordinary people remained aspirants for changes in their lives and looked forward to sudden or immediate vicissitudes. In such politically aggravated condition, mostly of marginalized and disappointed people, the radical communist parties i.e., the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) and other small fringes raised the voices of the voiceless showing the demerits of democracy and dreams of being republicans. Aditya Adhikari (2014), in this regard, delineates, "To the communists in the Unity Centre, those early years of democracy confirmed that parliamentary democracy was a sham: they believed it could never bring about the necessary transformation of Nepali society making it necessary to wage war against the state and seize power" (p.15). Invoking the slogan of republican state, they started enlarging their organizations in different parts of the country especially in the hinterlands. It subsequently led them to raise weapons for their rights and privileges immediately starting a war against the state's power, such as the police.

On the one hand, parliamentary parties were not doing any significant works for the people and their underscored rights and privileges, on the other hand, disappointment against these parties and their apathy towards the nation's pre-mature democracy was increasing incredibly. The king was in the mood to usurp the power making any feigns. The political turmoil remained in the nation for some years from 1991 until the royal coup in 2002, undermining the role of parliamentary power and their impotence in strengthening the democratic exercise. Lok Raj Baral (2006) further clarifies this situation, "This ambiguity, however, came to an end following the royal takeover of executive power in October and its further consolidation in February 2005" (p.255). The royal visits to the districts, directives issued, and a number of civil and military decisions taken by the king make it clear that absolute monarchy had made a comeback. Along with such a condition, the radical communist groups – the Communist Party of Nepal-Fourth Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal-Mashal merged to form the Communist Party of Nepal – Unity Centre, which would float a communist wing for election and other political activities to come in the eyes of people to "expose the bourgeois system" (p.260). They had been opposing the compromising deal between the king and Nepali Congress and United Left Front for the restoration of multiparty democracy calling it a betrayal of the people.

In 1994, the Communist Party of Nepal - Unity Centre split on the issue of launching an armed struggle in the country. This option was favoured by Puspa Kamal Dahal alias Prachanda opposing other factions led by Narayan Kaji Shrestha of Unity Centre, the Communist Party of Nepal - Fourth Congress and others. Prachanda's faction later named as the Communist Party of Nepal - Maoist. On 4 February, 1996, in the leadership of Baburam Bhattarai, this party presented a forty - point demand to Nepali Congress-led Sher Bahadur Deuba government. As the demands were not fulfilled, it began the People's War thereafter on 13 February, 1996 (p.261) that continued for about ten years taking the lives of more than fifteen thousand people, making millions of other people displaced traumatizing millions of others. Deepak Thapa and Bandita Sijapati (2012) state, "When Baburam Bhattarai submitted his demands on 4th February with the warning that an armed uprising would begin if the grievances outlined were not looked into, Deuba virtually ignored it and went off on a visit to India" (p.85). There is no evidence that the police were kept on alert during that period. The lackadaisical manner of the government and eagerness of the Maoist to instigate the war led the nation to destruction.

For a glance upon the demands, one would be able to notice that even willing Prime Ministers would not be in the condition to fulfil them, let alone the intention of the agitating demonstrators. They must be sure that the demand would not be fulfilled until the deadline and they would opt for rebellion. Needless to say, it became easy to the rebels to start the "People's War" on 13 February 1996. It was just after four days of the deadline. They started the rebellion by striking at several government institutions such as police station in different districts. The security force, in retort, responded more violently upon the rebels creating a havoc in the hinterlands with fear and doubt. The situation forced many youth to take refuge either in the forest or in the neighbouring country, India, running away from the possible arrest and intimidations. It became very good to the Maoists who were looking for an opportunity that they could get the benefit. As a result, they were able to enlist many youths in their group so they could fight against the atrocities imposed upon them by the local administration Police operations such as Operation Romeo and Kilo Sierra 2 initiated by the government not only alienated more and more innocent people but also helped them join the uprising and pledged to take revenge on the force. The beginning of the uprising was not easy for the rebels as they had to face many problems to wrangle with the situation. As they started the rebellion, they did not have enough weapons and ammunition. It seemed impossible in the beginning, but "it is quite true that the Maoists' weaponization started only after 1996" (Dasgupta, 2007, p. 32). For them as modern weapons were not accessible, hence, pressure-cooker bombs, petrol bombs made of beer bottles, 303 rifles, muzzle guns etc. were quite prevalent to ensue the violence. Later, AK-47s and SLRs, mortars

and other heavier armoury became common to them (Ibid). They, thus, believed more in arms and ammunition than in themselves in bringing safety and ultimate resolution in their lives. On one hand, the hit-and-run guerrilla tactics imposed by the rebels and the abrupt search, arrest and punishment, on the other hand by the security force became quite common. It created a big problem in the life of the people that ultimately made many die and misplace from their own places. People living in the society did not have any option to live the life freely. If they were seen helping with the rebels, they would come in the eyes of the security forces, which was supposed to be a threat to the security forces. The worst backlash remained in the plight of civil right of ordinary people with the result of thousands' death and hundreds of students, lawyers, teachers, journalists, teachers, and doctors disappearing from their working places and accommodations. Under suspicion of being sympathizers of both warring groups, it, to the large extent, impacted terribly in the life of marginalized ethnic groups or castes mostly living in the hinterlands.

While bringing out the political predicament of post-democratic Nepali polity, Dhrub Kumar (2003), witnessing the predicament of the country very closely analyses that the government took a number of measures to increase security. For example, emergency was imposed, anti-terrorist law was adopted, military was mobilized and parliament was dissolved to sidestep legislative hurdles. Despite these efforts to bolster the government's military policy to crush the Maoists, insurgency grew by leaps and bounds. Rising death tolls of the 'Maoists' caused by the indiscriminate killing by the security forces who were provided impunity by the anti-terrorist law, however, did not compensate for the loss of face of the government concerning human rights of the citizenry (p.174). Continuity of this trend would certainly make Nepal a classic case of a failed state that apparently has already occurred with the collapse of the state authority.

For the state was liable to fund more on military power despite its abysmal human right record, it ultimately led the government to militarized its approach. Military actions and collateral damages increasingly became permissible as conflict ensued. In spite of the prescient warning against such policy imposed by the state, the government prepared to inflame the conflict as the global 'war on terrorism' letting the state have losses of agriculture production, declining industrial outputs, increasing imports and decreasing exports, explosion of telecommunication repeater tower in some remote districts and so many to name a few.

Traumatic Testimony to Understand History

The present world is torn and scarred by violence, which has become integral to the human condition from the very inception of human civilization. Thus, traces are still

imprinted in the design of human bodies and brains. Enlarging the concept of trauma Kirmayer (2007) states that it has become a keyword through which clinicians and scholars from many disciplines approach the experience of violence and its aftermath. The metaphorical assumption of trauma draws "an attention to the ways that extremes of violence break bodies and minds, leaving indelible marks even after healing and recovery" (p.1). Now, the notion of trauma has been extended to cover socio-political events, psycho-physiological processes, physical and emotional experiences and narrative theme while explaining individual and social suffering. Similarly, Konner (2007), while enlarging the area of trauma from the normal understanding to very severe and abnormal circumstances which can be exemplified as war, rape, or other devastating natural disasters to physical, sexual and other severe emotional abuse as torture and concentration-camp experiences. It is thus, termed as label which the word trauma is no longer restricted to such extremities (p.300). The traumatic memory with which the victims live a long time would be "an object of intellectual curiosity and health skepticism" (Young, 1995, p.358). It may help one reconstruct his or her own potential to go ahead rather differently.

But Alexander Hinton (2007), highlighting trauma as psychological wound points out extensively this psychological wound has been understood as an affliction that every individual has to go through during the difficult situation and he or she has to look for the way come out of it. Besides, it unfolds the inner pains through the words written in the form of narratives. Literary writing tries to heal trauma - a sort of psychobiological malady soothing the long lasting affliction (p.447). But traumatic experiences may make one lose the self-consciousness, but consequently lead one to peaceful coexistence among the inflicted people.

For the traumatic memories about the holocaustic past, one as an audience can have shared with the whole community. There would be a potential space for retelling. If a community agrees about the existence of traumatic events and makes it part of its history, there will be a collective memory in which the individual memory can have a place or can be transformed (Ibid). If defined classically, trauma is a symptom of overwhelming event. The belated response that makes trauma includes a range of psychological effects: repeated and intrusive hallucinations, dreams stemming from the event as well as psychic numbing. It also produces physical responses such as uncontrollable behaviors or increased autonomic arousal to stimuli recalling the event. However, Susan Y. Najita (2006) has different opinions about it. She opines that trauma cannot be defined either solely by the event itself or by personal significance a person attaches to it (p.13). But the so-called pathological aspects of trauma inhere in the moment of its reception: the traumatizing event or 'kernel' is not experienced fully at the time, but only remembered belatedly and without conscious control.

John P. Wilson (2007) is again quoted to have drawn a relationship between trauma and culture, which is an important one because traumatic experiences are part of the lifecycle, universal in manifestation and occurrence and typically demand a response from culture in terms of healing, treatment, interventions, counseling, and medical care (p.4). A traumatic life event can be simple or complex in nature and result in simple or complex forms of post-traumatic adaptation. Similarly, cultures can be simple or complex in nature with different roles, social structures, authority systems, and mechanisms for dealing with individual and collective forms of trauma. Here, cultural importance can be liable to understand trauma. Injuries caused by trauma include the full spectrum of physical and psychological injuries.

Unlike Wilson, Lisa Tsoi Hoshmand (2007) has tried to link trauma with interpersonal and socio-cultural factors and expounded on ecological influences on traumatic experiences. She further clarifies, "The collective transmission of trauma involves the historical and social – structural hat should be included in the assessment of cumulative ecological risks that perpetuate trauma" (p.36). The historical events remain pivotal to transgress the inner feelings of the survivors.

Discussion and Results
Understanding Trauma in History through "The Descending Mountain"

The three major processes -- militarization, displacement, and gender-baseness which impacted Nepali people and society has been generated by the decade-long People's War in Nepal. Through a study of women's position in Nepali political and cultural history and multi-ethnographic research on the People's War, it is important to examine "how crisis-induced displacement and violence impacted and shaped gender dynamics at the local level and Nepali people's mobility at the transnational/global level" (Lohani-Chalise, 2008, p. ii). The crisis had multiple effects in the form of displacement, migrations, disappearances, murders of innocent people, extrajudicial killings as well as life under the state of emergency and militarization remained nightmarish to all survivors of the crisis. A situation like flashback, another fundamental change in psyche due to trauma, would provide a form of recall that survivors frequently go through. Here, Caruth (1995) argues, "While the traumatized are called upon to see and to relive the insistent reality of the past, they recover a past that encounters consciousness only through the very denial of active recollection" (*Trauma Exploration,* p.152). People living the hinterland were the most targeted ones who were crippled among the victims.

Rukmana, a rural woman, whose son has been disappeared for a long time and his whereabouts has still been unknown to her, is one victim of the People's War. Her life, along with her small daughter, Muna, has even been more painful in the village.

Ramlal Baje, a retired school teacher, who is hurt by the predicament prevailing in the village, which is ravaged by the Maoist insurgency. The storyteller, Maya Thakuri (2011) narrates this event,

> Our village is being deserted. Youths have left to go abroad. The children and the elders are also leaving in the village. We only see fallow lands wherever we look. The *dhiki* and *janto* have been replaced with newfangled machines. The water is continuously wasting away from the spring. The village has become an inhospitable place to live. No one ever imagined that they would have to see this nightmarish time. (p.30)

The war has ravaged the village in such way that people have been scared of living there. Once a time, it used to be fairly quiet and hospitable for each of them. If anything is heard, it is only gunshots, bomb explosion, crying etc.

Bomb, gun, lethal weapon, explosion, clash, deadly attack, arson, murder, abduction, arrest, torture, violence and so forth have been common to all people. Now there is no need "to flip through the pages of a dictionary to grasp the underlying meaning of these words. This is because many people from infants to elders are losing their precious lives in the maelstrom of such destructive rage" (p.29). The peaceful village has been targeted to be a battlefield where innocent denizens - women and children have been victims. Talking about the meaninglessness of such conflict, the writer narrates in the following lines,

> What crime have the children committed when they are simply enjoying their multicolored lives, exposing life's many layers? Why were golden dreams seized from their innocent eyes? For whom and for what reasons are they made the victims of violence? Why are our daughters being rendered homeless? Whichever side the killed belonged to, the victims' families have to bear the brunt of the tragedy. Consequently,   women and children, in particular, will have to live with an unbearable load of pain throughout their lives. (Ibid)

The painful lifestyle prevailing around has been prevalent and has become common to all. The senior citizens of the village, Ramlal Baje and Karmabir have been seriously rendered by the insurgency. They have nothing to do except witnessing the malpractices the society is undergoing with. While comparing the past and present, they find the present predicament rather menacing to each as everything seems to be a threat to all living there. Ramlal Baje talks to Karmabir, "They used to say that a good neighbor's duty was to help others in difficulty, but in today's adverse situation, when one knocks at the door of his neighbor crying for help to protect his life and property, the neighbor shuts himself in so as to save his own life and property" (p.30). People living there are in threats either to live there obeying the rebels' rules or to fleeing away from there in a cowardly manner. The harmonious atmosphere the village deserves has been faded

away with the fear of death and of being kidnapped at any time. Thus, they are in trauma.

Being threatened by the unseen fear, the villagers have given up the hope of being happy. The smile has been replaced with terror on everyone's face. Their condition is narrated like this, "The fear of war has left the country in a dreadful silent state. If the situation continues like this, today's history will be written with blood" (Ibid). Having spent some time, Rukmana and her nine-year-old daughter Muna have taken shelter in a cave as her only son has caused havoc in the society – looting, vandalizing, and drinking, thus, turned himself in the group of rebels to change the society. She is in search of both the rebels and the security force. The condition of the village is described here, "The village was ravaged by war. Huts were blown up with bombs. People were made homeless. Several innocent children, youth and defenseless elders were shot dead. It seemed that fear dwelled in the villagers' eyes and had become deeply rooted in the hearts" (p.31). Thus, the villagers have been reluctant to welcome the guests or frown at the strangers who, otherwise, react blatantly. The fear of the villagers is delineated in this way, "The villagers were forced to open their doors when a group of torchlight holders came for a night raid and landed their boots on their doors. Finding themselves threatened at gunpoint, the villagers did not even know the reason for the brutality" (Ibid). Their life was on the edge of the sword; hence, they were crippled in trauma and seem to be awaiting their own doom sooner or later.

Living for three days and nights in the cave in terror of being either killed or manhandled from either side, she was badly terrorized with any kinds of sound. They were not in the condition to return to the village, rather in the mood to go somewhere to a safe place. But the doom was nearby them as some boys – rebels being drunk came to hide in the cave to debilitate them. Her plea, "Please don't kill us. We have nothing. We will leave this place early in the morning and go somewhere else" (p.34) would not mean to them anything except some gesture of contempt, and that could not soften their cliff-like heart, which led them commit very heinous crime. Rukmana's compulsion is described here, "Removing the boulder from the mouth of the cave, the first youth grabbed Rukumana's legs and dragged her outside. She pressed her daughters tightly to her chest. She looked timidly at the boy's face, like a terrified doe" (p. 35). But, the very pathetic situation turned ever more painful when her son in his drunken position would be unable to save both his mother and daughter from the hands of his own comrades. Ultimately along with his mother and sister, he was also among the three dead bodies found thrown somewhere in the jungle. The ultimate denouement of the situation is mentioned as follows,

Three days after the incident, a man was en route to a foreign country when his eyes
     fixed on a ghastly sight of three dead bodies – a woman, a youth, and a child –
     somewhere deep in the jungle.
     "Ugh! Whose corpses could these be? Which group might have killed them?
     What were their crimes? Many unanswerable questions overpowered him. He
     looked around and walked on. (p.36)

The villagers like this man remained in a dilemma in recognizing such dead bodies and
fell on the delinquency that one might be the next to be lying somewhere namelessly.
They would not have anything except undergoing with such a painful traumatic
situation for a long time when the governmental foundation is a stake and citizenry was
panicked. They could blame on destiny not what the predicament was encroached upon
them.

Conclusion

It is war whether fought with other nations or within itself, which always brings
destructions not only on physical body, rather on mental sphere which would be more
serious and can't be healed for a long time and remains in mind as trauma. Besides, the
insurgency that confiscated the lives of thousands of people without any reasons or
mistakes or crimes, became a good source for writing narratives about the victims.
Therefore, the perpetrators and their traumatic experiences for coming generations
would help all know how the traumatic period that went through with many changes
remains in mind of the affected people. As Caruth opines, trauma presented in literature
would be a testimony of the truthful claims of the historical facts which, otherwise
would not be known to other people; and it opens the door of creating narratives in such
a way that all whether victims or perpetrators would accept it as their own narratives
forgetting all their unhappy feuds of the past and would be able to live peacefully
hereafter.

The world has seen many ups and downs in the last two centuries. Much blood
and many lives have been ushered in the name of bringing peace and solidarity. The
first and second world wars happened to bring peace and happiness, but the history has
shown what happened then as a consequence. Nepal also went through many ups and
downs; and still has not recovered yet with many conflict victims with different
testimonial experiences. The impacts of these wars have been credited from different
angles. Each one is pointing fingers to others and trying their best to escape from the
responsibility. But one has to bear the responsibility because the remarks of history
cannot be deleted, but rather they remain as a great source of information and
delineation for the generations to come in the future.

References

Adhikari, A. (2014). *The Bullets and the Ballot Box: The Story of Nepal's Maoist Revolution*. New Delhi: Aleph Book Company.

Balaev, M. (2014). *Literary Theory Reconsidered.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Baral, L. R. (2012). *Nepal-Nation-State in the Wilderness*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

BenEzer, G. (2007). *"*Trauma, Cultural, and Myth: Narratives of the Ethiopian Jewish Exodus.*"* In Laurence J. Kirmayer, Robert Lemelson, and Mark Barad (Eds), *Understanding Trauma* (pp 382-401). New York: Cambridge.

Caruth, C. (1995). *Trauma: Exploration in Memory.* Baltimore: John Hopkins UP.

Dasgupta, A. (2007). *The People's War in Nepal.* Colombo: Regional Centre for Strategic Studies.

Drozdek, B. (2007). "Are We Lost in Translations? Answered Question on Trauma, Culture and Posttraumatic Syndromes and Recommendations for Future Research." In Wilson P. John and Boris Drozdek (Eds), *Voices of Trauma: Treating Survivors Across Cultures* pp. 368-86). New York: Springer Science+Business Media, LLC.

Hinton, A. (2007). "Terror and Trauma in the Cambodian Genocide." In Laurence J. Kirmaayer (Ed), *Understanding Trauma* (pp 433-50). New York: Cambridge UP.

Hosmand, L. T. (2007). "Cultural-Ecological Perspectives on the Understanding and Assessment of Trauma." In John P. Wilson, Catherine So-kum Tang (Eds), *Cross-Cultural Assessment of Psychological Trauma and PTSD (*pp. 31-50). Ohio: Springer.

Kirmayer, L. J. (2007). "Failure of Imagination: The Refuge's Predicament." In Laurance J. Kirmayer, Robert Lemelson, and Mark Barad (Eds), *Understanding Trauma* (pp. 361-81). New York: Cambridge UP.

Koll, B.A. V. (2002) "In Terror's Grip: Healing the Ravages of Trauma." *Literary Review* 34(1), 1 1-12.

Konner, M. (2007). "Trauma, Adaptation, and Resilience: A Cross-Cultural and Evolutionary Perspectives." In Laurence J. Kirmayer, Robert Lemelson, and Mark Barad (Eds), *Understanding Trauma* (300-38). Eds. New York: Cambridge UP.

Kumar, D. (2003). "Consequences of the Militarized Conflict and the Cost of Violence in Nepal." *Contributions to Nepalese Studies.* 30(2), 167-216.

Lohani-Chalise, R. S. (2008). "Women and Gender in the Maoist People's War in Nepal: Militarism and Dislocation." Diss. The State U.

Najita, Y. S. (2006). *Decolonizing Culture in the Pacific: Reading History and Trauma in Contemporary Fiction.* New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

Tankink, M. and Annemick Richters. (2007). "Giving Voice to Silence: Silence as Coping Strategy of Refugees Women from South Sudan Who Experienced Sexual Violence in Context of War." In Boris Drozdek and John P. Wilson (Eds), *Voices of Trauma* (pp. 191-210), Springer.

Thakuri, M. (2011). "The Descending Mountain." In Ramchandra K.C. (Ed and Trans), *Rebel Stories of Conflict and War from Nepal* (pp.29-36), Kathmandu: TransReprint, 2011.

Thapa, D. and Bandita Sijapati. (2012). *A Kingdom Under Siege.* Kathmandu: the Printhouse.

Wilson, J. P. (2007). "The Lens of Culture: Theoretical and Conceptual Perspectives in the Assessment of Psychological Trauma and PTSD." In John P. Wilson Catherine So-kum Tang (Eds), *Cross-cultural Assessment of Psychological Trauma and PTSD* (pp 3-30), New York: Springer.

Young, A. (1995). *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.* Princeton NJ: Princeton UP.

Knowledge and practices on maternal health care among mothers: A case study from Sewar Bansbot village of Dang district

Ganga KC, PhD[*]

Abstract

Knowledge and practices regarding maternal health care among women has had a significant shift in Nepali culture. Understanding this ship can help to improve women's overall status. Nepal implemented a safe motherhood program, which slightly improved maternal health. Data, showed the maternal mortality ratio decreased during the period between 1996 and 2016 but still there is high ratio in maternal mortality. Conservative practices of maternal health are prevalent to this date. Health education is one of the crucial factors empowering women to be attentive of their rights and health status to get appropriate health services. Maternal health is a major burning issue in Nepal, which has been affected mainly due to early marriage, teenage pregnancy, superstition, low women literacy rate, and unhygienic behavioural practices. Women go through a rather depressing situation due to workload ignorance, lack of health facilities, economic, and social conditions. Despite the efforts from various types of private, government, and voluntary health agencies, there has not been a satisfactory improvement in maternal health status and safe motherhood. This study focuses on theknowledge and practices of maternal Health care. It also describes antenatal care, delivery care, and postnatal care. The study was conducted in Sewar Basbot village of ward no. 13, Ghorahi Sub-metropolitan city of Dang district that is situated near by district headquarters, Ghorahi. In total, 45 women of reproductive age (15-49 years) who were pregnant and having children below five years of age were purposively interviewed and completed the self-administered interview schedule.

Key Words: Attitude, knowledge, maternal health care, prenatal, postnatal care practice.

Introduction to Maternal Health

Maternal health refers to the physical, mental, social and psychological health condition of mothersduring pregnancy. Childbirth, and the postnatal period is one of the

---

[*] Dr. KC has been working as the Associate Professor at the Department of Anthropology, Patan Multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

critical issues on reproductive health. Maternal health is closely related to safe motherhood ensuring women and their babies reach their full potential for health and well-being. Socio-economic factors are directly associated with knowledge and practices on maternal health such as taboos related to the pregnancy period, belief on childbearing, dietary practice, obstructive problem, health facilities etc. It should be addressed to reduce maternal mortality, infant mortality, as well as child mortality. Maternal mortality in developing countries compared to developed countries is considerably high. The most common direct cause of maternal injury and death are excessive blood loss, infection, high blood pressure, unsafe abortion, and obstructed labor, and indirect causes such as anemia, malaria, and heart disease. Most maternal deaths can be prevented through suitable management by a skilled health professionals working in a supportive environment. It is critical to magnify efforts to reduce maternal injury and disability and to promote health and security. Every pregnancy and birth is unique. Addressing disparities that affect health outcomes, especially sexual and reproductive health, and rights, and gender is fundamental to ensure all women access to respectful and high-quality maternity care.

Maternal mortality is excessively high. About 295,000 women died during and following pregnancy and childbirth in 2017. The vast majority of these deaths (94%) happened in low-resource settings, and most could have been prevented (WHO, 2019). So this issue has been important in the discipline of medical anthropology. This study deals with the anthropological aspects of the maternal health, ethnic and indigenous practices of maternal health, cultural practices of different caste and ethnic groups. It discusses the various aspects of maternal health which are directly related with the issue like antenatal and postnatal practices.

According to WHO (2015) most maternal deaths are preventable and health-care solutions to prevent or manage complications are well known. Proper care in pregnancy, and during and after delivery should be accessible to all women. Maternal health and newborn health car ear closely linked. It is important that trained health specialists attend all births, as suitable management and treatment can outstand the risks associated to life and death for the motherland the baby.

The latest available data suggests that in the highest income and upper-middle-income countries, more than 90% of all births benefit from the presence of a trained midwife, doctor, or nurse (WHO, 2015). In contrast, such skilled health personnel assist fewer than half of all births in several low incomes and lower-middle-income countries (WHO, 2019). WHO (2019) further recognized that poverty, distance to facilities, lack of information, inadequate and low quality services, cultural beliefs and practices have been identified as the main factors that prevent women from receiving or seeking care during pregnancy.

WHO (2013) reported that in 2012, approximately 213 million pregnancies occurred worldwide. During the pregnancy some of the pregnant women will experience some types of complication. Because of this complication, some of the mothers die each year from causes related to pregnancy, most of which could be prevented. The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) in Nepal decreased from 539 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births to 239 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births between 1996 and 2016. In 2016, roughly 12% of deaths among women of reproductive age were classified as maternal deaths (MoHP, 2016). This paper has great importance to investigate and describe women's knowledge and practices on maternal health.

Maternal Health Care Practice in Nepal

Pregnancy and childbirth is a normal physiological phenomenon, and almost every woman goes through this process of pregnancy and childbirth at least once in her lifetime. However, there are many adversities like abortion, maternal or fetal disability, and even maternal death or fetal loss or both that lead to termination of pregnancy or pregnancy termination (Gupta and Paul, 2005). Each pregnancy is considered at risk and associated with complications during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postnatal period. But, it is difficult to predict them (DoHS, 2011). Maternal mortality and disability are remarkably high in Nepal as pregnancy and childbirth are not taken change as major events in one's life that demand proper devotion and efforts rather, they are perceived as biological phenomena only (WHO, 2006).

In Nepal, pregnancy and delivery are viewed as a natural process, requiring no health care intervention. Childbearing women and their families only seek care when the condition becomes life-threatening. Traditionally, childbirth takes place in a cowshed, and local materials are used for delivery and cord care. Strong religious and cultural belief and practices regarding reproduction is deeply embedded in the traditional societies of Nepal (Levitte et al. 1998). But recently, the scenario has been changed in the context of Nepal. According to MoHP (2017), there were 239 maternal deaths reported per 100,000 live births which also states that between 2011 and 2016, there was a 22% increase in both the proportion of institutional deliveries (from 35% to 57%) and births assisted by SBAs (skilled birth attendance) (from 36% to 58%).Doctors administered 31% of total deliveries, and nurses and midwives/auxiliary nurse midwives helped27%. While the percentage of deliveries attended by traditional birth attendants decreased from 11% in 2011 to 5% in 2016, the home birth rate remained high at 41% (MoHP, 2017).

One of the goals of Millennium Development Goals (MDG) is to improve maternal health, and the government of Nepal has committed to achieving these goals by addressing barriers. To address these issues, the minimum package of essential safe-

motherhood services was developed in Nepal, and services under the package box include supplementation of iron and folic tablets, counseling about nutrition, rest, recognition of danger signs, and preparedness/readiness for service consultation and motherhood during pregnancy, the arrangement of place for delivery, and clean/safe delivery practices and postnatal care practices (WHO, 2013). Despite these efforts, ANC practices in the Midwestern development region of Nepal is relatively low, and the dropout rate (first ANC vs. fourth ANC visit) is very high (50.0%, four ANC visits), and only 50% of the expectant mothers had one postnatal visit which is the lowest achievements in the national statistics (MoHP, 2017). As a matter of fact, lack of proper knowledge among the pregnant mothers and her relatives, poor access, and acceptance of maternity services, including delay in seeking and receiving care, are some of the recognized obstacles in Nepal. To address the issue, the government of Nepal has adopted promotional strategies for awareness, readiness, and preparedness on the complication of pregnancy and extension of obstetric services in the country. Therefore, promotion of health and reduction of adverse pregnancy outcomes requires the entire range of care starting right from conception up to the postpartum period. In this context, the study was carried out to assess the mother's maternal healthcare knowledge and to identify the respondents' practices in terms of antenatal care, delivery care, and postnatal care.

Because of the early marriage, teenage pregnancy, superstition, low women literacy rate, unhygienic health behavioural practices, maternal and child health status has not improved, and most of the local women do not utilize health services properly, not aware of the available health services in their locality. Women are facing this very depressing situation due to workload ignorance, lack of health facilities, economic and social conditions. Despite, various programs for improving the maternal health status and to assure safe motherhood have been launched by private, government, voluntary health agencies, there isstillno satisfactory result found. Maternal health care has three major concepts- prenatal, delivery and postpartum healthcare practices for the mothers. In other words these practices can be described as pregnancy care of before birth, delivery and after birth practices which include treatments and training to ensure a healthy pregnancy, labor and delivery for mother and baby.According to MoHP (2017), the goal of the National Safe Motherhood Program is to reduce maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality and to improve maternal and neonatal health through preventive and promotive activities as well as by addressing avoidable factors that cause death during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period.

The Government of Nepal introduced demand-side intervention in maternal health to improve institutional delivery. The Maternity Incentive Scheme was the first such intervention, launched in 2005 and designed to share the cost of transportation to

the health facilities. In 2009, transport incentive; user fees were removed from all types of delivery care, known as the Aama Program. In 2012, a separate demand-side intervention called 4 ANC incentives program (introduced in 2009) has been merged with Aama Program. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2073/74, the free newborn care program (introduced in FY 2072/73) has been merged into the Aama program. Aama program in its current form is known as the Aama and Newborn program and has the following provisions. (MoHP, 2017).

The safe motherhood program is one of the effective programs of Nepal. The primary objectives of National Health Policy (1991) were to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity. The safe motherhood approaches have been adopted for improving maternal health in a holistically improving maternal health way. The primary intervention for reducing maternal mortality is universal access to assistance at birth by a skilled birth attendant and provision of essential and emergency obstetric care. This is further supported by access to family planning and management of unwanted pregnancies. This study was concentrated on the description of knowledge and practices on maternal health care.

For the safe motherhood, the Government of Nepal implemented the *'Sunaula 1000 Din Program'* (golden 1000 days Program). It was the community's actions for nutrition projects for pregnant women and delivered mothers. This program was implemented from October 2012 to March 2017. In Nepali, "*SunaulaHazar Din*" means, "Golden 1000 Days", which is a critical window of opportunity between conception and the age of two years that, with good health and nutrition, can mitigate the risks of malnutrition that hamper a child's long-term physical and cognitive development (Oshima & Bhattarai, 2017). Similarly, others like Gyawali et.al (2013), Low et. al (2016) have also attempted to researched in this topic. But these are limited to medical field and not applying the concept of anthropology.

Objective and research methods

The prime objective of this paper is to find out knowledge and practice on maternal health care among mothers. More specifically, this study attempts to deal withantenatal care, delivery care, and postnatal care practices of maternal health care. The fieldwork was carried out in 2019, in Sewar Basbot village, ward no.13 of Ghorahi sub-metropolitan of Dang district. This area was purposively selected for the study. For the data collection, the interview schedule, and key informant interview method were adopted. The target group was45 women of reproductive age (15-49 years) having children below five years selected by using purposive sampling. Both qualitative and quantitative data are used in this study. Primary data were gathered through the use of

key informant interviews likewise, secondary data were collected from published sources, documents, and websites.

Discussion on findings

Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

The socio-economic characteristics of the mothers significantly influenced maternal health-care services. A significant difference was observed among mothers with different occupations. The mean age of the respondents was 27 years. The majority of the respondents were Tharu 27 individuals followed by Kshetri 7 individuals, Brahmin3 individuals, Magar 5 individuals, and the Blacksmith 3 individuals. Most of the respondents (29) were living in a nuclear family, and only 16 respondents were living in a joint family. Among the 45 respondents, 24 were labor by occupation followed by housewife 14, agriculture 5 and government service 2. Likewise, 35 respondents were Hindu, 5 were Christian and Buddhist were 5 by religion, as shown in table no.1.

Table 1: Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
Age groups		
15-20	5	11.1
21-27	25	55.6
28-34	9	20.0
35-41	4	8.9
42-49	2	4.5
Total	45	100.0
Caste and ethnicity		
Kshetri	7	15.5
Brahman	3	6.7
Tharu	27	60.0
Magar	5	11.1
Blacksmith	3	6.7
Total	45	100.0
Family structure		35.5
Joint	16	64.5
Nuclear	29	
Total	45	100.0

Educational level		
Illiterate	9	20
Literate	8	17.7
Primary	18	40.0
Secondary	7	15.6
Bachelor	3	6.7
Total	45	100.0
Occupation		
Agriculture	5	11.1
Govt. service	2	4.5
Labour	24	53.3
Housewife	14	31.1
Total	45	100.0
Religion		
Hindu	35	77.8
Christian	5	11.1
Buddhist	5	11.1
Total	45	100.0

Source: Field study, 2019.

Education was found to have the most powerful influence on the knowledge score of maternal health. Knowledge not only transforms but also empowers women and improves their self-esteem (Renkert & Nutbeam, 2001). It is expected that educated women are more likely to be conscious of their health status and seek health-related information. Furthermore, educated women may have more enormous decision-making power on Health-related matters. Different studies and national report shows that a large number of rural women in Nepal, at present, have minimal education, and to access maternal Health education is a challenging task for them. This reality was substantially valid in the study area too. According to table 1 the educational level of the respondents was not sound. Among the 45 respondents, only 3 respondents had bachelor level education, followed by 18 respondents with primary education, and 9 respondents were illiterate. 8 respondents were literate, followed by 7 respondents with secondary education.

Cultural factors such as ethnicity and religious beliefs have been stated through various studies carried out indifferent parts of the world to influence the use of maternal health services and need to be taken into account for any successful interventions (WHO, 2005, 2007). Similarly, the government of Nepal has applying different

approaches that address the ethno-religious barriers to facilitate the optimum utilization of ANC, natal and postnatal maternal health services.

Knowledge of Maternal health care

Health education is considered as one of the key factors that empower women to be attentive of their right to good health and to getsuitable health facilities. Maternal Health refers to the health status of women during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postnatal period. These periods are valuable and full of high risks for mothers. Sound knowledge of maternal health care is must for mothers. Table 2 shows the respondent's knowledge of pregnancy-related health conditions and symptoms that pose risk to the mother. Vomiting, headache, and acidity were the most mentioned pregnancy- related conditions, followed by irregular movement of the foetus. The swelling of hands, legs, and face was the least known among women in this study. Lower abdominal pain during the pregnancy period was not mentioned by the respondents.

Table 2: Respondents knowledge ofpregnancy-related conditions

Description	Number	Percentage
Knowledge of the frequency of minimum visits of ANC		
Yes	25	55.5
No	20	44.5
Knowledge of WHO guideline for ANC for pregnancy checking		
Yes	14	31.1
No	31	68.9
Knowledge of risky symptoms during pregnancy		
Vomiting, headache, and acidity	34	75.5
Vaginal bleeding	2	4.5
Lower abdominal pain	--	--
Irregular movement of the fetus	5	11.1
Soiling of hands, legs, and face	4	8.9
Knowledge on/of supplement medicines (iron, zinc, folic acid, etc.) during pregnancy		
Yes	21	46.6
No	24	53.4

Source: Field study, 2019.

Table 2 declares the respondent's knowledge of antenatal care (ANC) during pregnancy. Among the total 45 respondents, 25 have a sound knowledge on the frequency of minimum visits of ANC, and 20 respondents didn't know of ANC visits. Similarly, out of 45 respondents, 14 had sound knowledge of WHO guidelines for ANC for pregnancy checking, and 31 were unknown about ANC checking. Among the 45 respondents, 34 had knowledge of vomiting, headache, and acidity caused by pregnancy, 2 respondents known about bleeding during the period. All the 45 respondents did not know about lower abdominal pain during the pregnancy, and 5 respondents knew about the irregular movement of the fetus. In response to knowledge on supplement medicines during pregnancy, 24 respondents were unknown, and 21respondentsknewand 4 respondents had the experience of the swelling of hands, legs, and face during the pregnancy period.

Age and Pregnancy

Age isdirectly related to the biological factor for pregnancy. It is an essentialfactor, which plays a vital role in the issues of safe motherhood. Delaying marriage often delays first birth, and can also reduce the total number of children. Pregnancy atearly age causes mother's health to be pathetic, and further, it could lead to a high child mortality rate. Furthermore, high child mortality reduces the birth spaces as the mother is obliged to conceive again. With lower birth spaces, mother's health deteriorate. Similarly, pregnancy at later age is also not considered to be good for the mother and the child's health as well. Therefore the mother should know the proper age for pregnancy.All of the respondents know how the age factor plays a significant role in the pregnancy.

The respondents said that the age factor is significant for pregnancy. Age at the first pregnancy affects the Health of the mother, and the newborn baby. In many communities, girls are married at an early age. Since they are in adolescence, they often lack information about reproductive Health and sexuality, and also have little access to family planning and reproductive health services. Female health status is associated with marriage, and motherhoodin many developing countries, and even the youngest bride faces the pressure to prove that they are fertile. In sucha case, when a woman conceives at an early age, she might have to face various complications of pregnancy, and hence pregnancy at very young age may lead to the death of both mother and infant.

Table 3: Knowledge of suitable age for pregnancy

Age for pregnancy	No.of respondents	Percentage
Below18 years	8	17.8
Above18 years	37	82.2
Total	45	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2019.

The table 3 shows that 8 respondents who were below 18 years, didnot know the appropriate age for pregnancy, and 37 repondents who were above 18 years knew about the appropriate age for pregnancy. This data show the respondents knowledge about the suitable age for pregnancy.

Work during Pregnancy

It is well known that pregnant women should not involve in heavy physical work that might harm her and the fetus. The women should do light work and take rest as far as possible. The women are to do the job as they are the wage earners, and one day leave may leave them starving.

Table 4: work during pregnancy

Types of work	No. of respondents	Percentage
light work	12	26.6
regularwork	30	66.7
no work	3	6.7
Total	45	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2019.

Table 4 shows that 12 (26.6%) respondents do light work, likewise 30 (66.7%) respondents do everyday work, and 3 respondents do not work. And it was found that most of the respondents (66.7%) had done regularjob during pregnancy.According to the respondents regular works are those done by women in everyday life for their livelihood. These works include household activities, outhouse work, agricultural activities, firewood and fodder collection, water fetching from the river, and so on. Usually these works are done by the non-pregnant woman in everyday life. Likewise, light work means simple works like- cooking food, cleaning the utensils, and simple household chores which doesnt affect the pregnant woman's physical health.

Food Consumption during pregnancy

A mother's nutritional status is essentialfor the intrauterinedevelopment, and for protection against maternal mortality and morbidity. Thus during pregnancy, women should take nutritious food i.e.those foods enriched with vitamins, protein,and minerals. Nutritious food nourishes the mother as well as the baby.According to 79 years old Tharu woman, Maiti Chaudhari of the study area, there is a unique practice of fooding among the Tharu people for pregnant woman. According to theircustomary practice,the

pregnant lady is given two portion of special nutritious food like meat, one share for her and another for the fetus.

Table 5: food consuming pattern of the mother during pregnancy

Types of food	No. of respondents	Percentage
Same as usual food	34	75.5
More than expected and more nutritious food	11	24.5
Total	45	100.0

Source: Field study, 2019.

Regarding the food consumption pattern during pregnancy, table 5 shows that the majority of the respondents i.e. 34 respondents replied that pregnant women should intake the same as usual food. Similarly, 11 respondents replied that pregnant women should intake more than regularfood. Proper diet intake is essential for safe motherhood practices. Eatinghealthy and nutritious food during pregnancy means having ahealthy fetus and ahealthy mother. However, diet consumption depends on the income level and economic condition of the respective family. Those pregnant women can only consume a proper diet if they have knowledge and are able to afford it.

Knowledge and Diphtheria and Tetanus (DT) immunization

Diphtheria and Tetanus immunization of pregnant women is considered an essential maternal issue in developing countries, recognizing the fact that neonatal diphtheria and tetanus is one of the leading causes of neonatal deaths in developing countries. Pregnant women and the newborn baby should be protected against the diptheria and tetanus by providing DT injection. Pregnant women should receive two doses of DT to prevent herself and the unborn child. For full protection, a pregnant woman should receive at least two doses of DT during her first pregnancy administered one month apart and a booster shot during each subsequent pregnancy.
Knowledge of DT injection helps the mother to prevent herself and her baby from getting diptheria and tetanus. One such risk is the chance of being infected with tetanus during pregnancy. The infection can be transmitted to the fetus and can be life-threatening for both mother and baby. Therefore, it is important to understand about tetanus and its vaccinations in pregnancy. All the 45 (100%) respondents of this study received DT immunization during the pregnancy, according to WHOguidelines. All respondents knewabout DT injection.

The Practice of Safe Maternal health care

Maximum respondents exposed that most of the deliveries take place in the hospital; it was because of increasing acceptance of institutional deliveries. Theplace is an important physical factor for delivery of women. Level of understanding about maternal Health, availability of services, and socio-economic condition of the family, determine the choice of place for delivery, i.e., home or hospital, which is presented in thegiven table.

Table 6: Delivery practices and postnatal care

Place of Delivery	Number	Percentage
Home	9	20.0
Government hospital/ Health Post	35	77.8
Private Hospital	1	2.2
Use of thedelivery kit		
Yes	2	22.2
No	7	77.8
Total	45	100

Source: Field study, 2019.

The data of table 6 shows that the maximum no. of women practice their delivery in government hospitalsi.e., 35 women were having their delivery in thegovernment hospitals. Similarly, 9 women delivered at home, which is followed by 1 women who had delivery at aprivate hospital.The use of safe delivery kits during the delivery is very essentialas, which prevents the mother and the baby from getting any kind of infection. Besides,using asafe delivery kit, is a part of safe motherhood practices. Likewise, thehome delivery kit was used by nine respondents 2,and 7 respondents had not used the safe delivery kit in the case of home delivery which, indicates the lack of health knowledge on proper maternal health care.

Postnatal Care Practices

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently updated global guidelines on postnatal care for mothers and newborns through a technical consultation process. The new guidelines address the timing and content of postnatal care for mothers and newborns with a particular focus on resource-limited settings in low and middle income countries (WHO, 2013). They complement other recommendations on maternal,

prenatal, and newborn Health as well as those recommendations on which type of health care worker can safely deliver key maternal and newborn health care interventions, which went through a similar guidelines development process (WHO, 2012). The postnatal and childbirth period is a critical phase in the lives of mothers and newborn babies. Themother should be informed about taking rest after delivery as it helps her to recover soon. Most of the respondents of the study area had an idea and knowledge onpostnatal rest. But they did not get the opportunity of postnatal rest after delivery. Economic condition, socio-cultural and ethnic practices play the vital role on postnatal care of the mother and baby. The mother's response is presented in thebelow table.

Table 7:The Practice of postnatal care

Practice of postnatal rest	Number	Percentage
Yes No	39 6	86.7 13.3
Total	45	100

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

 Table 6 states that themajority of the respondents (39) knew about the postnatal rest, and 6 were unknown about postnatal care which indicates the poor practice of postnatal care.

Conclusion

Women play an important role in reproductive and productive responsibility. Nature has gifted women a capacity to bear a child. This childbearing is ultimately a biological process and depends on women's physical state. But some women lose life in the process of giving birth to a new living being. Women deserve the best possible health care through a happy and healthy pregnancy and childbirth. Age, occupation, income, and education are some of the factors that influence the practices of safe motherhood. Maternal Health is determined by various factors like health condition, nutritional status workload, family structure, pregnancy, economic status, hygiene, and sanitation, etc. It is well known that pregnant women should not involve in heavy physical work that might harm her and the fetus. The women should do light work and take rest as far as possible. During pregnancy, women should take nutritious food i.e.those foods enriched with vitamins, protein,and minerals. Eatinghealthy and nutritious food during pregnancy means having ahealthy fetus and ahealthy mother. However, diet consumption depends on the income level and economic condition of the

respective family. Pregnant women should receive two doses of DT to prevent herself and the unborn child. The use of safe delivery kits during the delivery is very .essentialas, which prevents the mother and the baby from getting any kind of infection The postnatal and childbirth period is a critical phase in the lives of mothers and newborn babies.

References

Department of Health Service (DOHS). (2011). Annual report: F/Y 2010/11. Management Division, Department of Health Service, Teku, Kathmandu, Nepal. Retrieved from http://www.dohs.gov.np.

Ghai, O.P, Gupta P, &Paul, V. K. (2005). Essential Pediatrics. 6[th]Ed. New Delhi, Bangalore, India: CBS Publishers and Distributors.

Gyawali K, Paneru DP, Jnawali B, & Jnawali K. (2013). *Knowledge and practices on maternal health care among mothers:* A Cross-sectional study from rural areas of mid-western development region Nepal. *Journal of the Scientific Society*; 40:9-13.

Levitt, Martha, and Kussel Nancy. (1998). *The Magazine of the World Health Organization.*

Lowe, M, Duan-Rung C., & Song-lih H. (2016). Social and cultural factors affecting maternal health in rural Gambia: An exploratory. *PLoS ONE*, 11(9).

Ministry of Health- MoH/Nepal, New ERA/Nepal, and ICF. (2017). Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2016. Kathmandu, Nepal.

Ministry of Health, Nepal; New ERA; and ICF (2016). Nepal Demographic and Health Survey Key Findings. Kathmandu, Nepal.

Oshima, K., &M. Bhattarai. (2017). https://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia /engaging-communities-golden-1000-days-Nepal

Renkert S, Nutbeam D. (2001). *Opportunities to improve maternal health literacy through antenatal education:* an exploratory study. Health Promotion International. 2001, 16: 381-8. 10.1093/heapro/16.4.381.

Shrestha, B. (2004). 'Family Planning: The key to reduce Maternal Mortality'. Population Magazine. Kathmandu: CDPS.

WHO. (2019). Trends in maternal mortality: 2000 to 2017: estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and the United Nations Population Division. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2019.

WHO. (2015). Strategies towards ending preventable maternal mortality (EPMM).Geneva: World Health Organization.

WHO. (2013). *Recommendations on Postnatal Care of the Mother and Newborn.* Geneva: World Health Organization.

WHO. (2013). *Recommendations on Maternal and Perinatal Health.* Geneva: WHO. Guidelines on maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health approved by the WHO guidelines review committee.

WHO. (2012). *Recommends optimizing health worker roles to improve access to key maternal and newborn health interventions through task shifting* (WHO, 2012).

WHO. (2007). *Maternal mortality in 2005:* Estimates developed by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, and the World Bank. World Health Organization, Switzerland, p. 1-48.

WHO. (2006). Working together for Health. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Report; 2006.

World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund. (2019). WHO/UNICEF joint database on SDG 3.1.2 Skilled Attendance at Birth. Available at: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/

WHO. (2005). *World Health Report 2005-make every mother and child count.* World Health Organization, Switzerland.

https://www.mohp.gov.np/eng/program/reproductive-maternal-health/safe-motherhood-programme

http://www.nnfsp.gov.np/Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development Local Body Support Section

Celebrating *Teej* as a Festival of (Re) union and Enjoyment

Kamala Dahal, PhD[*]

Abstract

Among many festivals that are celebrated in Nepal, Teej, *is regarded as the most significant festival observed by women. If we trace its origin as Parvati's union with Shiva after her long and hard penance, then we understand that it is the festival celebrated in memory of the victory of a wife's love and devotion towards her husband. If we observe the way it is celebrated today, then we come to understand that it is a festival celebrated as an occasion of (re) union with parents, bothers, and sisters in their maternal home and sense of joy and happiness. In Nepal and in most parts of North India women gather at their maternal home, have delicious meals, sing and dance with full sense of freedom and enjoyment during the occasion.* Women can also express their feelings of pain and suffering which they have to bear at their in-law's house in the form of singing and dancing through which their burdens lightened. While some people still celebrate* Teej *as a religious ritual in ancient sense, many other people today celebrate it as an aspect of cultural life in modern sense. Despite different views and opinions about* Teej*, it has been an integral part of life of women in Hindu society of South Asia and beyond. This article explores how this festival provides a sense of joy and happiness to women to the women who are subjugated by patriarchal domination in Nepalese society and are free to reunite with maternal home and family and enjoy fully, if only during this occasion. It is based on the secondary sources and field study.*

Key words: *Teej*, festival**,** fasting, enjoyment, celebrate**,** devotion

Introduction

As *Jatras*, feasts, and festivals are considered as integral parts of (Khatri and Dahal, Nepali culture 2053: 129), *Teej* is regarded as an important festival mostly celebrated in Nepal and North India. Migrant women who live in different parts of the world also celebrate *Teej* as a cultural part of their life because they want to keep core values of their root culture.

---

[*] Dr Dahal has been working as the Associate Professor of Culture at Patan Multiple Campus, Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

There are different festivals with the name of Teej. *Teej* is a generic name for a number of Hindu festivals that are celebrated by women mainly in this region. They are named differently in terms of season, location, and a particular community culture. Some of the popular names are as follows:

Akha Teej is the local name of Akshaya Tritiya which falls on Baisakh *where as Hariyalee Teej* is celebrated on the third day of the bright lunar fortnight of the month of Shrawan. As the name suggests, *Hariyalee Teej* is mainly related with greenery and commemorate it for abundance of greenery and good harvest. Women wear green colored clothes especially, *sarees*, wear green bangles and adorn their hands with beautiful *mehndi* patterns which resemble green nature. The name *Hariyalee* is given to the festival as the month of Shrawan marks the season of greenery. It is also called small *Teej* or *Teej* of Shrawan.

Kajari Teej is a *Teej* festival celebrated on the third day of the dark lunar fortnight of the month of Bhadra. The word *Kajari* indicates folk songs, which are commonly sung in the months of Shrawan and Bhadra mostly in rural areas of India. Women celebrate the festival praying to Shiva, Parvati, Ganesh and Krishna singing *Kajari* songs. As on the day of other *Teej* festivals, women undergo fasting wishing the long life and happiness of their husbands on this day also. *Gauri Tritiya* is a *Teej* festival that is celebrated on *Tritiya* day according to the lunar calendar. Women mostly worship Goddess Gauri so the *Teej* festival has got the name *Gauri Tritiya*. On this occasion also they worship deities and celebrate it as a part of religious and cultural life.

Haritalika Teej is the biggest of the many varieties of *Teej* festivals that are celebrated on *Shukla Paksha Tritiya Tithi* of Bhadrapada month (third day of the bright lunar fortnight of the month of Bhadra (August or September) in Solar Calendar. *Haritalika Teej* comes one month after *Hariyalee Teej* and is mostly celebrated one day before Ganesh Chaturthi. This is the festival which is solely dedicated to women and exclusively celebrated by the women. This festival falls in the mid monsoon so it is also called Monsoon Festival. This is the day when women undertake fasting for their husbands' long life and happiness.

Basically this article in the following paragraphs delineates two things. First it tries to trace the origin and development of the *Teej* festival. Second, it explores how this festival is celebrated by women in contemporary Hindu society. More specifically, the following paragraphs deal with different stories about the of *Teej, origin,* especially *Haritalika Teej,* popular in this region and how it has become an integral part of life among women in Hindu society. It also explains how women enjoy this festival with the sense of full freedom from household chores at least for three days.

Tracing the Origin of *Teej*

One of the problems for understanding the traditional festivals celebrated in Nepal, either the national festivals or the regional ones, is that we are not in a position to trace the history of their exact origin due to the lack of authentic information. The same case is applicable to the *Teej* festival also. There is no adequate evidence to suggest the origin of *Teej* because neither the ancient religious texts nor the eighteen Puranas have the references to this festival. So, some scholars opine that the word *Teej* does not come from Sanskrit (Kaudinyayan, 2045: 713). But some other writers state that Mahabharat, Shiva Purana and Brataraj have some references indicating the performance of *haritalika vrat* by Goddess Parvati (Paudyal, 2070), which can be linked in some way to the present state of *Teej*.

There are different myths and legends about the use of the word *Haritalika* which later became the name of a festival. *Haritalika* is the classical name of the one type of *Teej* festival. According to a legend, Goddess Parvati had accepted Lord Shiva as her husband and started to please him through devotion and praying since her childhood. Parvati was shocked when she knew about her decision. Then she decided to take help from one of her friends who took her to a dense forest to hide for some time to avoid her marriage with Lord Vishnu.

From then on, she led an ascetic life. She went through hard-core *tapasya* (penance) and had to take 108 births on the earth having failed to have Lord Shiva as her husband till 107th birth. On her 108th birth, when she continued the hard-core tapasya again, Shiva realized her devotion and decided to test her sincerity. On the third day of the month of Bhadrapada, when Parvati made a Shiva lingam using her hair and prayed to Shiva, He then disguised as the rich Vishnu and rode a gorgeous carriage to see Parvati, trying to lure her to marry him. But, Parvati remained unmoved by this. So Shiva was very impressed by her determination and finally revealed his identity as Shiva to marry her.

Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva married her with her father's blessings. It is commonly believed that it was *Alika* who helped Parvati to escape from the house and hide in an unknown forest. The *'Harat'*, in Sanskrit means 'abduction' and *'Aalika'* means a female friend. So, the festival got name harit+ alika = Haritalika (Acharya, 2045: 115). But the festival in Nepal is commonly called *Teej Parva*.

According to this age-old legend, Goddess Parvati was reunited with Lord Shiva on the third day of the bright lunar fortnight of the month of Bhadra. So, it is believed that Goddess Parvati recognized this moment to be highly auspicious for womenkind and proclaimed that whoever invoked her on this day would be blessed with happy married life and would have their wishes fulfilled. It is also said that *Hartalika Teej* was

narrated by Lord Shiva Himself who reminded Parvati of her incarnation
as Shailputri in the house of King Himalaya Raj.

According to another legend, *Teej* is a small red insect that comes out of the soil during
the rainy season. It is said that *Teej* got its name from the same red insect. This is how
why *Teej* is celebrated in red clothes. However, this view of red insect is not acceptable
as some other festivals celebrated in spring season are also named *Teej*. For example,
the Akshaya Tritiya festival which is celebrated in spring season is addressed
as *Akh Teej* in India.

Most of the scholars in Nepal and India opine that *Teej* is the corrupt form
of *Tritiya*. The *Nepali Brihad Shabdakosh* (2040:602) and
other *Shabdakosh* (Nepal, 2057:616) took 108 births on earth
state that *Teej* is the corrupt form of T*ritiya*. Some of the foreign writers also have used
the word *Tritiya* to address *Teej* (Shrivastava, 1981:95). This view is more
convincing because when local languages started to develop in Nepal, the Sanskrit
word T*ritiya* changed into *Teej*.

In the context that we have to depend on myths and legends, it is important
to note that *Teej* festival was celebrated even in Vedic, Puranic, and other ancient
historical periods. We can find that some of the books of later period, such
as *Dharma Sindhu*, *Dharmashastra Nibanda Niryanasindhu, barsikkritya granth* as
well as some books of the medieval period in manuscript forms, preserved in the
National Archives, have some references to *Haritalika Teej* festival. It can thus
fairly be argued that the *Teej* festival originated in ancient times, became popular in
medieval period, and gained its popular currency in modern times.

Celebrating *Teej* in Nepal

There are different rituals of *Teej* festival performed in Nepal. Attired mostly in
traditional red *sarees* women congregate in a temple to worship Lord Shiva
and Goddess Parvati. On this day, in some places, idol of Goddess Parvati is decorated
with rich silk cloth and heavy jewelry. This day is considered as very
important day because married women and engaged girls stay fasting praying for
the long and healthy life of their husband and to-be-husband. So, both married and
unmarried Hindu women observe the three-day-long festival seeking blissful married
life and happiness for their husband and to-be husband.

Preparation for *Teej* celebration

Teej Puja is celebrated in different steps such as preparation
for *Teej* celebration, *dar khane*, activities of the main fasting day, and worshipping the
goddesses with *puja*. These steps are detained in the following paragraphs.

Teej starts about seven days before the main day. Firstly, brothers or fathers of the married sisters or daughters go to invite them to maternal home to celebrate the festival. Secondly, women start shopping for *Teej* well in advance. This is the very occasion for (re) union with *maiti* and *cheli* which abounds with joy, happiness, and merrymaking They buy different things for worshiping and fruits and other food items for *Teej* feast. They do not miss to buy new clothes and jewelry because *Hartalika Teej* is the time to adorn oneself with new clothes and jewelry. Thirdly, mothers send customary gift to the homes of their married daughters. The customary gifts include *dar* food, scarlet *sarees*, red glass bangles and other valuable things to her daughter and daughter's mother-in-law separately. Girls engaged to be married receive a gift from their future in-laws on the day before the festival. The gifts include henna, bangles, a special dress, and sweets. Fourthly, they invite their family members, friends and they decide to celebrate the *Teej*, especially the *dar khane* programme, together.

The first day of *Teej*: *Dar khane*

On the first day of the three-day celebration of *Teej* a special feast is served to the women in the house. One of the interesting aspects of the *Teej* festival is feeding oneself with piecemeal on the preceding day of fasting. The lavish feast taken on the day of *Dar*. When the night falls, they make a hearty meal and prepare tasty sweets. In the evening group of women- mothers, grandmothers, sisters and daughters including good friends gather together to have a feast, perform dances and sing songs. These celebrations continue till midnight. Some women may hold their feasting party during the day. When the children are sleeping and men out of sight the women often congregate in one room and seat themselves on the floor around a spread of many many dishes, laughing, bantering, and gorging themselves with all they can hold. The feast must be finished before the midnight.

In recent days the forms and practices of merry making have changed. *Dar* is originally meant to be taken only for one day, that is, on the preceding day of *Teej* fasting. But these days it has become a different mode where women have started gathering in the name of having D*ar* even a month before the *Dar khane* actual day. Previously, in *Dar* feast a variety of regional / traditional sweet dishes such as *kheer, pulao, sel-roti*, etc. were included but now varieties of dishes, vegetarian as well as non-vegetarian both, including alcoholic beverages are included in *Dar*. All kinds of curry- mutton, chicken, fish and eggs, fruits and sweets, vegetables with *achar* can be seen in *Dar* feast in these days. The expensive *Dar* feast tradition often strains the economic burden to the family who are not economically sound. Tradition compels that the husband must meet these expenses even if it means pawning valuables, taking a loan or selling part of his store grains. Thus, some men, alluding to the next

day's fasting, claim that 'a woman observing her yearly *Teej* fasting often consumes a whole bushel of corn' (Anderson, 1988:116). This can be taken as a change that engages women in malpractice of *Teej*.

Activities of the main day of *Teej*

A religious text *Vratraj* gives detailed *Vidhi* (method) to perform *Hartalika Teej Puja.* The main *puja* steps given in Vratraj are as follows:

Taking a bath

The first step of *Teej* ritual is taking a bath in the early morning. The auspicious time for *Hartalika Teej Puja* is the the morning, which the women need to get up early to take a holy bath, intended to purify their souls. The religious text *Vratraj* prescribes the bath with Sesame and Amalak powder. If possible, the bath should be taken in nearby holy rivers or ponds, though there are no restrictions in showering within the dwelling house.

Attire/dress up

After the bath, women dress up with new clothes. Adorning with new clothes and ornaments is an important part of the festival as women wear elegant traditional attires, mostly red *sarees*, red bangles, red bindis and kajal along with applying henna on their hands. Women are usually seen in auspicious red *sarees* if possible, in their wedding *sarees*. Some unmarried girls dress up in Kurta-Salwar. Some women wear very heavy jewelry while some wear light jewelry. Women have full liberty to ask for anything they wish. Even their husbands do not stop them from doing anything and offer gift to them as they desire because they starve themselves for the well-being of their husband.

Sankalp (**Oath/determination**)

The third step as described in *Vratraj* is taking *Sankalp* to perform *Haritalika vrat* to please the deity Umamahashwar. The *Sankalp* is individual determination to assure her to successfully complete the fasting. Therefore, the devotee should show her determination and take a *Sankalp* that 'I am able to celebrate the fasting and *vrat*, take oath for confidently completing the *vrat*'. For *Sankalp* it is not necessary to be lauded or to get help from any other.

Worshiping Lord Ganesh

The fourth step in *Teej vrat* is worshiping Lord Ganesh. According to Hindu mythology, Ganesh, is worshiped firstly before worshiping other gods in any worship or

religious works. Upon failing to do so, it is believed that *Puja* would be unsuccessful. Thus, Lord Ganesh is worshipped before worshiping Shiva
and Parvati in *Teej* although *Teej* day is only to show devotion to Shiva and Parvati.

Shodashopachar puja of Shiva- Parvati

After worshipping Ganesh women visit nearby or famous Shiva temples to pray to God Shiva and Goddess Parvati. If there is no Shiva temple available, handmade idols of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati are worshipped and legend of *Haritalika* is narrated during the Puja. In Kathmandu valley, during the *Teej Puja* most women like to go to the great temple of Shiva, Pashupatinath temple for the devotion of Shiva as it is believed that the secret phallic symbol (Shiva Linga) of Pashupati represents Shiva himself. On this particular day, the streets of Kathmandu turn into a sea of
red colour with women dressed in red *Sarees* and *Dhotis* making their way to
the Pashupatinath Temple. The Pashupatinath temple is only open to women and priests for that day. They worship and offer fruits, flowers, etc. to Lord Pashupati by dancing and singing the religious songs.

Shodashopachar puja of God Shiva and Goddess Parvati is pivotal ritual of *Teej*. Women visit Shiva temples to pray to Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati. They pray for their husbands' longevity, progress, and prosperity. They chant religious hymns, recalling the ordeal Parvati had gone through to win the heart of the master of all living beings (Regmi, 1999: 133).

Worship of Teej Mata – Goddess Parvati

Teej honors Goddess Parvati as a symbol of utter devotion and love. Hence, in some places, Parvati is also called *Teej Mata* so *Teej* is
called *Teej Mata* festival. Teej festivities and its celebrations are dedicated to Goddess Parvati and this is why it is considered as a festival of womenfolk. The divine figure of Parvati is worshiped with full dedication at the time of *Teej* as said above. *Puja* is conducted in the afternoon or in the evening of the day or in early morning
of the following day. During the field study the researcher found different groups of women performing their *Puja* at the ornately carved images in Pashupatinath area. Some women are found performing their *Puja* on the bank of Bagmati River. The main *Puja* takes place with offerings of flowers, sweets and coins that are supposed to be holy. A semi-circle is created and an idol of Parvati is kept at the centre. A Brahman priest helps them to worship accordingly. On this occasion woman offer flowers, fruits, sweets, 'sindoor' or vermillion, red glass bangles, tika etc. to Goddess Parvati. Women are eager to hear *Hartalika Teej Vrata Katha*, chant *shlokas* and mantras to please Lord Shiva and Mata Parvati. All the ladies together worship and listen to the holy *Teej*

Katha as the priest narrates. Young girls also sit and listen to the *Katha*. While listening to the *Katha*, women are expected to concentrate their minds to their soul mate. The ritual often lasts for two hours.

In the evening of the day the women worship Goddess (*Parvati*) and offer different things beseeching her blessings upon their husbands. This day is enjoyed with full craze, dance is arranged and women carry pots on their heads and indulge in dance singing songs praising Goddess Parvati. A special *puja* is also performed to worship the moon. Traditional singing of songs and dance escalate the enthusiasm of *Haritalika Teej* celebrations. Both married and unmarried women enjoy the festive spirit by swinging on adorned swings and singing songs relating to the month of Sawan. It is also customary to receive beautiful new clothes and ornaments from her Mother-in-law. Hartalika *Teej* welcomes the monsoon season and is celebrated primarily by girls and women, with songs, dancing and prayer rituals. Because a friend of Goddess Parvati helped her to get Lord Shiva as her husband, this day is also regarded as the solidarity of friendship among the female friends.

When *Puja* is complet, women offer fruits, flowers and other holy items and seek blessings from Shiva Parvati for marital bliss. Devotees are granted *prasad* which she has offered to the gods, usually a banana or other fruits, which her husband is required to eat. She touches his bare toes with her forehead, washes his feet and, according to tradition, is required to drink this consecrated liquid. Then the women are allowed to break their fasting, only after gaining her husband's permission. Another important thing of *Teej Puja* is the oil that the oil lamp which should be kept alight throughout the night. It can be a sign of bad omen if it extinguishes.

Fasting

The most important ritual of *Teej* festival is fasting. Women and unmarried girls keep fasting for long and healthy life of their husbands. *Teej* fasting begins immediately after *Dar khane* program at midnight of that day and goes for 24 hours. It is the most rigorous fasting in which not one morsel of food or drop of liquid can be taken for twenty-four hours. Extremely pious women will not even swallow their own saliva. They do it to avoid a sin that is mirrored to drinking their own husbands' blood. Women observe *Nishivasar Nirjala Vrat* which means that the women not only abstain from food but also avoid drinking water and other liquid for the whole day. According to Bhavishwettar Purana, those who do fasting on this day and fulfill it successfully are sure to gain good grace of god (Deep, 1982: 78). The fasting day is observed with evening prayers and traditional dancing and singing activities. When the daylong fasting for long life of their soul mate is over, women can drink water and eat some food. These days many husbands encourage their wives to drink.

During the field study the researcher noticed a bit change in the trend of keeping fasting these days. All women may not do rigid fasting as it used to be about 50 years ago. Due to the education and social awareness, women today are beginning to celebrate *Teej* taking care of their health as well. Some women do 'vrata' or fasting by drinking water or other fruit juice, some by consuming only fruits and some do 'nirjala' vrata without a drop of water and also refrain from sleep. During the *Teej*, women gather around the holy goddess temple and pay obeisance to the Goddess Devi and God Shiva.

Teej fasting is difficult when women restrict themselves to have even a morsel of food and drop of water for full 24 hours. It is even more difficult for the newlywed women to keep the 24-hour-long fasting without eating and drinking anything. One needs lot of patience and courage to keep such a long fasting. Usually mothers encourage their daughters to drink juice or tea so that they do not fall sick on such an auspicious occasion. These days' husbands suggest that their spouse should not do fasting so rigorously. In the interview some women admitted that they would drink juice as encouraged by their husbands.

Pregnant women are advised not to keep the fasting and even if they do it, they are advised to consult a doctor. Many pregnant women go on a diet of milk and fruits and fulfill their nutritional requirements. At this difficult time of the day women also play a many games, watch movies, and do many other recreational activities to pass their time. It is also found that some even go off to sleep and don't involve themselves in any household activity.

The most interesting thing about fasting is that women are happy even without a morsel of food or a drop of water during the vrata. Despite extreme cases of even without swallowing saliva, women do not care about eating and drinking. This has been a customary practice since long ago.

Rishi Puja

The last day of *Teej* is celebrated with a personal holy bathing and worshiping the *Sapta Rishi* on the day of Rishi Panchami, the fifth day of Shukla Paksh (Waxing Moon Fortnight) in the month of Bhadrapada, as per the Hindu calendar. It falls on the next day of Ganesh Chaturthi. On that day very early in the morning, women take a traditional bath. This is regarded as an act of purification. It is assumed that woman becomes pure from all sins after taking this holy bath. The bathing ceremony is mandatory for all who have undergone the *Teej* fasting including all females who crossed the puberty.

On the day of Rishi Panchami women in Kathamndu valley go to the holy river to take a bath. Hundreds of them gather near the temple of Teku Dobhan where

the Bagmati and Vishnumati rivers meet. As a rule, bath must be taken with red mud found on the roots of the sacred *datiwan* bush. The red mud must be smeared 360 times on different parts of the body, including the hands, elbows, shoulders, knees, feet, and private parts. Then the hair is washed and women sprinkle themselves 365 times with 365 leaves of *datiwan* shrub, brushing their teeth 365 times with a stalk of the same plant (Acharya, 2045: 127). Using 365 times is the symbol of 365 days or 12 months and bathing, brushing and sprinkling 365 times means her bath, brush and sprinkle cover for the whole 365 days of last year (Koirala, 2052: 94). These herbs are pure and are considered to make the body clean. After bathing, women pay homage to various deities situated on the bank of sacred rivers.

On this day Rishi Puja is arranged. After taking a bath and putting on clean clothes, women make a square shaped diagram (Mandal) at a clean place. Placing the image of Sapta Rishi on the Mandal she pours water and Panchamrit over the image, put *tika* of sandalwood (Chandan) on their forehead, put on a garland of flowers and offer flowers fruits, sweets, etc. In many regions, this process is done on the riverbank or near a pond. Women do not have cereals after this *puja*. Rather they take a special type of rice on Rishi Panchami.

Rishi Panchami puja is especially dedicated to the Saptarishi, the seven great sages such as Kashyap, Atri, Bharadwaj, Vishvamitra, Gautama, Jamadagmi and Vashishtha (Acharya, 2045: 127). Sapta Rishis are supposed to be the sages who devoted their lives to the wellbeing of humanity. They taught general people basic principles of goodness of higher level. They were determined to their principles of living better life. It is believed that they handed down their wisdom to the people who are able to follow the path of knowledge and wisdom that they taught. The holy bathing ceremony on Rishi Panchami is supposed to be an atonement of female sin as she might have committed in the last twelve months knowingly or unknowably. It is a strong belief in Hindu society that having undergone this purifying bathing ritual, women are absolved from all sin, real, or emarginated, including that awful transgression of touching a man during menstruation. The Hindu tradition states that women who are under menstruation are forbidden to undertake religious activities or involve themselves in domestic affairs till they return to normal state. They are even prohibited to touch holy things. If this condition is breached by mistake or for other reasons, it leads to *Rajaswala Dosh*. It is believed that women fast on Rishi Panchami to get rid of this *dosh*. There are many powerful stories in Hindu mythology explaining the significance of Rishi Panchami which force women to perform bathing ceremony and worshiping the Rishis. Womenfolk believe that Rishi Panchami is the road to peace and sanctification of the soul, mind and body. While so doing women are happy and enjoy the festival with utmost enthusiasm.

Singing and dancing

Another notable feature of *Teej* festival is performing the traditional singing and dancing. It is very interesting that although the womenfolk may be weak from fasting and loss of sleep, they take pride in concealing any ill effects, many laughing, dancing beating the small drums, or singing ancient hymns. As all that the festival used to be the medium to express the feeling traditionally, that the womenfolk today celebrate it even in their husband's houses through the lyrical melodies which they sing and dance. So, the womenfolk are seen in the street corner singing and dancing different types of songs relating to the different aspects of their individual, social, and family issues.

Apart from the traditional *Pujas* and other rituals, women dance on tunes of various *Teej* songs. It is a traditional way to express their feelings. Women in different parts of the country celebrate *Teej* by performing their traditional dances. When it is the rainy season, it is assumed that spirits go high in celebration and this is marked with traditional folk dances in Kathmandu valeey. *Teej* dances in Kathmandu cheer up the people and create a perfect festive mood. Colorfully dressed Nepali women sing various songs and perform folk dances in fairs and temples which become a major part of attraction for foreign tourists.

Nepali women believe that such devotional songs reach the ears of Goddess Parvati who would fulfill their wishes and bless their dear husbands with long and healthy life. For women in Nepal, *Teej* is the most colorful festival when they wish to celebrate it with utmost devotion to God and Goddess. They believe that traditional dance is the easiest and most enjoyable way to keep up the spirit of the festival. Women dancing in red *sarees* create the most holistic view at the time of *Teej*, which is a rare scene.

Currently, musicians and artists are beginning to make cassettes, videos, you tube and other audio-visual materials about *Teej*. Many songs and dances show women's true feelings, emotions, and sentiments very often with pain and suffering that they have to experience in their in-law's house. But more often than not, some of the articts and musicians demonstrate songs and dances which also show rather vulgar performance in front of the devoted elderly women who initially celebrated *Teej* praying for the long and healthy life of their husbands.

Conclusions

On the basis of the details of *Teej f*estival give above we can conclude that *Haritalika Teej* is by far the most popular festival of women celebrated in Nepal despite variations in different locations. Both in ancient and modern senses, *Teej* is obviously a festival of (re)union and the enjoyment that results from that

union and the the way it is celebrated. If we regard this festival in terms of religious myth, it is the festival triumph of woman's love for the desired person to be her husband as Goddess Parvati was able to have her sacred union with God Shiva. In cultural sense, it is regarded as the (re)union of married women with their parents, brothers, and sisters in their maternal home. In both cases faith, love and affection are of paramount importance.

Despite its different names, forms, and nuances in relation to the geographical locations and particular communities that celebrate it, there are common practices of celebrating it among the people. Likewise, there are different steps to be followed by devoted while observing the festival. Among the various forms, types and steps to be followed, Nepali women celebrate H*aritalika Teej* as an integral part of cultural life. These women are entirely devoted to the deities Shiva-Parvati who they think bless them with blissful life devoid of pain and suffering. The Hindu women, especially from Brahman and Chhetri community, strongly believe that the deities will fulfill their desire for happy and prosperous life. During the festival that is celebrated for three days, they are engaged in having delicious meals before fasting, singing songs and dancing the dances with full joy and sense of freedom. With the changing context even husbands and in-laws help them enjoy in ways they can. In this sense, *Teej* can be regarded as a festival of (re) union and enjoyment being free from pain and suffering that have been caused by traditional patriarchy.

References

Acharya, Chetonath Sharma (2045), Hamra Dharmik Chadparva (Our Religious Festivals) Kathmandu: Sanatan Dharma Seva Samiti.

Anderson, Mary M. (1988) Festivals of Nepal, Calcutta: Rupa and Co.

Deep Dhruba Krishna (1982), The Nepal festivals Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar

Joshi Hariram (2057) Nepali Chadparva (Nepalese Festivals), Lalitpur: Joshi Research Institute.

Joshi Satya Mohan (2039) Nepali Chadparva (Nepalese Festivals) Kathmandu: Royal Nepal Academy.

Khatry, Prem Kumar and Peshal Dahal (2053), Adhunik Nepal ko Samajik Ilthas (Social History of Modern Nepal), Kathmandu: Sajha Prakasan,

Koirala, Kulchandra (2052), Nepali Sanskritik Jatraparva (Nepalese cultural festivals) Kathmandu: Kul Chandra Koirala Memorial Academy

Koudinyaan, Shivaraj Acharya (2045), Vedic dharma Mul Rupama (Vedic religion in original form) Kathmandu: Narayani Devi and others.

Nepal, Vasant Kumar Sharma (2057), Nepali Shabda Sagar (Nepalese Dictionary), Kathmandu: Bhabha Pustak Bhandar

Regmi, Rishikeshab Raj (1999), Dimensions of Nepali Society and Culture, Kathmandu: SANN research Institute

Shrivastava, Ashok Kumar (1981), Hindu Society in the Sixteenth Century, New Delhi: Milind Publications Pvt. Ltd.

Tod, James, Antiquities of Rajasthan, Quoted in Shrivastava, Ashok Kumar (1981), Hindu Society in the Sixteenth Century New Delhi: Milind Publications Pvt. Ltd.

Why are there Escalating Incidences of Confrontations in Nepali Hospitals? An Anthropological Critique

Kapil Dahal, PhD[*]

Abstract

This article deals with the emerging phenomenon of confrontations and vandalism in hospitals in Nepal. It interrogates how far paternalism and commodification has become the feature of the Nepali health care sector and their interrelationships with each other. With the esoteric nature of medicine and different explanatory models of understanding illness episodes and healing outcomes, there is always a communication gap between the service providers and the patient party. The unfolding of the confrontation process creates space for and paves way for third party involvement in the conflict and negotiation process. The increasing confrontation also reflects falling trust between the service providers and the health seekers. This paper is based on information generated from a qualitative research carried out in two hospital settings in Kathmandu and Chitawan in different periods in 2019.

Keywords: Hospital, Conflict, Commoditization, Communication Barriers, Medico-legal Redress, Third-Party Involvement, Nepal

The Onset

The assessment of the investigation committee of the Nepal Medical Council (NMC), says that due to some "medical weaknesses" and "medical errors" that happened during the diagnosis and treatment (Mishra, 2014) at a private hospital in Thapathali, Kathmandu, Mr. Sami Risal, 47 died. Mr. Risal had been admitted to the hospital for his complaints of vomiting, headache, diarrhea, and stomachache. The NMC report mentions that though Mr. Risal had consulted the hospital to treat gastroenteritis problems, the consulting medical doctor could not recognize on time the neurological problem that he was actually suffering, which ultimately became the cause of loss of his life. The report adds that when the patient became unconscious, neither was he provided with adequate emergency care, nor was he sent for intensive care. On

---

[*] Dr Dahal has done PhD in Anthropology and has been working as the Lecturer in Anthropology in the Central Department of Anthropolgy, Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

top of that, the patient party's requests to have a consultation by other specialists were also ignored.

The report further states that there is no clear treatment protocol at this hospital that provides specialized services. This report has also pointed out the absence of a reliable mechanism at the hospital even for the admitted patients to contact the concerned medical doctor. The lack of protocol leads to confusion about how many patients does a doctor can diagnose in a day and how much time should be given to each patient. This further complicates the situation and deteriorates the quality of consultations.

Here, the family members see that the problem lies with the physicians not to cognize the ailment on time which led to the death of the patient. The hospital argued that they tried their best for Mr. Risal's treatment. With some disputes and confrontation with the hospital, the family sued the hospital at NMC. These kinds of incidents and legal measures have become a regular phenomenon these days in Nepal. As shown in this case of Mr. Risal, it is evident that patient parties and the service providers have a differential understanding of the incident. As a backward-looking activity, both the parties describe of what had already happened. They develop a differential understanding of the incident not because of their differential "explanatory models" (Kleinman, 1980) alone but also because of their conflicting interest in an interpretation of the incident.

This article aims to highlight why such conflict, confrontations, and vandalism take place in the hospitals, which are considered to be providing generous services to the people approaching there for their health care for various kinds of ailments. In this article, I will engage with, though I cannot claim to provide definitive answer, some of the pertinent questions that an inquisitive may encounter. How the differential interpretation of the treatment outcome does lead to conflict and confrontations? Are these confrontational incidents one-time episode, or can we gaze at them in a specific pattern? Why do the patient party and the service providers cannot come up with the same view about the treatment outcome? Why does patient party come up with the decision to go for vandalism when they are not satisfied with the treatment outcome? Who are involved in such incidents? If anyone from outside their close circle involves what could be the driving factor for them to bring in there? How does it affect the negotiation process? What makes hospitals to bow down to the (dies) organized voice against them?

In shaping social relationship and social phenomena in general, whether competition is a determinant factor or it's a marginal is a matter of debate and often claimants can be divided into two poles, one side in favor of determinant and the other side who consider it as having peripheral value (Mannheim, 2003). Mannheim posits

himself somewhere in between. Moving ahead from the debate of center or periphery, Mannheim argues that it shapes the thinking process, especially regarding the "public interpretation of reality". Individuals or groups compete with each other to establish their argument. Sometimes, such competition may manifest in the form of conflict when the competing parties can reach a consensual agreement.

Analyzing the sources of conflict Koester (1998) points out that it roots in the theoretical arena of frustration and aggression. He categorically clarified that aggression is not an instinctive drive like hunger or sex; rather, it may play an instrumental role to fulfill other purposes. It is through the social process that people learn about how to behave in conflict situations, and they are primarily shaped by the cultural realm. He proclaims that conflict is an unavoidable segment of social life, whereas one can avoid violence. Following Koester, I have critically examined the context in which Nepali health seekers and sometimes health care service providers find themselves in such an unavoidable situation and what makes them go for confrontations and the patient party goes for vandalism.

Social scientists have focused on different aspects of health research in Nepal. They have analyzed the impacts of armed conflict on the health, well-being, and mental health of the general populace (Dahal, 2018, Lucite et al. 2013, Devkota and Teijlingen, 2010). However, whether and how conflict can take place in health care setting and what kinds of consequences may lead has been largely neglected in Nepali academia. It could be mainly because commonly health care setting in the low and middle-income countries is often characterized as underserved and inadequate. Thus, even academics tend to overlook the possibility of confrontations taking place in such areas. Therefore, this article has both theoretical and applied significance (Dahal, 2020) as it analyzes respectively the behavioral aspects of the conflict and confrontations linking them with broader social processes, and it can inform the health policy and planning in Nepal about the emergence and outcome of this phenomenon.

With some background and opening remarks, the introductory part of this article orients to the whole article. In the methods section, I have briefly sketched the research design, data collection techniques, and how that information were analyzed to explore a kind of pattern presented here. Then the findings and discussions part of the article has been divided further into four different sub-sections. It mainly deals about what kinds of a situation leads to the emergence of conflict and confrontation, are there any legal provisions to address medical problems, the commoditization of health care services, and how comfortable it is to have a dialogue between the two parties and in what context third parties get involved into these hospital bases confrontations is also dealt here.

Reaearch Methods

This article bases on qualitative information generated from fieldwork carried out in Bir Hospital, Kathmandu and College of Medical Sciences (CMS), Kathmandu University, Bharatpurat different times in 2018 and 2019. I have purposefully selected these two hospitals to have variation in terms of ownership and location of the hospital. Observation and interactions were the primary sources of information generation.

Along with these physical sites, I have also collected data from the online source of some of the selected national dailies and online media. While extracting information from online sources, I have regarded that "the online material can always be considered in the light of our offline knowledge" (Miller and Sinanan, 2017: 4). I employed this approach to recompense my inability to reach the sites, where confrontational incidents have taken place. Thus, I chose online as an ethnographic site and online materials as source of information. I have juxtaposed information acquired from different sources and explicated them to derive meaning from them instead of taking the position of apologist from either side at face value.

I carried out in-depth interviews with the service providers, including doctors working in the emergency ward and out-patient department of medicine, surgery and dentistry units, lab technicians, administrative staff, nursing staff, and private pharmacists from the respective sites. Moreover, this article also bases on information acquired from common people who have reflected upon their experiences of their encounter with doctor-patient relation. Not to disclose the identity of any category of the informants, I have used pseudonym as part of "ethnographic masking" (Murphy and Jerolmack, 2016). Data acquired from all these sources provided various themes, both the grounded and prior, to elevate them to the level of analysis and interpretation, which immensely helped to find patterns in seemingly the chaotic situation of scattered data.

Vulnerability to Conflict and Vandalism

Research participants and reported cases of vandalisms have shown that particular situation, time, people, and places have more susceptibility to violent conflict. Disputes and confrontations in various departments of the hospitals are spread asymmetrically. A service provider from Bir Hospital informed me that Emergency Ward and Intensive Care Unit (ICU) are more susceptible to differences and disputes in this hospital. He stated that:

> Generally, in Nepal, we have a kind of delayed health-seeking practices. People rush at the last minute and end up at the emergency ward. Sometimes, by the time patients are brought in, they already in severe condition. When the severity escalates, then they are admitted to ICU. Occasionally, we cannot cure the patients who are provided care in the ICU.

In addition to being a conflict prone area, emergency departments also shape certain sociality among the service providers working there. A medical doctor from CMS states that often doctors working in the emergency ward quickly lose their temperament. It is not only the 'materiality' of the emergency department that led to such sociality (Law &Mol, 1995), but the socialness of the department also contributes to generating confrontations.

The treatment procedures of certain types of ailment can make patients go for confrontations. Dialysis patients have to wait for a long time to get their turn. Occasionally, they even do not get a chance for that. The inability to have dialysis makes them angry with the hospital and health workers, and often, they accuse the latter of not understanding their precarious health condition. They have experienced that festival time like Dashain is also confrontation prone. In these times, most of the service providers are on leave, making the patients wait for a long time, which otherwise they would have accessed swiftly. This increases the patient's dissatisfaction with the hospital and the service providers.

Service providers have also experienced that people who come to the hospital with "source-force" from their connections, within the hospital or outside of it, are the ones who ultimately end up with disputes and confrontations. By using their social capital to get admission into the hospital, they can also avoid being in a queue to get the doctor's appointment ahead of ordinary people or get access to some services. A medical officer from a hospital in Chitawan says that:

> These people have a higher level of 'suggestibility'. That means, we pay more attention to their narrations and suggestions. Listening to them, excessively, sometimes makes us bypass specific procedures. In case of any problems, these people question us for not properly following the procedures.

While looking at the timing of the day, those who approach the hospital, in evening, and group,   have quarrelsome tendencies. Often, these people, either the patient or their significant others, are intoxicated, and they can easily find reasons to fight with the service providers. Sitaula and Magar (2011) had shown that physical assault against health professionals in Nepal occurs mainly in the evening and night when intoxicated people come to the hospital. They mistreat, misbehave and threaten the service providers.

Generally, all the patients and their significant others are concerned about their patient; everyone thinks that his/her problem should get priority. In case of unavailability, then s/he complains against the hospital, doctor, or both for neglecting him/her. As it is related to inherent human nature, it is not possible to get rid of all these facets or to address them satisfactorily for all the patients.

Service providers, I talked to at Bir Hospital, would like to consider those patients and their significant others, who end up having conflict, as *nabujhne*, the ignorant, who do not understand how the hospital and medication procedure functions. For the service providers, understanding means obeying and complying with the procedures, even if the institution itself has not developed the protocol for the treatment procedure.

Are there any Legal Measures to Redress the Incident?

There is an Act in Nepal to address assaults and attacks on health workers. The existing legal provision is *Swasthya Sanstha tatha Swasthyakarmiko Surakshya Ain*, 2066 B.S., Health Organizations and Health Workers Security Act (2010). Clause three of this Act states that physical attack over the health workers, *gherao*, disrespectful behavior, vandalism and emblazing at the health institutions are strictly prohibited. To take action against these kinds of incidents, victims have to sue at the Coordination Committee of the Ministry of Health. When the Committee receives such complaints, then it has to set up an investigation committee and whose findings direct the legal procedure. In my conversation with health workers, they think this investigation process is quite lengthy. The proposed amendment to this act in 2017 had made the doctors furious, and they closed the health care services all over the country except the emergency services. They demanded the incorporation of a 'jail without bail' provision against the culprits.

Doctors have called for a series of protests against the proposed amendments in the Act. Following the agreement between the Ministry of Health, Government of Nepal, and Nepal Medical Association, the latter withdrew all its protest programs, including the closure of hospital out-patient departments. The government agreed to incorporate their demand for a 'jail without bail' through an amendment in the existing law.

Nepali (2018) regards the law enforcement in Nepal as pessimistic mainly because of misuse or manipulation of state power through money. This has influenced up to the judiciary, and thus, for these incidents, nobody gets penalized. He further adds lack of faith in the state's law enforcement agencies and mechanisms leads to such incidents; several failed attempts are there as evidence. Therefore, there is a linkage between mounting vandalism with the increasing situation of lawlessness. Echoing with Dr. Nepali, a doctor from Bir Hospital thinks it could be because of people's lack of trust in the medico-legal redressing mechanism or people are not aware of its existence that patient party opt to go for confrontations and vandalism.

A journalist regularly reporting in this area thinks lack of adequate level of pro-activeness from the side of NMC had also contributed to escalating the assault and

violence. Regulatory authorities like NMC do not work proactively to investigate the incidents regardless of their seriousness unless there is a strong complaint. Sometimes, even the investigation procedure ends without any logical conclusions. Some of the informants, with different professions and affiliations, linked the increasing trend of assault and confrontations with existing liberal democratic space in the country. They think though democracy has not made any significant change in the livelihood of common people; however, it has liberated some defiant people to act in such way.

When Health Care Services are Commodified

The commodification of medicine and health care services is not a new phenomenon. Through their inceptions, various healing practices have adopted transactional elements to compensate the professionals are involved in healing or in producing objects and services having healing power (Dahal, 2017). On the other hand, Henderson and Petersen (2002) take commodification of health care as a new social realm embedded with health policy shifts such as the deregulation and privatization of services. No one, however, can repudiate that this practice has contributed to making health as a 'commodity' and the individual subject of health care as 'client' or health care 'consumers'.

Nepali print media often present money-making as a prime factor leading to confrontations in health institutions. This also makes hospitals not make referrals (Annapurna Post, 2016) even if they can treat the patient. Budhathoki (2011), a doctor by profession, has observed that mounting urban-centric, money sloping, oblivious, and inept doctors are problematic in this regard. He thinks it has made pharmaceutical companies launch products in the market with "gift "and commissions for the doctors. Ultimately the health seekers have to pay for these medical gifts (Brhlikova et al., 2011), leading to more prescription of avoidable antibiotic and costly prescriptions, creating antibiotic resistance and fetching in superfluous diseases.

People salaried with the government hospitals think that commodification of health care services has embraced only at the private hospitals. An administrative officer from Bir Hospital says, "the confrontational problems emerging at the government hospitals are not because of the monetary matters. Patients can even get free medication here". However, while looking at the news from government hospitals and gazing at the ground reality in the field, it becomes apparent that commodification of medication has encroached primarily from the side of the prescription of unnecessary medicines (Dahal, 2017). While looking at the long queue of medical representatives of private pharmaceuticals in hospitals, one can easily see that commodification can flourish from any hospitals. Lack of trust among various actors present in the public

health sector in Nepal and India makes trust and mistrust personalized and continually suspect (Brhlikova et al. 2011).

When diagnosis and treatment of a patient entangle with its cost, then doctors feel that they have to adapt the treatment trajectory appropriate for the specific condition. When the affordability of the patient is prioritized instead of his/her pathological condition to decide the appropriateness of the treatment trajectory, this eventually harms efficacy and ethics of medicine.

Barriers in Physician-Patient Communication

One of the factors that frequently causes discomfort to the patient party is how service providers communicate with them. As shown initially in the case of Sami Risal, NMC's investigation has pointed out the rudeness of doctors in their interactions with the patient party. While inquiring about the condition of patients, one of the doctors responded by saying-"are you a doctor or me?" The doctors failed to show sympathetic behaviors towards Risal's family and relatives even when his situation began to deteriorate. Moreover, neither they let the patient to be checked by other specialists, nor was he allowed to be taken to another hospital.

A medical doctor from Bir Hospital has realized that doctors have to wholly and clearly converse with the patients or their relatives about the patient's situation. In the pretext of compromise on such procedure, if whatsoever unpleasant occurs, then that can aggravate the situation. The differential understanding of ailment conditions, if any, by the patients and the service providers hinders communication between the two sides. Mr. Risal's case is an impeccable illustration of this form of the negligence of patients' ideas and views.

Patient satisfaction depends upon both ways of medically handling the ailment and communicating with the patient and/or their significant others about what is going on and the rationale behind that (Dahal, 2017). Unfriendly behaviors and deficiency of transparency in a communication process about the medication procedure often increases the complexities in doctor-patient relation and negatively affects patients' behavior towards the hospital. Dahal (2019) has pointed out that the communication gap between the service providers and health seekers is one of the critical factors that have makes people living closer to the border areas look for health care services across the border in Indian towns and cities.

In his effort to save the face of doctors in communication with the patient parties, a medical doctor at CMS thinks that communication problem lies mainly with the paramedic and other administrative staff, not with the medical doctors:

> In different phases of our academic training up to the MD level, we learn how to communicate effectively with the patients and their relatives. Our junior staff do

not have such an opportunity to learn. Therefore, sometimes, problems emerge because of their weakness in communications.

Involvement in Conflict and Mediation Process

Nepal Medical Council's report on Mr. Shankar Rimal's[*] incident at a private hospital based in Sitapaila area has clearly showed that there were some weaknesses from the side of the patient party. The report indeed stated that earlier Mr. Rimal and his family members were contented with the negotiation process and compensation, and only then he was discharged from the hospital. Later on, they came to the hospital with added demands and new people demolished the hospital to build pressure.

What Trishna K. C. has said regarding how she became able to acquire compensation also acknowledges the involvement of third parties, different kinds of institutions and individuals, in the compensation process. She stated, "I am indebted to (mass) media and rights activists for their support, which made me entitled to the compensation after eleven years of the incident". Trishna acquired Rs. 6,17,119.00 (Rs. Six Lakha Seventeen Thousands and One Hundred Nineteen) as compensation for the multiple disabilities that she got from the hospital for wrongful treatment of her left eye (Kunwar, 2011).

Comprehensive news coverage on vandalism and confrontation at hospitals by Annapurna Post (2016) has elaborated on the active involvement of *Giroha*, the gang, which projects every death at a hospital as a doctor's carelessness. These people go to the street with the muscle power and demand for the compensations. Hospital management teams are afraid of disclosing their doings. Some of the hospitals offer compensation to them, even without committing any gaffes.

In response to such *Giroha*, Dr. Sharma from Chitawan has observed that these days, each hospital has kept a group of men to give protection to the hospital in times of need. As he stated:

> While serving at a hospital in Kathmandu in my initial years, once, I have met such group of people. I got to know accidentally when one of them was admitted for his stomachache. He denied providing deposit at the time of admission. The diagnosis did not show any problem in his stomach. Later on, after his discharge, we got to know from our administrative officer that he was admitted to his protection from another gang. Later on, we began to identify them as *palekoketa,* the boys kept by the hospital, and behave differently.

Taking the help of an organized third party seems to be emerging as a new norm in the health care domain. Both the patient parties and service providers/hospitals have begun

---

[**] A case registered (R.N. 488) at NMC on July 9, 2017.

to take such support, though, for different purposes. This is an indication and reflection of the lack of implementations of legal provisions or declining trust towards the law enforcement mechanisms and actors involved in warrantying primary health in Nepal (Brhlikova et al., 2011). This can encumber as a somber threat in the health care sphere of Nepal.

Concluding Remarks

Confrontation has become an inevitable concomitant outcome of service providers-patient interactions in Nepal. It primarily begins with health service providers' and families' different views on what constitute good care. It also reflects the manifestations of grievances and agonies of the people. When there is a loss of life, health, or someone acquires deformity, then, it is paralleled by a physical attack on the individuals and institutions involved in such incidents. The above discussions show that the inability of media and general people to see the differential role of the hospital, doctor, lab, and other service providers makes them solely blame doctors for any failures or any dispute that emerges at the hospital. Prevalence of confrontations both in the private and also in the government hospital shows the severity of the matter.

With their variant explanatory models, the patient party and the physicians come up with a differential interpretation of the outcome of the treatment episode. In case of extreme unwanted situations such as death or deformity of the patient's body or body part(s), both sides often clash with divergent opinions. Each side attempts to establish the supremacy of its own "interpretation of the reality" (Mannheim, 2003). With differing interest, motives, priorities and knowledge base, makes them unable to come up with a consensus to view the episode of the medical outcome on which they are debating. This sometimes leads to the situation of violent conflict and confrontation at the hospital.

The mounting tendency of hostilities between the two sides signify the putrefying medical paternalism (Crichton, 2017), which used to prevail for a long time in the Nepali health care domain. It also implies that people are becoming aware of and their knowledge about the appropriate way of administering health care services is also increasing. Commoners are claiming through the performance of confrontations that they are no more ignorant. Health care services in Nepal is entering into the commercialized domain and as a consumer of health care commodity people have become more concerned and conscious about what is being done in their health and body. On the other hand, it has also become both the cause and effect of falling trust between the service providers and the health seekers and eventually leading to the decline of paternalism in the field of medicine.

The esoteric nature of medicine and the medical profession leads to a communication gap between the service providers and the patient party. Both sides have their explanatory models, which often lead to differences in understanding the incident. People blame doctors for using their bodies as labs to make a series of medical experiments. Whereas, doctors' rationale is that medicine is not mathematical science where they cannot find a hundred percent accuracy, and thus, they have to make continuous efforts to help the patients get recovered. On top of this, in the Nepali context, there is always a problem of who is the appropriate person to get information from the doctor; is it the patient himself/herself or his/her family members?

The very social capital that privileges the health seekers to bypass the rules such as to be in the queue for the service may erupt as the source of misery. Due to their higher degree of suggestibility, sometimes medics do not follow the diagnosis protocol for the swiftness or bring down the treatment cost. In the case of the unwanted outcome, the patient party blames the service providers for not properly following the treatment protocol. This kind of situation can be regarded as the dark side of social capital (Villalonga-Olives and Kawachi, 2017, Campos-Matos, Subramanian, and Kawachi, 2016).

It is not only the family members and relatives who are involved in confrontations but also some other people who are not directly related to patients. Their participation in protest for the stranger patients is also linked with biosociality emanating from the shared vulnerability of, what they regard as, medical negligence. It would have been fair had their involvement was shaped by the shared vulnerability. Instead, many service providers would like to consider that their behaviors seem to have been mediated by the monetary transactions with the patient party. Taking the help of an organized third party appears to be emerging as a new reality in the Nepali health care domain by both the patient parties and service providers. This is an indication and reflection of poor implementations of legal provisions and declining trust towards law enforcement mechanisms of the country.

References

Annapurna Post. (2016). Upacharma Laparbahi. (Text in Nepali- Negligence in the treatment).*Annapurna Post*, 12/10/2016, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Brhlikova et al. (2011).Trust and the regulation of pharmaceuticals: South Asia in a globalized world. *Globalization and Health* 2011 7:10.

Budhathoki, P. (2011). Chikitsak Pani Sudhrinu Parchha (Text in Nepali- Doctors need to correct themselves). *Kantipur*, 2011-05-11. Kathmandu, Nepal.

Campos-Matos, I., Subramanian, S. V., &Kawachi, I. (2016). The 'dark side'of social capital: Trust and self-rated health in European countries. *The European Journal of Public Health*, 26(1), 90-95.https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckv089.

Dahal, K. B. (2020). Understanding confrontations between the health service providers and the health seekers in Nepal: a medical anthropological Study. A research report submitted to the University Grant Commission, Nepal.

Dahal, K. B. (2019). Cross border medical travel to India: an anthropological exploration of Lakhanpur area of Nepal's Tarai/Madhesh. *Nepali Journal of Contemporary Studies*, 14(1), 47-68.

Dahal, K. B. (2018).*Conflict, Gender and Body Politic in Nepal: Anthropological Engagement with the Threatened Lives and Well-Being of Women*. Washington, DC: Academica Press.

Dahal, K. B. (2017). Anthropology of health seeking practices and consultation with service providers: A study among the women in Nepal's Tarai. Ph.D. dissertation submitted to Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FOHSS), Tribhuvan University(TU) , Kathmandu, Nepal.

Devkota, B., and van Teijlingen, E.R. (2010). Understanding effects of armed conflict on health outcomes: the case of Nepal. *Conflict and Health*, 4 (20).https://doi.org/10.1186/1752-1505-4-20

Henderson, S. & Petersen, A. (2002). Introduction: Consumerism in health care. In S. Henderson, & A. Petersen. (Eds.), *Consuming health: Commodification of health care* (pp.1-10). Routledge.

Kleinman, A. (1980). *Patients and healers in the context of culture: An exploration of the borderland between anthropology, medicine, and psychiatry.* University of California Press.

Koester, O. (1998). Cultural variation in conflict resolution: alternatives to violence. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 9(4), 380-384.

Kunwar, S. (2011).GalatUpacharkoKshyatipurti (Text in Nepali- Compensation for the wrong treatment). *Kantipur*, 2/3/2011, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Law, J. &Mol, A. (1995).Notes on materiality and sociality.*The Sociological Review*, 43, 274-294.https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1995.tb00604.x.

Luitel, N. P., Jordans, M. J., Sapkota, R. P., Tol, W. A., Kohrt, B. A., Thapa, S. B., ... and Sharma, B. (2013). Conflict and mental health: a cross-sectional epidemiological study in Nepal. *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology*, 48(2), 183-193.

Mannheim, K. (2003).Competition as a cultural phenomenon. In G. Delanty and P. Strydom (Eds.), *Philosophies of social science: The classic and contemporary readings* (Pp. 128-133). Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Miller, D. and Sinanan, J. (2017).*Visualisingfacebook: A comparative perspective*.UCL Press.

Mishra, A. (2014). NorvicAspatalleBiramikoUpacharPrakriyamaTrutiGarekoThahar (Text in Nepali- Norvic hospital committed error in the treatment process). *Kantipur,* 10/14/2014, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Murphy, A., &Jerolmack, C. (2016).Ethnographic masking in an era of data transparency. *Contexts*, 15(2), 14-17.DOI: 10.2307/26370371.

Nepali, P. (2018). Doctor le abaafnaitaukojogaunekiupachargarne? (Text in Nepali- Whether doctors have to save them or treat the patients?). http://swasthyakhabar.com/news-details/21371/2018-02-22.

Crichton, P. (2017). Paternalism v. autonomy. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 210(1), 83-83. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.210.1.83a.

Sitaula, S., &Magar, A. (2011). Medical practice in the peripheral health centers in Nepal. *Journal of Nepal Health Research Council*, 9(19), 198-200. Villalonga-Olives, E., and Kawachi, I. (2017). The dark side of social capital: A systematic review of the negative health effects of social capital. *Social Science & Medicine*, 194,105-127. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.10.020.

Problems of Assimilation and Difficulties of Becoming a Man in LeRoi Jones's *Dutchman*

Madhav Prasad Dahal[*]

Abstract

This article attempts to explore the obstacles of an African American in becoming a Man *in the white community in LeRoi Jones's play* Dutchman. *In doing so, it analyzes the text from African American perspective, which is a black cosmological lens applied to critically examine African American history, culture and the literature, primarily with its focus on cultural assimilation and its aftermath . LeRoi Jones, also known with his new name Amiri Baraka, in this play exposes how the black Americans fall victim of racial hatred in the process of assimilating themselves with the mainstream white ways of life. The major argument of this article is an African American's process of assimilation with the white culture is not only a detachment from his/her origin but also his/her failure to be accepted by the new culture. It argues that in adopting a new culture, a colored American is twice the victim of his/her past and the present. To justify this stark predicament of colored American population, the article briefly looks back at the situation of the American blacks in the 1960s. It ponders on the entire behavior of Clay, a twenty years old black boy in the play, his fondness in choosing to imitate the white world as a model. His craze for white way of life is reflected in the dress up he is putting on, his mastery over the use of cosmetic language of the whites, his eating of apple given by Lula, a thirty years old white lady who morbidly tempts him for sexual intercourse, his attempt to forget his own ancestral history to make him look more like an American than a descendent of slave. The article also analyses Lula's stereotyping of Clay and the way she dictates white values and norms.*

Keywords: man, cosmological, detachment, assimilation, racism, slave

Introduction

Among all the immigrants to the US, the story of African immigrants is different. Many of them were forcibly brought to the United States as the slaves. Those who migrated with their own will to get employment opportunities were also paid off less in

comparison to the migrants of white color. The studies have shown that the wages between the black and white migrants are different. Observing the 1990 census of the US, Dodoo and Takyi (2002) found that hourly wages of 25 to 64 years old African origin white male migrants are 32% higher than those of comparable black migrants. After they migrated to the US for whatever reason, it was their compulsion to forget their ancestral line and to learn the white ways of life. On the one hand, the memory of their origin hit them. Larry J. Griffin and Peggy G. Hargis (2008) expose this fact in these lines thus: "The past reminds – makes- us who we are and, sometimes when we acknowledge that past, it also makes us wish we were not who we are" (p, 42). However there was no way out to return to their home land, and on the other hand, assimilating with the new culture was not easy. The color line between the two races could not allow the whites to accept the blacks as their brothers and sisters. They could not keep the blacks a little above the rank of slaves. Every attempt of the blacks in the direction of assimilating them with white culture was not only a subject of mockery but also an intolerable phenomenon for the whites.

Le Roy Jones's play *Dutchman* can be seen as a representation of the situation of the black during the 1960s. It was a decade that was unprecedented in history. The black Americans demanded equal treatment and massively resisted segregation. Leland Ware (2013) says, "By the end of the decade federal legislation outlawed the practices that had been used to reduce African Americans to second-class status" (p.10). The 1964 Civil Rights Act, Voting rights of 1965 and the 1968 Fair Housing Act had given the American Negroes strength to resist further. The Play *Dutchman* had come at such times of renaissance. But there was still a racial mountain even after the law had guaranteed Blacks equality. They were facing integration problems. Quoting LeRoi Jones, MacNicholas (1981) says, "*Dutchman* is about the difficulty of becoming a man in America" (p. 53). It gives a picture of the predicament of the American blacks during that time. Berkowitz (1992) states that racism as the previous condition was living death…so black people were faced with two alternatives, assimilation or revolt. They had to find new identities (p. 146). The play *Dutchman* exposes the male protagonist Clay as the one who has chosen the first one. By doing so, he seems to have detached him from his ancestral culture and origin. He does so hoping that he would have a distinct identity in his society that the world of white would appreciate and accept regarding him as its own member. He takes the white world as a model which is reflected in his appearance, language (his mastery of language gives him access to the white world (Bigsby, 1985, p.397). But his expectations are derailed in an insulting way that he becomes a bare life in the land of opportunities. He is behaved like a homo sacer in his process of being a man. He is a representative of not only the African Americans but also of all who are struggling to make an individual identity of a 'Man' in the US.

The word 'man', in African American studies, implies a strong masculine, a bold bread earner, who is courageous, handsome, and fashionable and can reflect the American ways in his entire ways of life. Clay exposes the fact that due to a visible racial biasness towards the blacks the chances of climbing the ladder of progress in America through the assimilation of the self with the white way of life is not that much easy. And moreover, it is quite difficult for the blacks to be treated with respect as the American citizens because the racial mountain between the black and the white is quite high and they are taken by whites as savage and worthy to be mocked. In this context of wider cultural gap, this paper attempts to explore those difficulties that an African American faces in culturally assimilating himself and making him a 'Man' in the new world.

Dutchman has received scholarly and critical attention from different critics. After the emergence of the postmodernist theories in the 1960s the new modes of interpretations emerged. The deconstructionist way of interpretation sees indeterminacy in the way Lula presents her. Jonathan Cooler (1982) says,, "A Derridean would agree that the language game is played but might go on to point out that one can never be quite certain, who is playing, or who is playing seriously, what the rules are, or which game is being played" (p.130-131). In *Dutchman* Lula is seen as an indeterminate character. She presents herself as an indeterminate one as for her 'being' is a form of playing a game. She keeps on changing position as a modern woman or a white stereotype. Kimberly W. Benston (1976), in her comprehensive study of LeRoi Jones's work, *Baraka : The Renegade and the Mask,* points out in the action of the play in the tragic pattern: "the fall from innocence through hamartia, and from hamartia to catastrophe" (p.158). She traces the classic tragic pattern in Clay's fall. The departure of this study with these concerns of the critics is that this paper, different from other theoretical imaginings and the set patterns, focuses on the real everyday problems of the African Americans in their processes of assimilation and becoming a man.
Textual Analysis

Dutchman was first released at the Cherry Lane Theatre in 1964 in New York. It gained Obie-Award and was then made into a film in 1967. Just after its release the play received dual commentaries as it was performed for dual audiences. It was both praised and criticized at the same time. It was interpreted as a play that hated the white community. Bisbee says, "After all it incited indignation because of being interpreted as a white- hating play with its radical language and its racist attitude against the white people" (p. 375). It was natural for the white community to perceive the play as the one that pours out black bitterness against them. But there in the white people's world there were also people who grasped just the other part of the play different from the white people. For them the play carried with it several other social issues as MacNicolus (1981) says, "It is about the racial betrayal, anti racist sentiments and black

consciousness raising combined with gender and class themes" (p. 51). Furthermore it is about American history (Bloom, 1995, p.89). Bigsby says, "The play describes Baraka's own autobiography in which he asks the general question of personal identity and the nature of the relationship between the self and the society (p. 397). These observations show that the play is interwoven with varieties of themes. As the focus of this study is about how a black faces difficulties on the way to his self formation, it seeks to explore these issues in the text.

Clay: His Past and Present

The name 'Clay' comes from the Biblical reference. It reminds us of the image of the fallen Adam for his sin. Adam was made of dust, or clay. The play in this sense can be interpreted as a political allegory. Annette Saddik (2006) says, "Dutchman is a metaphor for a cycle that is repeated endlessly throughout history; it is a political allegory of race relations in America" (p.75). It depicts the hostile relationship between the whites and the black people. Clay is a black representing black people's spirit. His name is associated with the resurrection of Adam. He is an educated, high spirited and flexible person who easily falls in the honey trap of Lula. As Eve in the Bible convinced Adam to eat the apple, here Lula feeds the apple to Clay. This ultimately sets a ground for his fall. But unlike Eve in the Bible, Lula does not fall; she herself kills Clay keeping herself in the position of his boss.

LeRoi Jones wants to show that Clay is a representation of all humanity. But Lula takes him as a malleable creature born and grown up out of gutter or as Adam thrown out of heaven. In the play Clay is the representative of black community. He comes from a slave family heritage. In the eyes of white he is a savage; he is neither educated nor civilized at all. According to Lula, his grandfather was a slave; he did not go to Harvard. He himself says, "My father was a night watchman" (Baraka, 1964, 512). Lula says, "You went to colored college where everybody thought they were Averell Harriman" (Jones, 2005, 2512). He is labeled as the son of a slave whatever position he has acquired now. Whatever family line or the spatial connection, Clay desired to be treated as a respectable individual. Michell Wallallace (1978) says, "Clay wanted freedom, equality and all that. But what he really wanted was to become a 'man' (p. 30). He wanted to have his identity as a man who can make a pursuit of his own happiness. He believed that anyone had a right and a chance to earn the highest level of material or spiritual success in the American land.

As Robinson (2000) says the black people living in America were not meant to be pliant captives and agents of institutions that denied light all over the world. They had to speak the truth to themselves and to the community and to all who invited them into new darkness. They had to affirm the light, the light movement of the past, the light

movement of their people. They had to affirm their capacities to move forward towards new alternatives for light in America. (p. 3). Clay wanted his masculinity to provide him a chance to make love with Lula. For this he had modeled himself according to the demand of the land and its culture. He had put on a three button suit, he had a book on his hand to prove that he was not an illiterate; he had learnt the polished way of speaking white English. He could dance in the way the whites do. But all these attempts of making him an American man are just his fantasies that are not going to get fulfilled. His endeavors to assimilate himself with his model culture become an irony of his fate. He is like a pendulum moving to reach nowhere. He is twice betrayed and traumatized, the first by the detachment from his ancestral culture, and the second by the culture he wants to assimilate with. He is dislocated. The most dramatic moment occurs when Clay throws off or breaks out of his false white man's self. He realizes the difference between his true identity and the false masking of a white persona. Lula tells him,

Why are you wearing a jacket and tie like that? Did you people ever burn witches or start revolutions over the price of tea? Boy, those narrow shoulder clothes come from a tradition you ought to feel oppressed by. A three button suit. What right do you have to be wearing a three button suit and a striped tie?" (Jones, 2512).

Lula's reaction at Clay wearing a three buttoned suit reflects how difficult the situation of a black is in becoming an American man. His buttoned up dress up in the white convention to make him an American man keeping him away from white vengeance gets loosened by Lula's words.

Lula, the Apple and the Stereotyping of the Blacks

Lula is a symbolic character in the play *Dutchman.* She symbolizes White America. She achieves her end through the use of apples. When she enters the subway car and takes her seat next to Clay, she seductively cuts the apple and starts devouring it. She tells Clay to eat it. This reminds us of the Biblical story of Eve who tempts Adam to taste the fruit of knowledge forbidden by God. The apple is a tool for Lula to seek out her victim for her ritual drama of love and death in this play *Dutchman*. She looks like the bringer of people's destiny. She often rides on the subway vehicle to trap someone. Lula gives us the image of a betrayer who caresses Clay's thigh but the level of her repulsion for the black color boils over. She, as the owner of American land intends to drive Clay out forcing him to sin by eating the apple. Not only uses the apple, she uses many other strategies to tempt her victims. Her voice is coarse and a "gentle sidewalk throb". Her hands are "dry as ashes". Her hair, the glass, the loud lipstick and the language tempt anyone coming across her. She takes her conversation to pure sex talk. "I am prepared for anything. How about you? (Jones, 2506). She lures Clay saying "you tried to make it with your sister when you were ten…But I succeeded a few

weeks" (Jones, 2507). This looks like her unconscious erotic desire to make Clay her phallic partner. The difference between her age and Clay's is ten years.

Kimberly Benston suggests that, as the "white temptress [Lula] is [also] a composite of many seductress, Circo, Calypso, Dido, Cleotraptra, Duessa, Delilah- but she specially resembles Eve" (p.158). But outside this mask of her persona, apparent racism dwells. She warns Clay in the way he cannot comprehend her straight. She says he is a "well known type" (Jones, 2509). She stereotypes Clay in every conversation with her. She pretends like knowing nothing about him but she knows everything. This reminds us of George Orwell's Big Brother of the novel *1984*, seeing and knowing everyone. Williams (1978) regards her as the "prototype of the white hipster who presumes to know Black people and their culture better than Black people know it themselves" (p. 137-38). When Clay asks Lula about his friends, she says, "I told you I lie. I don't know your sister. I don't know Warren Enright (Jones, 2507). But a little later she says, "Is Warren Enright a tall skinny black boy with phony English?" (Jones, 2507). It shows that she knows them all. Louis Casimir Jr. (1974) has called her "Medusa- like Creature" with links to the Loathly Lady of Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Tale (p. 303). Lula is therefore seen like the Biblical "The Strange Woman who, according to Claudia Camp (1997) will lead unwary youth to death through deceptive language which entraps him in sexual misconduct, typically adultery that violates his ethically upright life" (p. 85-112). She is not only a white lady but also a representative of the whole white America.

Nita K. Kumar (2003) in his article "The Logic of Retribution" says, "Lula's sense of her own identity, her perception of Clay is a series of stereotyped images… She evokes every stereotype that has historically defined the African American, from the escaped slave to Uncle Tom (p. 227). She uses quite condemning and stereotyping words like 'fascist', ' murderer', " escaped nigger" to Clay to keep control over him. She characterizes him as either guilty or fake, with little possibility of an authentic existence (p. 227). She is so hypocritical that she accuses Clay for gazing at her leg from the window of the subway car-"Weren't you staring at me through the window? ... I guess you were just taking those idle potshots. Nothing else to do. Run your mind to people's flesh (Jones, 2506). It was all her stereotyped assumption and pretence to blame that black people are savage.

Lula represents a repugnant white society which the blacks like Clay should not embrace. She hates Clay not only because he is black in color, it is because he shows an obvious attempt of assimilating with the white culture discarding his own heritage. However the irony is that the blacks are compelled to struggle in making themselves melted in the White way of life by sacrificing their own original identity in the land where they are mucked, subjugated and even demonized. Clay faces the tragic fate of

falling from his desire of assimilating that has only distanced him from his own heritage. He is compelled to allow Lula to take decisions about his life as he is not able to manage his life as per his own desire and because he is always under the white control. Though he tries to oppose her bullying at some time, he feels remaining non resistant is the safest way to go. In his submissiveness he discards his desire of going against the white hegemony. He realizes that walking a different way than this might rather be terribly disastrous. His passive endurance of Lula's verbal attack against him inevitably leads him to the mouth of death. His cultural upbringing of not resisting the white with a further terrible outcome makes him a tragic 'type'. As Amiri Baraka said in an interview *Conversation with Amiri Baraka,* "Clay's tragic fall is his passivity; he should be resisting that type of murder. Clay commits the crime that Baraka … condemned black artists for committing: being content to cultivate any mediocrity, was guaranteed to prove to America … that they were not really who they were, i.e. Negroes" (Saddik, 74).

Not only Clay, the other black passengers traveling in the same subway car also witness Clay's murder. They could have protested Lula for stabbing Clay and even taken revenge against her but they simply watch the event without a word of protest. Not only that they also silently obey Lula when she orders them to throw Clay's dead body out of the moving car. As Lula shouts at them to get off the car at the next stop, all of them do accordingly. The conductor, who could also have captured Lula or disobeyed her, remained silent. The next black boy who rides on the subway train just after Clay's murder was also quite young enough to fight against Lula. But Lula passes an evil look towards him as her next victim. He too, simply shows his docile smile to her villainy. The justice would have been there if this new rider had killed a murderer of the innocent boy. But their powerlessness deprives the blacks from going against the whites. As the title of this play 'Dutchman' comes from the biblical allusion of a flying Dutchman killing hundreds of people behind, the play here shows the serial murder of black Americans by the white members just to subjugate the blacks . The ship alludes to the Dutch vessels that transported slaves to the New World and the legend to the Flying Dutchman, a ghost ship doomed to sail forever as retribution for the crimes of its crew (Baker, 110).

Conclusion

Dutchman thus records the difficulties of the blacks in the process of establishing their identities. The dominant issue at the heart of this play is the idea of black people's struggle for their socially distinct identity in the American land and the way they are suppressed by the whites just due to their race there. It deals with how the American Negroes face problems in the process of converting themselves in the way the White world does. It shows they can neither survive respectfully there as Americans nor as

Africans. The reason behind such humiliation is nothing other than the color of their skin. By means of Clay as the black stereotype the play portrays the black people's repressed feelings of anger and a desire of a revolution to force the whites to accept them socially and culturally. It also reflects how the black community is double agonized by the loss of their original heritage and by the rejection of the new culture. These arguments now bring me to the conclusion that the play *Dutchman* is about the problems of assimilation and the difficulties of becoming a man in America.

References

Baker, C. (2013). A trip with the strange woman: Amiri Baraka's "Dutchman" and the book of proverbs. *South Atlantic Review*, Vol.78, No.3/4, pp. 110-128.

Baraka, A. (1964). *Dutchman and the slave: Two plays by LeRoy Jones.* New York: Harper Perrenial.

Benston, K. W. (1976). *Baraka: The renegade and the mask*. London: Yale University Press.

Berkowitz, G. M. (1992). *American drama of the twentieth century.* London: Longman, p.53.

Bigsby, C. W. E. (1985). *A critical introduction to twentieth century American drama.* Vol.3, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 375.

Bloom, C. (Ed.) (1995). *American drama*. Stuttgart: Macmillan Press CDD.

Camp, C. V. (1997). "Woman wisdom and strange woman: Where is power to be found". *Reading Bibles, writing bodies: Identity and the book.* Ed. Timothy K.et al. Abingdon: Rutledge, pp. 85-112.

Casmir, Louis Jr. (1974). "Dutchman: The price of culture is a lie". *The binding of Porteus: Perspective on myth and the literary process.* Ed. Marjorie W. McCure, et al. Pennsylvania: Bucknell UP, pp. 298-310.

Culler, J. (1982). *On deconstruction*. Abingdon: Rutledge.

Dodoo F.N-A, and B. K. Takyi. (2002). Africans in the diaspora: black-white earnings differences among America's Africans. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 25, Issue 6, 913-941.

Griffin, L., & Hargis, P. (2008). Surveying memory: The past in black and white. The *Southern Literary Journal*, Vol.40, Issue 2, pp. 42-69. Retrieved October 11.

Jones, L. (2005). "Dutchman". *Heath anthology of American literature.* Paul Lauter (Ed.), Vol.5, ed.5, Boston: Houton Miffin.

Kumar, N. K. (2003). "The logic of retribution". *African American review*.Vol.37, no, 2/3, Amiri Baraka Issue, (Summer- Autumn), United States: John Hopkins University Press.

MacNicholas, J. (1981). *Dictionary of literary biography, Vol. 7: Twentieth century American dramatists part 1: A-J.* Gale Research Company, p. 51.

Robinson, C. J. (2000). *Black Marxism: The making of black radical tradition*. The University of North Corolina Press.

Saddik, A. J. (2006). *Contemporary American Drama*. Edinburg University Press, 2007, pp. 73-76. http://www. Encyclopedia.com/arts/educational magazines/dutchman

Wallace, M. (1978). *Black macho and the myth of superwoman.* London: Verso.

Ware, L. (2013). Civil rights and the 1960s: A decade of unparalleled progress. *Maryland Law Review*, Vol.72, Iss.4, http://digitalcommons.law.umaryand.edu/mlr/vol72/iss4/4.

Williams, S. A. (1978). "The search for identity in Baraka's *Dutchman"*, *Imamu Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones): A Collection of Critical Essays.* Ed. Kimberly W Benston, United States: Prentice Hall, pp. 135.

Storytelling for Promoting Social Cohesion in the Marginalized Communities: A Study of *Chautari Nataks*

Madhu Giri, PhD[*]

Abstract

*The notion of storytelling in playback theatre (*Chautari Natak*) suggests a dialogue between performer and audience. This dialogue in the public sphere can evoke collective understanding on political and natural disaster victims, and cultivate grounds of negotiation for micro levels of misunderstanding in socio-cultural issues. One of the main objectives of the paper is to analyze methodological intervention employed by the* Chautari Natak *to initiate sharing/communication between ex-combatant and the local community. Based on field observation and interviews, I argue that the* Chautari Natak*, as methodological innovation for social dialogue, transforms personal stories into avenues for the socio-cultural empowerment of the participants and promotion of social cohesion. The* Chautari Natak *performance could be linked to a description of community performance as a way to overcome loneliness and reduce the distance between cultural groups, status groups, and constitute an experience of community for those participants. Marginalized audience or real people, who are focused by* Chautari Natak*, rarely get opportunities to tell real stories in society. Storytelling in a public forum is a breakthrough in communication among participants, healing of the storyteller, and it can be a general issue for the transformation of the political and socio-cultural understanding. For the theoretical analysis, I employed Van Gennep's and Turner's concepts of liminality for the stage of storytelling and performance among the audience. The act of telling a personal story can be analyzed through the lens of Habermas' notion of communicative practice of everyday life.*

Keywords: storytelling, *Chautari Natak*, harmony, liminality, dialogue

Introduction

Theatre Village, one of the theatre houses in Kathmandu, organized playback theatre[†] for a month after April Earthquake in 2015. The primary purpose of the

[*]Dr. Giri has done PhD from Tribhuvan University and has been working as the Leturer in Anthropology at the Central Department of Anthropolgy, TU, Nepal.
[†]Playback Theatre (*ChautariNatak* in Nepali), is an interactive theatre form that is inspired by improvisational theatre, storytelling traditions, and psychodrama. It is based on the audience's personal

playback theatre was listening (traumatic) stories of earthquake victims, making a community of people through participatory listening. Participatory engagement in the storytelling, listening, and enactment of the story (performance) promote 'collectivity' and 'we-feeling' among the participants. Jonathan Fox, the founder of playback theatre, has been visited Nepal several times to trained theatre artists about playback methodology, which has been used for the reconciliation of ex-combatant in the communities. Pro-public with technical support of CSSP-Berlin Centre for Integrative Mediation has been using the method to build reconciliation and social cohesion between ex-combatant and host communities and other cross-cultural conflicts in six districts of Nepal since 2015 (Pro-Public, 2017). Nepali theatre artists gave the Nepali name '*Chaurtari Natak'* for playback theatre to give a traditional social and cultural flavor to Nepali communities.

Besides observing playback theatre in Theatre Village, series of discussion with theatre artists, and Jonathan Fox in Kathmandu, I have carried out fieldwork in the communities of six districts where Pro-public coordinated *Chautari Nataks* were performed on October 2015 and August 2016. I have observed Chatari *Nataks* at Binauna in Banke, Gulariya in Bardiya, Bijauri in Dang, Sainamaina in Rupandehi, Gaighat in Udayapur, and Bardibas in Mahottari performed by local artists. The basic logic of selection of these villages was that the Maoist army combatants called PLA (People Liberation Army) resettled and reintegrated in these communities after receiving the golden handshake from the government in 2012 (Pro-Public, 2017). In this context, the relations and social harmony between the ex-combatants and host community observed fragile because of political orientation. Pro-Public initiated social integration and harmony through *Chautari Natak* (Pro-Public, 2017). In Banke and Bardiya, local artists and dialogue facilitators organized and informed participants on scheduled time. The dialogue facilitators were selected from local communities including ex-combatants. One of the participants told his/her life story loudly in front of the artists and audience. Then, artists performed symbolically to disseminate meaning and feelings of the storyteller for the initiation of dialogue. The performance focused on social unity and harmony of people in the community irrespective of their caste, ethnicity, gender, political, and other socio-cultural status.

All of the selected communities were marginalized in terms of political economy, and mixed in terms of caste/ethnicity and regions. Tharu, Hill migrant *Sukumbasi*, ex-combatants, Dalits, and Brahmin-Chhetri were participants, and storytellers in the

stories, includes music, and improvised enactments and provides a vital source for individual emotional healing and the past's social processing. It was successfully organized at the community level in Nepal for the first time in 2015 through the zivik-funded project of CSSP and Pro Public, and continues for a month after earthquake 2015..

community. When the participants heard one of the storytellers, many of them were interested to share their personal story in the forum. By sharing story, they started communication and dialogue with their social issues. In Kathmandu, Tamangs, disaster victims and stakeholders were selected because they participated on the performance of *Chautari Nataks*. The basic questions of the study are: What are the experiences of participants, and storyteller's aftermath of the earthquake disaster, insurgency, and caste ethnic conflict? Why did artists organize *Chautari Natak* in marginalized communities? How did storytelling promote social cohesion as claimed by theatre artists? What are the social and cultural assets of storytelling in the public sphere?

Chautari Natak: Telling Private Story at the Public Sphere

Chautari Natak was performed in different communities of six districts[*]in 2015 and 2016. I observed *Chautari Natak* in Binauna-Banke and Gaighat-Udayapur. Artist/dialogue facilitators were selected among ex-combatants, host community, artist and social workers considering caste ethnic, gender, linguistic and regional inclusion by Pro-Public. Selected dialogue facilitator formed a management committee among the local people before performing the *Nataks*. With the coordination of the management committee, local artists called ordinary people to participate *Chautari Natak*. Local artists requested participant/spectator to tell their own story voluntarily on the stage about their own suffering, conflict, and any other experiences. All participants and artists listened to the story. When storyteller finished his/her story, artists performed the information without rehearsal and delay. After enactment, the storyteller was asked whether he/she was satisfied with the enactment of the story. Similarly, other 5/6 storyteller's stories were enacted in a session of *Chautari Natak*.

Chautari Natak can be observed and analyzed as a blending of traditional Nepali culture with the modern democratic practices. Storytelling is a widespread oral tradition of communication and dialogue in Nepal. The purpose of the storytelling is both entertainments as well as communication. When stories are enacted, they are supposed to joy, cultural morality, and social cohesion through dialogue between the characters. Abhi Subedi (2006) argued that street drama, poetry, theatrical performance, and cultural shows not only educate and change society but also promote social harmony and democratic culture in Nepal (Subedi, 2006). The term *Chautari/Chautaro* is a typical public sitting space where a formal and informal decisions, sharing, dialogue, and communication were made collectively. Its traditional connotation was sense of collectivity, a sense of justice, and model of communication in rural communities.

---

[*]Dang, Banke, Bardiya, Rupandehi, Mahottari, and Udayapur

Usually, *Chautari* is constructed under *Bar-Pipal*[*] trees that are mythologically supposed to conjugating in-between. Such *Chautari* under *Bar-Pipal* is considered a place of security, psychological peace, a place of Yoga, meditation, and socio-cultural activities. The banner of the *Chautari Natak* has also painted the tree and the sitting places near a settlement. In another term, *Chautari* is a public space of laypeople, their space of sharing, social integration, and collective belongingness. The *Chautari Natak* symbolized both flavor of openness and space of marginalized people.

Similarly, women and marginalized people got the opportunity to share their stories in the public sphere. They hardly get a forum to share their suffering and experiences. One of the principal reasons for listening to the stories of women, as with Dalits, is that their lives are not generally accessible by other means, and their voices, and the underlying subversive messages they may contain, are too readily silenced in the more familiar, available and overtly self-important sources that serve the perspectives of the dominant group and gender. Sylvia Vatu (2004) notes that personal stories or life histories are a way of recovering the marginalized group's (women, Dalit, and ethnic) voice buried. For many marginalized groups, telling the lives of those who defied authority or exemplified a lost age of justice might serve as a 'weapon of the weak' (Scott, 1985). Performance artists were also laypeople who belonged to the same community. *Chautari Natak* is an opportunity of coming into the public sphere for women and marginalized people.

Krishna Khadka, a *Chautari Natak* artist from Mahottari District, said that people did not initially believe them (ordinary person) as an artist. He added that despite local artist and local story, people were interested in participating and listening stories of their own community members. At the end of the session at Mahottari, everybody asked, "When and where is the next show of *Chautari Natak*?*"* Krishna told me that wherever the *Natak* organized, lay-people participated in listening local stories. He said by giving logic of participation of women, and marginalized people, "stories are local and the artists are also local; therefore, participants find an organic flavor in the *Chautari Natak* performance."Soma Bahadur Barali, an older man from the Dalit community, shared his story on the stage of *Chautari Natak* at Patu-Bardibas in 2017. His story was about deprivation of equal share to his parental property because of his brother's affiliation with the insurgent group. He argued that this was his personal and family issue shared in the public sphere in the hope of social pressure for the integration of brothers. After performance of the *Natak*, some of participants expressed solidarity to initiate

---

[*]According to Hindu mythology *Bar* and *Pipal* are husband and wife. People believed that making decisions and sharing information by sitting under the trees have not only social but also cultural and religious values. People used to plant *Bar-Pipal* trees, organized marriage ceremonies of them and construct Chautari to earn merit as well as keep name memorable.

communication with his brother. He lamented the loss of the traditional system of sharing happiness and pain. He added that *Chautari Natak* rolled reflection of *Chautari* justice and social space of sharing. Rama Rai, an ex-insurgent, told that her personal stories of war and suffering were told a public place to erase the negative attitude of communities toward her. After telling personal story on the *Chautari*, she was not only accepted but also appreciated by the participants. Similar opinions were shared by ex-insurgent participants who were resettled at Rupandehi, Dang, Banke, and Bardiya districts. Other storytellers also said that they shared their personal stories at public gatherings because they rarely get the opportunity to share their experiences with many people. Especially women participants argued that they were overloaded by household chores, and *Chautari Natak* was the reason for their meeting, happiness, sharing, and understanding of marginalized people in the community. They demanded this program because it helped them to understand their fellow members better, build solidarity in case of suffering, and initiate communication for harmonious relations in the family and community.

In terms of communicative action, *Chautari Natak* resonated communicative life-world in which people reproduced their society through communication and dialogue. To emphasize an adequate framework Habermas (1984: xiv) notes to the communicative practice of everyday life, the medium of symbolic integration and reproduction:

> In coming to an understanding with one another about the situation, participants in communication stand in a cultural tradition which they use and at the same time renew; in coordinating their actions via intersubjective recognition of criticizable validity claims, they rely on memberships in social groups and at the same time reinforce the integration of the latter; through participating in interaction with competent reference persons, growing children internalize the value orientations of their social groups and acquire generalized capabilities for action. . . Under the functional aspect of reaching understanding communicative action serves the transmission and renewal of cultural knowledge; under the aspect of coordinating action, it serves social integration and the establishment of group solidarity; under the aspect of socialization, it serves the formation of personal identities.

Jurgen Habermas (1984) stressed the values of communicative action for the development of social harmony. When storytellers told their stories in front of familiar participants, they started a conversation with the public mass for personal issues. This public platform integrates people from different socio-political backgrounds. According to Suresh Baral, *Chautari Natak* revived communication and dialogue culture in the village. The *Natak* artists are dialogue facilitators who use the soft tools (art/

performance for discussion) to interact and integrate people. Communication is fundamental for an interactive society. The more people communicate, the more they understand each other. Similarly, Jonathan Fox[*] told me that storytelling was an elementary characteristic of humans. When people shared the same ontological level of human beings, they helped other humans for their satisfaction. Story and performative art have the power to serve people for life. In his book Acts of Service, he gives objectives of the playback with the following words: 'What is most important is to create a theatre that is neither sentimental nor demonic, hermetic not confrontational, but ultimately a theatre of love, happiness, and harmony' (Fox, 1994: 216). *Chautari Natak* followed his concept of happiness and social harmony by breaking the silence of marginalized people. The performance serves for the dialogue and integration that are fundamental prerequisites for a democratic society.

Telling Lived Story

In his novel Nausea, Jean-Paul Sartre writes that 'a man is always a teller of tales, he lives surrounded by his stories and the stories of others, he sees everything that happens to him through them, and tries to live his life as if he were recounting it' (Sartre, 2000:61). Playback theatre is organized around the stories of its participants; therefore, some consideration of the nature of narrative will be vital if we are to understand the peculiar performed stories told in playback. Similarly, W. Benjamin (1970) believed that oral storytelling was dying out because our sense of the 'epic side of truth, wisdom' (1970: 87) was lost, presumably through the reductionism of science and the privileging of 'information'. He says that the loss of this wisdom leads to a weakening of our idea of eternity and, by implication, death. The storyteller he writes: 'is the man (human) who could let the wick of his life be consumed completely by the gentle flame of his story' (Benjamin 1970:108). Similarly, since the 1920s, anthropologists have acknowledged life stories as powerful and riveting data for personalizing cultural, historical, and social forces (Narayan, 2004:227). By listening to life stories, politics, culture, and social processes could be analyzed.

In *Chautari Natak*, stories are simple but challenging to share. Every participant has a lived a story, but few interested participants told their own story. Local artists argued that most of the plots were about cross-cultural, cross-gender, political conflict, and economic hardship of marginalized communities. The core of the program is storytelling and participatory listening. Listening was participatory because all participants traveled together with the story's plot, and expressed sympathy, empathy,

---

[*]The founder of playback Theatre, Jonathan Fox, visited Nepal to train *ChautariNatak* (Nepali version of playback theatre) to national and local artists. Artists managed meeting with him at Kathmandu in 2016.

and sociality. Chirimaya Tamang, one of the storytellers at Theatre Village aftermath of the earthquake, expressed that she became happy the first time after the earthquake by observing Playback Theatre. Her face was smiling. She added that many displaced women and elderly were interested in sharing their stories of loss and suffering, but there were not any contexts of sharing in the village. In Kathmandu, they were supported by different agencies and made coordinated for this storytelling and performance program. She admitted that she was not alone and the only sufferer of the earthquake disaster. She was trying to make connections with people both donor and affected. She thanked the organizer for giving her the opportunity of sharing her story. The overarching theme of the *Chautari Natak* is storytelling promotes social cohesion, and art can serve social harmony. Narendra Shrestha, one of the local artists of *Chautari Natak* from Bardiya, expressed his reflections:

> *Chautari Natak* is more about the story rather than about performance. Simple performance skill is enough, but participatory listening is essential. Here, characters are not the focus of the participant; instead, storytellers are the main center of attraction. The tellers try to communicate lessons, education, or mere experience. Artists' message and creation are tough to understand among the participant in this site. Though I am a skilled artist for conventional performance, *Chautari Natak* is a new experience of performance. Many NGOs and government institutions contracted me to perform issues-based street drama in different parts of the district.

Shrestha believed that plot of the story and mood of the storyteller set the degree of seriousness of participants in *Chautari Natak*. The participant laughed when there was a comedy plot, and on the contrary, they cried when stories were pathetic and sentimental. Participants have no preoccupied mood. The dialogue facilitators argued that active listening of the story and participatory engagement are the necessary steps of a successful performance. Yubraj, a facilitator from Udayapur, reflects the program as:

> It is different from conventional performances. Its focus is not performance. In the beginning, while I missed a portion of the story. At the time of performance, I lost myself. I realized that this was a totally unfair practice in *Chautari Natak*. Then, I corrected myself. I engaged in the story. I placed myself at the place of a storyteller; then, it was easy to embody the story. My performance depicted the themes of the storytellers.

> Storytellers have a variety of responses to their experience of storytelling. Most of them said that they have hesitated initially, but when they started, they came up without fear and hesitation. Radha said that there was a dilemma in her mind whether to tell or not. When she heard a story from an earlier teller, she went on the stage to speak. She said her real-life story without hesitation. Storytelling participants were highly

appreciated both by participants and local artists. One of the non-telling participants experienced a high degree of discomfort and uneasiness because she was also interested, but she controlled. She argued that she would have faced severe problems from her family members. In some contexts, the social and cultural protocols and values conflicted with the *Chautari Natak*'s values. One of the artists at Mahottari said that women from sophisticated families could not share their personal stories in *Chautari Natak* because they did not think the forum was right place to tell and making personal public was loss of family status.

Anthropologists argued that storytelling were primordial practices of communication of knowledge of history, socialization of youngers, education, and social integrity from one generation to another. Jack Goody (2010) succinctly argued that oral story and the oral myth of the marginalized communities were distorted when they were mixed up with dominant cultural politics, religion and narratives. The dominant history, culture, and mythology influenced the making of characters and plots of the oral narratives. Therefore, the life of the oral history, mythology, and story was suppressed and infiltrated by politico economically dominant history and unequal relationships. Anthropologists have tended to view culture and ritual as performance (Turner, 1969, Douglas, 1966). Particular emphasis has been given to documenting the performative aspects of culture and society, e.g., initiations, tribal celebrations, seasonal festivals (Turner, 1974, 1986, Schechner, 1985, 1988). Sociologists claim that there is a theatre in everyday life (Read, 1993; Goffman, 1959). Goffman (1959) positions social behavior as performance, theorizing that we all perform as part of everyday life. He posits that performance refers to "all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a set of observers and which has some influence on the observers (Goffman, 1959:22)." Victor Turner (1969) argued that stories were performed in a symbolic versions and gradually performative version of stories named rituals. Similarly, the playback theatre offers a contemporary ritual framework from within which individuals can engage with one another at the margins and pursue the magical interactions and rebirththat Berman (1990) claims as 'life-giving' like high castes' *Bartabandha* ritual gives cultural birth of the person. Jack Goody mentioned that a story-based performance form, playback theatre is derivative of the oral tradition (Goody, 2010), merging culturally relevant arts with sacred ritual, personal story, and community gatherings. He further notes that storytelling is a therapeutic method of healing and entertaining among the pre-literate community (Ibid). Narrative scholars argue that enabling such intimate interactions to occur in a public forum paves the way for societal and personal reform through stories. In terms of post-quake trauma healing and social building, the process of playback theatre could be analyzed by Victor Turner's ritual theory of liminality. Van Gennep's three-phase

schema, comprises a separation phase, a liminal (transition, threshold) phase, and a re-entry phase (Turner 1969). The first phase is the pre-liminal phase is a painful, insecure feeling and quite a different world for the storyteller. The second stage that Turner and Gennep called liminal or the stage of ambiguity and confusion is quite similar to the stage of telling and performance. The images of oral narrative and participatory engagement are elementary forms of collective belonging among the participants. Turner (1982) claims that this liminal space invokes "anti-structure" and facilitates an experience of "communities", which Van Gennep (1960) called incorporation.

Literature from performance and ritual theory provide a framework for the inquiry of *Chautari Natak*. Theory about stories and storytelling offers a complementary lens that acknowledges the centrality of personal narrative on the public stage. Ethnographic observation of performances, informal interviews with artist and participants, and program reflexivity supported argument story telling is a method of transforming issues and agendas from private to public. Therefore, storytelling is a political dialogue and a form of a democratic way of communication. The case of post-earthquake playback in Kathmandu, storyteller not only shared their experiences but also demanded socio-economic support from participants implicitly. The storytellers said that participatory engagement on story generated inter subjective feelings which were useful for trauma healing and collective belonging. The political-economic status and differences in physical dispositions are not obstacles to humanistic communication since they are positioned at the same level as the ontological scale (Viveiros de Castro, 2004). When participants, artist and storytellers shared same ontology, they understand each other and people in community better way. For this kind of personal storytelling to work in the modern context of the participant who begins the evening as strangers-accustomed to privacy and expecting to sit back and be entertained-it is essential to create an atmosphere of safety and respect. The actors, on stage throughout the performance, are receptive to the unknown roles they will be asked to play, and come back to their personalities between scenes. The story follows story as a collective drama is built, reflecting the lives of the people present.

An Experience of Communitas[*]: Connection through Stories

Chirimaya Tamang expressed her sense of collectivity among the storytellers and participants when she told the story of her loss and displacement by the earthquake. There were many displaced people in the hall. Participants were both publicly called

---

[*]Communitas is a Latin noun commonly referring either to an unstructured community in which people are equal, or to the very spirit of community. It also has special significance as a loanword in cultural anthropology and the social sciences. Communitas is an intense community spirit, the feeling of great social equality, solidarity, and togetherness.

and requested some of the displaced people who were managed by the government at the open spaces of Kathmandu. Chirimaya shared with me that different people were interested in listening her story of the earthquake. She added that people who heard her story of disaster, tried to support both psychologically and materially. Some participants expressed sympathy, and empathy for her story. She said that more than material and food/shelter sense of social safety, hope and togetherness are energy for the forward life during an earthquake disaster. Her words indicated that experiences of communitas after living by and telling experiences among the participants in Kathmandu.

The concept of communitas is borrowed from Victor Turner's study of ritual stages: pre-liminal stage, liminal stage, and communitas stage (Turner, 1969). Local artists were from different cross-cultural groups. Participants of *Chautari Natak* shared that they reconsidered their previous roles and actions in the community. After participation, they were also interested in telling stories and experiences. They found that whatever they thought about the opponent was not right after listening to stories of fellow neighbors. One of the ex-PLA (people's liberation army) expressed his self-reflection of *Chautari Natak* was:

> The beauty of *Chautari Natak* was that it focused on self-articulation, confession, and telling real life-story. People didn't understand the ex-PLA's feelings and experiences, because their experiences were so different from many local people's lived experiences. People remain detached and simply can't understand or see the relevance in terms of their own lives. After telling the life-experience of ex-PLA, the participants hugged and expressed sympathy upon me. They accepted me again as an ordinary people of the community. The great thing about *Chautari Natak* was that it focused on the emotion of the teller.

In 2006 a peace agreement was signed between the state and the Maoist People's Liberation Army (PLA), ending a decade-long armed conflict that killed over 13,000 people, displaced many more, and left wounds in the hearts of Nepalese citizens. The Maoist Army combatants were stationed in cantonments until the political agreement was found on the terms of their release. The United Nations Mission in Nepal verified about 19,602 of them as former combatants in 2007. In 2012, almost six years later, the cantonments were closed. Most ex-combatants (18,250) set out for the villages after receiving a golden handshake from the government. In this sensitive context, the ex-combatants have been trying to settle and live as regular community members. There were problems of adjustment in the community because of their different behaviors. When ex-PLA participated and told their stories of insurgency, community people understood their compulsion and included in the community. The community's acceptance is analyzed with Turner's concept of communitas (being a mature member of the community after initiation ritual).

Experiences of communitas occurred as participant members witnessed the telling and the dramatization of personal stories in *Chautari Natak*. It was during these times that participant members relaxed to watch and listen together. The heightened intra-personal activity generated by invitation to tell was (mostly) transformed when someone was selected to tell a story. At this time, the tension of participation abated, easing the expectation an individual may have placed on themselves to act. This shift resulted in a move away from heightened individualized engagement due to the possibilities of participation inherent in the form, to become other-focused. The participant shared the experience of listening and watching. It was a shift away from individual agency toward the formation of a collective watching participant. While there was no certainty that whole participants had an experience of communitas at every moment, the study found that many times during a performance some participant members shared a simultaneous experience of watching, listening, or reflecting. The sense of communitas was reinforced during the after-show period, which revealed that many participant members checked in with one another to ascertain how their experiences may have intersected. Communitas could be understood as a group experience of flow. Simultaneous experiences of flow among participant members equated to momentary experiences of communitas arising from a collective emotional response (e.g., laughter or tears) to a story or a spontaneously altered perspective and the simple sharing of applause. At the performances that feature in this study, several people in the participant were found to simultaneously identify with the teller or other characters presented in a story. There were also participant members who had little collective engagement with a story. Often this was transformed when the story was dramatized. Mostly, the teller's performance was a unique and compelling collective experience. Some participant members experienced communitas through a shared aversion to listening to a particular teller.

Chautari Natak: A Metaphor for Community

The term '*Chautari*' connotes the revitalization of communal life in Nepali culture. Traditionally, farmers, porter, visitor, and community people not only get rest under poplar trees but also make gossip, meeting, and decision on *Chautari*. It is a social place as well as a cultural space where poplar trees not only provide oxygen but also a sense of protection, justice, and belongingness. Jurisdiction under poplar trees is considered as a witness of God (poplar tree is an incarnation of God among Hindu people). Socially, it is an open place where anybody can come and participate. Politically, *Chautari* is a democratic space. In this way, the storytelling and performance activities captured the traditional concept of the community. I discuss the notion that the *Chautari Natak* is a metaphor for society. Conceived as a public event,

the community-based *Natak* performance places emphasis on local stories as a means of connection and building community. The immediacy of the storytelling performances and the dramatic transformations of them on stage provide multiple metaphors for a community experience. It challenged mainstream theatrical performance, the sophisticated plot of theatre, and the dominant social protocols in the community context. Sunita Rai, one of the storytellers on *Chautari Natak*, said, "Stories are local and the artists are also local; therefore, participants find organic flavor on the *Chautari Natak* performance."Participants respond by either accepting or rejecting the challenge, and thus entering or resisting the liminal experience. The call to risk is reacted by participant participation and is reliant on individual agency.

 Chautari Natak summons participants active listening. Unlike the individual agency underpinning the necessary culture of risk-taking the call to listen engenders collective action. The performance is a counter-cultural social environment where people are encouraged to share stories. This requires all participants (without hierarchy), listening for what's being said, what's being shown, and missing. In terms of the development of human agency (capacity to act despite constraints) among marginalized groups, the *Natak* could be further studied in this perspective. In some stories, issues were trivial, but they were necessary for marginalized people. The *Natak* provides space for trivial matters of laypeople that demands further analysis in terms of 'small is beautiful,' and lay life matter.

Conclusion

 Chautari Natak is an interactive form of theatre based on the personal stories of local participants. In the *Natak* (a performance), a series of stories are spontaneously told by volunteer tellers. Each tale is then paired with a discrete dramatic enactment inspired by the particular plot, mood, and images inherent in the 'just-told' narrative. A story-based performance form, *Chautari Natak* is derivative of the oral tradition merging culturally relevant arts with sacred ritual, personal story, and community gatherings. The *Natak* combines cultural ingredients of oral narratives and ritual performance by its names and content. Stories and performances are straightforward, accessible to marginalized community members, and anti-structural in terms of the social hierarchy of communication. In general contexts, elites did not share, listen, and communicate trivial issues with laypeople. Participants not only sit together but also interact, listen, and they communicate with other participants, which leads towards harmonious social relations or communitas.

 In this way, the *Chautari Natak* method enables everyone to take responsibility for the telling spaces shared. This generates a spirit of inquiry and curiosity about the other. The *Natak* opens a space where people can meet in their sameness and difference

and potentially rise above estrangement and judgment. As an ephemeral community experience, the *Natak* offers a chance for participant members to see others in a different light and perhaps overcome estrangement by knowing and understanding more about them. The mutuality implicit in the form means that this may create reciprocal opportunities for seeing and coming to know more of the Other. These public reflexive *Nataks* promote insight, with participants members thinking about what they think and feel or, perhaps more significantly, discussing what they think and believe. Experiences that foster the erosion of social distance due to reflection, or as a result of discussion between individuals because of perceived difference, no matter how small or intangible, represent an opportunity for a community. At many of the study performances, several people referred to the importance of hearing the stories of the others, from bureaucrats hearing the stories of people with mental illness to older women hearing the stories of younger women. This hearing practice might be termed 'a community narrative' (Rapapport, 2000) that embodies the shared experience of the performance and the stories told within the performance. Like an oral history that evokes the tradition and lore of the gathered participant, *Chautari Natak* elucidates multiple truths and celebrates the courage and social coherence of the participant/community. Future researchers could analyze the *Chautari Natak* through the lens of human agency development, trivial issue matter, the resistance of marginalized groups, and subaltern studies.

References

Benjamin, W. (1970). The storyteller: Reflections on the works of Nikolai Leskov. In W. Benjamin (ed.). *Illuminations*. London: Collins/Fontana.

Berman, M. (1990). *Coming to our senses: Body and spirit in the hidden history of the west*. NY: Bantam Books.

Douglas, M. (1966). *Purity and danger*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Fox, J. (1994). *Acts of service: Spontaneity, commitment, tradition in the nonscripted theatre*. New Paltz: Tusitala Publishing.

Fox, J. and Dauber, H. (eds) (1999). *Gathering voices: Essays in playback theatre*. New Paltz, New York: Tusitala Publishing.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. NY: Doubleday.

Goody, J. (2010). *Myth, ritual and the oral.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Habermas, J. (1984). The theory of communicative action: Reason and the rationalization of society. Boston: Beacon Press.

Nayaran, K. (2004). Honor is honor, after all: Silence and speech in the life stories of women in Kangra, North-West India. In D. Arnold and S. Blackburn, (eds.), *Telling lives in India: Biography, autobiography and life history,* (Pp. 227-251). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Pro-Public. (2017). Enacting Dialogue – Community Level Reconciliation through Theatre-Facilitated Dialogue. External Evaluation Report, Pro-Public.

Rappaport, J. (2000). Community narrative: Tales of terror and joy. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 28(1), 1-24.

Read, A. (1993). *Theatre and everyday Life: an ethics of performance*. London, NY: Routledge.

Sartre, J. P. (2000). *Nausea*. London: Penguin.

Schechner, R. (1985). *Between theatre and Anthropology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Schechner, R. (1988). *Performance theory*. NY: Routledge.

Scott, J. C. (1985). *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*. London: Yale University Press.

Subedi, A. (2006). *Nepali theatre as I see*. Kathmandu: Gurukul.

Turner, V. (1969). *The ritual process*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Turner, V. (1974). *Dramas, fields and metaphors*. NY: Cornell University Press.

Turner, V. (1982). *From ritual to theatre: the human seriousness of play*. NY: PAJ Publications.

Turner, V. (1986). *The anthropology of performance*. PAJ Publications, NY.

Van Gennep, A. (1960). *The rites of passage*. M. B. Vizedom and G. L. Caffee (Trans. & eds.). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Vatuk, S. (2004). HamaraDaur-i Hayat: An Indian Muslim woman writes her life. In D. Arnold and S. Blackburn, (eds.), *Telling lives in India: Biography, autobiography and life history,* (Pp. 144-174). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Viveiros de Castro, E. (2004). Exchanging perspectives: The transformation of objects into subjects in Amerindian ontologies. *Common Knowledge,* vol. 1 0/3: 463-84.

Chhaupadi Pratha: Women's Experiences and Perceptions about Social Suffering

Nirajan Khadka[*]

Abstract

Chhaupadi Pratha, a *socio-cultural system, is mostly exercised at the Far Western region of Nepal. The system is linked with biological process of women's menstrual period. Women are kept in small sheds away from home during their menstrual period. Besides difficulties staying in a small hut, they have to suffer from many physical and psychological problems. In that period, they are not allowed to take part in religious ceremonies, family kitchen for nutritious food, and family home for security, and warm. This article attempts to analyze women's experience and perception towards* Chhaupadi *system. In doing so, it investigates how women are suffering from the Chhaupadi system and its consequences. This ethnographic research employed unstructured in-depth conversations and key informant interviews methods to collect information. This research finds that these women are affected physically and mentally by the practices of* Chhaupadi. *The practice restricts women's safe live and educational opportunity because they are restricted touching anything during their period. The concept of pollution and purity differentiate the life situation of women which is depended on monthly menstrual bleeding. Menstruating women are believed as polluted that's why they are forced to live small shed and face various difficulties. Non-menstruating women are believed as a pure. Consequently, their social relationship disturbed by shame and restriction. Living in the* Chhaupadi *shed brings psychological and physical threats. The discrimination during the periods faced by women is considered as violation of fundamental human rights. Women activists are engaged in campaign against the system.*

Introduction

In most parts of the developed world, women are assumed that their menstrual period remain a part of their private lives, and it does not affect their ability to work, go

---

[*]Mr. Khadka has completed MPhil in Anthropology from Tribhuvan University, Nepal, and has been working in development fields in various organizations.

to school, or contribute to society(Kandel et al, n.d.). In Nepal, menstruated women are considered "polluted" and "impure". During their menstrual period, they are avoided from participating everyday routine lives. Their restriction is socially influenced in their private issue. Even in this modern-time, women and girls are sent to spend the duration of their monthly menstruation periods isolated in an unsanitary shed; this is a common and accepted ritualistic practice for women (Manzullo, 2011).This system is known as *Chhaupadi Pratha* in which women and girls are restricted to touch anything and have to live in small shed during menstruation. It is a normal practice prevalent in the Far-West and some parts of the Mid-West region in Nepal (Kindle et al, n. d.).

It is common for women who are regarded as 'impure' and untouchable during their menstruation (Maharjan, 2010). Everything they touch during their menstruation days considered as impure (Mazzulo, 2011). The word *Chhaupadi* came from the Achhami local language word. *Chhau* means menstruation and *Padi* means woman (Kandel et al, n. d.). *Chhaupadi* means "Menstruating woman." The *Chhaupadi* is a practice of keeping women and girls outside the house in a separate small and dark place known as *Chhau-goth* (Dahal et al, 2017). However, they are isolated from family, relatives, and society as well.

Centuries old *Chaupadi* system of ritual has been banishing Nepali women and girls at the time of menstruation. The history of menstruation is considered to be followed from religious description where it was believed that Gods and Goddesses became angry with women who stay with the family at house during menstruation. Based on the religious folklore, Indra, the King of Heaven, was accused of killing a Brahmin (Hussain, 2012). For him, because of the illicit acts with women, the Indra committed during his quest to redeem his sin, for these acts all women were ordered to be punished through menstruation. There are direct religious aspects for following practices. When, a Hindu woman reaches in maturity, she is kept in a dark room for thirteen days during their first and second menstrual cycle and four days of every other menstrual cycle ((Kandel et al, n.d.). In the case of woman who have baby, she has to stay in shed for five days and married woman has to stay for only four days (Maharjan, 2010).

Objectives and Methodology

The general objective of this study is to analyze women's perceptions and experiences about *Chhaupadi* system. Specifically, the objectives of this study are to describe women condition in the process of *Chhaupadi Pratha* and to investigate the women's experience and perception towards *Chhaupadi* system.

The research was conducted from Chaurpati Rural Municipality ward no. 6 Duni village in Achham. The study was based on descriptive research design and qualitative

by nature. For this study, I used in-depth interviews, group discussion, observation, and oral history methods to collect information. The secondary literatures are also reviewed.

Ideology of pollution and purity

Menstrual bleeding is believed an extreme impurity in *Chhaupadi* system and discriminatory menstrual practice is imposed on women (KC, 2018). The concept of pollution and Purity are central idea of caste and gender (Bennet, 1983). Through the gender perspectives women are believed as impure or polluted during their monthly periods by women and men also. The ideology of purity-pollution is related to states of peoples, objects, and actions (Douglas, 1966). Likewise, the women were decided pure-pollute by their monthly states and action following that idea. In every society, there are concepts of purity and pollution. Both of them exist at the same time in which purity makes social order and pollution brings disturbance in social order (Bennet, 1983). During *Chhaupadi*, women are treated as bodily polluted during the period of menstruation. In the case of Achham, most of the social relations of the people directed by the idea of purity and pollution. There were various actors to define the practices of purity and pollution. They were shaman (*Dhami*), the regular worshiper (*Pujari),* and the priest (*Brahaman*), who has strictly abided by the norms of impurity avoidance. They forced to follow the *Chhaupadi* system by making the norms of impurity avoidance. For them, menstruation is considered contamination of body. About impurity Kali BK (name changed) said, *"Chau bhaya pachhi baikinika hada bati ragat aaudochha tei ragat le nachhunya banaunya ho, pan dinka dini ragat aauna banda vaya pachhi baikini gaiko gaut khayera chokhkhinichhan"* (when a woman menstruates, the blood comes out from the body that blood makes women untouchable. After five days, the blood stops to come out then they become pure or touchable after drinking cow's urine.)

Women's Condition in Chhaupadi System

Chhaupadi practice was running based on the belief that when woman has her monthly period, she herself feels "impure" and "pollute" and "contaminate" the staying outside the house during her menstruation periods (Rebaud, 2011). Women were socialized such a way that they themselves believed the biological process of menstruation was polluted. They have to follow the system because it becomes general norms. In the strictest observation of *Chhaupadi*, the women are prevented from looking at the sun, interacting with other family, and community members. They are restricted having dairy products and conducting their regular activities. These restrictions make women detached from the various things in the society that caused the mental torture. Furthermore, the women are badly treated in the community because it

is believed that if they touch the fruit trees, the fruits will fall before ripen time or the fruits tree will dry. It is also believed that if the menstruate woman touches the source of water, the water source will dry up; if the cattle are fed or milked by her, blood will come out of their teats instead of milk (Rebaud, 2011). Believing in these things, women felt discriminated and deprived from the common daily activities. It is believed that menstruating woman cannot touch anyone; if anyone touches her, they need to be purified by taking a bath and drinking cow's urine. This is the process that brings people impurity to purity. Biologically, menstruating woman needs rest but in the case of *Chhaupadi* system woman has to engaged in hard labor, such as working in the farms, collecting firewood, washing clothes, and so on (Sharma, 2010). It is believed that if the woman does not follow these practices, there could be different of negative impacts such as she could become sick or even dies; her bones could break; she could become infertile; other family members could fall ill or even die (Kandel et al, n. d.). These are hidden forced to follow the system.

During the interaction with Tulasa Auji (name changed), she shared her bitter experiences. Each month, during her menstruation, she had to stay in small shed. She asked herself "Oh God! Why have you given this torture to the women?" Her experience of staying in the shed is so horrible. She is even obligated to take her meals in this unclean place. Likewise, Mrs. Dhana BK also has to stay in her menstrual hut. Because of poverty, the community cannot construct another shelter for use as *Chhau* shed. If they touch something accidentally, then the item should be cleaned immediately. If the women touch their husband or other family members, then they must bathe to clean themselves. During this period, she felt as if she was treated an animal and, for this reason, she wanted to share her experience.

Housing Pattern for *Chhaupadi*

Housing pattern of *Chhaupadi Goths* found different in different community and geographical area. Many of the *Chhaupadi goths* are built within the household premises, but in other cases, they are built far from the homes, up to hundred meters away from the houses (Amgain, 2011). It was found that the space of *Goth* could not adjust more than two women but more than two women stayed in a hut. The hut was constructed about four feet long, four feet wide, and four feet height. It was made of mud, stone, and wood. There was no windows and ventilation. A *Chhaupadi* shed, generally, is built from stone, grass and stick. The sheds found very unhygienic, airless and poorly built. During their stay at shed, they did not use sufficient clothes and utensils because they were not allowed pollute more clothes and pots. After period, they have to purify these clothes and pots. They cannot stand within the shed. The *Chhaupadi* sheds were filthy floors. The dung and other wastes were collected in front

of the shed. Because of the congested shelter and poor sanitary conditions, women were left, completely separated that cause issues of life threatening. If a woman has physical problems during monthly periods, she could not get any chance to get help from family and community. This may be a cause of death. About *Chhaupadi Goth* Naru Saud (name changed) said, *"Goth ghar dhekhi alli para saguro adhyaro hudochha naap thauma pana tin char jana suttachhan"* (The shed is constructed a little far from the house with narrow space and three or four persons should stay there.)

Belief of *Chhaupadi Pratha*

Chhaupadi is such a traditional practice that has been in existence that banishes women from their house during their menstrual bleeding and this practice is derived from a Hindu tradition related to association with menstruation (Katarina & Are, 2015).Many social and cultural beliefs reflect a gender bias and discriminatory attitude by considering menstrual blood is polluted and impure (Joshi, 2015). *Chhaupadi* practice has been widely recognized as a social norm in some communities of Hindu society in Nepal through religious rituals (Acharya, 2017).The most ordinary cultural belief demonstrated by the respondents was that women are considered polluted and untouchable during the period (Lama & Kamraj, 2015).There was a belief that, if a woman touched so-called sacred thing during her menstruation period, then it would happen disaster such as cholera, diarrhea, landslides, heavy rain, etc. If anyone doesn't follow the norms of *Chhaupadi*, the society will face premature death and some suddenly accident. The local beliefs about *Chhaupadi are related* with health, illness and death. There are many narratives of improper Chhaupadi and illness and deaths of people. For instance, Devi Luhar (name changed) said, *"Chhaupadiko chalanlaina manya pachhi hunyana hunya biram lagdachhan, saap kattochha, deota risai anikaal lagdochha, gai goruko nuksan hudochha"* (if we don't follow the tradition of *Chhaupadi*, there will expand unknown lines in the community; snake will bite, deity will become angry, there seems scarcity of food, cases of premature death of girls, and sickness and death of cattle.)

There is a popular narrative in Patalkot, one of the joined villages of the research. Shanti higher secondary school is located near the temple of Goddess Durga named Sannitkot in the village. So-called lower castes (Dalits) and the menstruating women were prohibited to enter the temple. If they break the tradition and enter the temple, they will face various problems such as madness, death, and faint.

Food Behavior and Work Burden

All the *Chhaupadi* women I have talked with were not allowed having dairy product. They were not allowed eating meat of offered goats, buffalos, hens and ducks

in temple during the festival. They did not touch fruit trees. They ate rice, *daal*, vegetable and chapatti during their monthly period. Answering my question Narpata Saud (name changed) says, if they drink milk, the cow or buffalo will not give milk. And answering my question The Champak Sonar (name changed) said, *"Chhau bhyaka bela dud, dai, chhai, ghiu kei khana millaina sukhkha bhat daal tartari matrai khana paidochha, kasai deotalai chdayaka kukuda bakhrako masu pana khana millaina, khaya pachhi deota risauchha".* (If Chhaupadi women eat offered animals, the god will be angry so badly that their life will be lost. They have to participate in hard labor out of the house, such as, farm work firewood collection, washing clothes, and so on.") Chameli Kami (name changed) said that; *"Aba Chhau bhayaka bela hamle ghar bhitrako sajilo kaam harna millaina, ghar bairako ghas katnya, daura lyaunya, khannya, syaula lyaunya jasa kaam harnu paddochha."*(During the menstruation period, we are not allowed to be engaged in easy work within the house. We should be engaged in hard work outside such as grass cutting, firewood collection, field digging etc.)

Most of the *Chhaupadi* women I have talked were living at the small shed far from their home. They didn't allow entering home and cooking food for their family. The women were not allowed to take part on religious ceremonies. I observed that some menstruating women did not participate in local rituals called Bhuwa. They have to bathe every day and wash clothes by using cold water. Moreover, there was small separate tape and well for menstruating women. This tape and well not used by common people.

Dharma and *Paap*

Chhaupadi practice is associated with Hindu Dharma, which illustrated that the menstruation as a "curse," and menstruating woman as "impure, "even though menstruating women are prohibited from usual religious ceremonies, including entering home, prayer rooms and the temples (Amity et al., 2018).Once, I asked to a woman, (name changed Kabita Saud) what happens, if you go inside the house during menstruation. She shared me that it was a sinful act *(Paap lagne kaam ho).* "I cannot do like that and if I did that my cows and buffalo will be ill and tiger can take goat from the cowsheds". Many girls and women follow the tradition in the name of Dharma. They thought that following the tradition was a Dharma (main duty) of them. If they break the rule of *Chhaupadi,* their Dharma will be destroyed. Violation of Dharma also a sinful act *(Paap Lagchha).* If dairy product such as milk, curd, and ghee are given to the girls and women of period, who come in contact with religious place, fruit-bearing trees, then it is considered as sin *(Paap)* (Kandel, Bhandari and Lamichanne, n. d.). The most of the women and girls do not want to be a sinful (paapi) by violating the *Chhaupadi* rules

and other family members do not want to take the risk. The concept of *Dharma* and *Paap* embedded in local social structure is a driving force to continue the *Chhaupadi* practice in the region. Similarly Desara Luhar (name changed) said, *"Chhaupadi gotha nabasi khera gharai basya pachhi pada ni deotako than hudochha taludi Chhaupadi bays pachhi deota risaudachhan, paap lagdochha, chhal hudochha, gothaka goru maddachhan bana bakhralai bag khadochha, gharaka maisa birami paddachhan"* (if she stays at home during the period, the god from the upper room of the house will be angry, then, she will have bear sin *(Paap).* It will harm to family member and castles.)

Tuli Auji (name changed) said to me that they had to face various difficulties if not followed *Chhaupadi* system. For her, *Chhaupadi* is sinful *(Paap Lagchha*. She shared me a story that she had herded. She Said "A woman was not following the system in the village. In the menstruation period, she lived inside the home, drunk dairy products, went anywhere through the way of temple. One day her son went to a jungle to gather fire wood. Then, a tiger attacked and killed her son. She relates the story with the consequences of not following *Chhaupadi*. It was considered a cause of bearing sin *(Paap Lagyo).*

Shamanism *(Dhami-Jhakri)*

Shamanism is the process of *Dhami-Jhakri.* It is believed on supernatural power. The *Chhaupadi* system is associated with *Dhami-Jhakri* system. *Dhamis-Jhakris* are local religious leader, a representative of god. So, everybody followed their rules of *Chhaupadi*. They were the main illustrator of myth and superstition. *Dhami-Jhakri* is also a reason for following the system. According to a local *Dhami,* if woman doesn't follow *Chhaupadi* process, the God *(Deota)* will be angry *(Risauchha)*. The *Dhami* might fall sick, and the *Dhami's* neck will bend on the back side. Sometimes, he might become faint. It accelerates the belief that menstrual women should not come in contact with sacred things once set on the processes of evolution of different socio-political systems (Amgain, 2011). An old women shared me a narrative that, "If someone is feeling suffering from any problems, if one's buffalo left to give the milk then he or she goes for *Dhami* to ask what happened to them, then *Dhami* shack and blame the break of *Chhaupadi* process. So, the *Dhami*, the symbol of local deity, who exercises the power of deity, plays roles for the perpetuation of the *Chhaupadi* rules.

A younger girl responded that the women followed the tradition because of the fear of local deity *(Dhami/Deota)*. For them, many people's life depends on the power of local deity during natural disaster. Many people believe that they will be saved from many unfortunate happenings because the power of their local deity. The person, who invoked some supernatural power, made be shacking the *Dhami* during religious functions and gatherings. They are considered as pure people. They have to maintain

the contact of bodily impure people such as Dalit and *Chhaupadi* women. So-called pure *Dhamis* and *Jhakris* do not eat the meal made by polluted hand. In the case of *Chhau*, they do not walk the way from where the menstruated walked. Once, I asked with a woman about *Dhami*, what would happen if a girl or woman touches him during the period of menstruation, she said, *"Chhaupadi baikini chhau bhyaka bela dhamika hada lagya pachhi deota risaudachhan tabai dhami birami paddachhan, tei baikini lai pana baulyaudochha".* (if menstruating women touched the *Dhami*, the god would be angry, the *Dhami* would get sick and the woman would shake her body.)

Pārbati Saud (name changed) shared me an incident. There was a big stone in front of her house. It is believed that the god *(Deota)* lives on the stone menstruating women were prohibited to touch and go near the stone. A couple of days ago, she was bringing the grass for cattle. There was raining and the grass become wet. Her sister kept the grass on the big stone. The grass brought by her touched the stone. She was menstruating. Then, the god (*Deota*) had been angry. The big snake, as a symbol of god, was standing in front of her house. Then after, her mother-in-law visited there and apologized to the snake by saying, "Please god forgives us! It was our big fault! We will never do such acts!" Then, the snake went and disappeared slowly far from the house. The incident reflects the strict belief upon Shamanic interpretation of menstruation.

Women's Perceptions

Most of the women with whom I talked to interpret the *Chhaupadi* practice shared stories of Hindu culture. Menstruation is a form of taboos and stigma. They feel that, menstruation is harmful for them and their family till not following the system. They believed that if didn't maintain this tradition; the community would no longer be able to survive. A Dalit woman shared her story of her first menstruation. At the first, she felt shyness to share with her family members. Her friend shared the case with her mummy. After that, she was separated from her family. She was kept in a small dark shed where she never been. In this period, she felts suffocation in a small sheds. She could not sleep whole night and became mentally unstable thinking of security and biological change. After completing the periods, she could not show up her face to the male family member thinking that she had committed sinful act. Women of Duni revealed that staying in *Chhaupadi* shed was very challenging because there might happens many accidents such as snake bite, wild animals attack and possibility of rape. These are cause of fear staying at the *Chhau* shed. Some women revealed that having bathe and washing cloth early in winter morning with cold water was challenging task.

A woman Kabita Saud (name changed) shared that when she started to live in shed for her menstruation, it was very uncomfortable situation than staying at home she

faced. For her, she can be most insecure from various things in shed also. She alienated from family and community. That's why she has suffered mentally and physically. Women to whom I talked have known that in their monthly period, they need more supports, but in case of *Chhaupadi*, there are restricted from all support. This is very torturing for women. Despite knowing the entire thing, they cannot do anything because they are quite being afraid from local cultural belief. An old Dhauli Saud (name changed) woman described that the menstruating is much honored for women because menstruating is starting process to be a mother. She said, *"Phul phulnu phal lagnu kati ramro ho testai ta ho chhau hunu pana"* (just as flowering is for being fruits so is menstruating for being mother.).She was blaming the community for not considering menstruating as good rather it is taken as a sinful act and restricted from family and community. She argued if this Chhaupadi system lifts the restriction, then that would be very grateful for women.

Changes in the System

Even in this modern day, *Chhaupadi* system is pervasively exercised in Achham. The system penetrated in people's mind. Therefore, they could not change the system collectively. Cultural beliefs, religious values, and superstition on power of God are some major effective factors of continuation of *Chhaupadi* system (Karki & Khadka, 2019).Some people still believe that a god or goddess become angry if the practice is not followed, which is cause of result in harm, death of livestock or destruction of crops (Gautam, 2017).

Supreme Court decided that *Chhaupadi* was discriminatory punitive act in 2005. And the parliament has recently passed a bill to criminalize the practice. Nevertheless, the decision has not ensured compliance, as the practice is still widely practiced in this area (Jun, 2018).The Guideline is the specific provision made for combating *Chhaupadi* problem in 2008. But it is not well-known even to district line agencies in all *Chhaupadi* affected region as well. The Ministry of Women, Child and Social Welfare promulgated it as per the Supreme Court directives for the Ministry. This guideline defines *Chhaupadi*, its effect, and need of action, objectives, and its mechanisms (Chary, 2017). Padma (name changed), a Community Mobilize, came to understand the negative effects of "*Chhaupadi Pratha*". She gave up following such practices and stayed in her home during menstruation. However, during this time, her goats were killed by wild animals. All of her family members believed that Chhaupadi was their norms. She refused to adhere to tradition. Then, she was treated as a bad woman who spoiled their family and the god. This fear reinforced her in the practices. She felt that the "god and goddess were not happy with her". She continued the practice again, despite some reluctance. When she appointed a community mobilizer of a local NGO,

she worked on empowering women of the community. She learned more about women's and children's issues. Now, she, along with her family members, does not believe and follow such practices.

Likewise, women are somewhat leaving to stay in *Chhaupadi Goth* after *Chhaupadi Goth* free campaign conducted by local governments. Women started to use alternative shelter of *Chhaupadi Goth*. Some women stayed in the room attached with the house. But they don't enter at the house and kitchen. The women from the Chhaukhutte Bazar area are not following the system because of lack of availability of *Goth* and market penetration.

Conclusion

This study concludes that *Chhaupadi* system is still predominant practices of women in Duni village. The menstruate women continued to stay in small shed away from the home. Based on information in the, the women experienced various suffering and problems in the *Goth*. They felt isolated from the society. They were restricted from the dietary foods and dairy products. They have heavy workload because of the restriction from household work. They felt polluted and impure during periods. The belief of the local culture perpetuated the system of practiced in the community. *Chhaupadi* system is considered the process to maintain Dharma and protection from the *Paap*. Shamanism is also a triggering factor in the community. The *Dhami* is the main actor to describe the rules. People of the Achham do not consider *Chhaupadi* system as natural action but treated as a cultural construction (Amgain, 2011). The women felt that the system was making their status inferior in the community. Gender discrimination and violation of human rights of women were observed in the system. The study found that only the women are following the system. Men are the actors who force women to follow the system. These days, resistance campaigns against Chhaupadi are organized. Women felt psychologically and physically annoying for performing *Chhaupadi* system. Some changes in the system were observed and the causes of changes were the anti-*Chhaupadi Goth* campaign, education and other development activities.

References

Acharya, B. K. (2017). *A Study of Chhaupadi Pratha (Menstrual Discrimination) in Nepal: Its Causes and Consequences*. [Unpublished master's thesis] EwhaWomansUniversity.www.googlescholar.com.

Amity, P. Ghimire, S., Callahan, K. E., Baral, B.K., & Poudel, K.C. (2018).*Practice and lived experience of menstrual exiles (Chhaupadi) among adolescent girls in far-western Nepal.PLoS ONE 13*(12).https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.

Amgain, B. (2011). Social Dimension of *Chhaupadi* System Study from Achham District, Far West Nepal. *Social Inclusion Research Fund (SIRF)*, SNV Nepal.

Bennett, L. (1983).*Dangerous Wives and Sacred Sisters: Social and Symbolic Roles of High Caste Women in Nepal*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Dahl, B.P., Chary, S., Munakarmi, R., Sunar, T. & Parajuli, B. (2017).*Chhaupadi and education of girls: A study on effects of Chhaupadi practices on education of adolescent girls in Karnali, Nepal. Kathmandu*: Action Works Nepal & BEE Group.www.googlescholar.com.

Douglas, M. (1966).*Purity and Danger: an Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo.* New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Gautam, Y. (2017). Chhaupadi: A Menstrual Taboo in Far Western Nepal. *Journal of Nursing and Healthcar*e, *2*(4), 1-4. www.googlscholar.com.

Husssain, N. (2011).*Chaupadi pratha: tradition or torment?, Human Rights.* http://www.restlessbeing.org/.

Joshi, L. R. (2015). "Chhaupadi Pratha: Socio-cultural Violence against Women in the Far Western Region of Nepal". *Journal of Nepal Public Health Association*, *6*(1), 22-32.http://journal.nepha.org.np/images/Chhaupadi_Partha.pdf.

Jun, M. (2018). The Role of Social Capital in Shaping Policy Non-compliance for Chhaupadi Practice in Nepal. *Asian Women, 34* (3), 47-70. https://doi.org/10.14431/aw.2018.09.34.3.47.

Kadariya, S. & Aro, A.R. (2015).Chhaupadi practice in Nepal – analysis of ethical aspects. *Medicolegal and Bioethics,* 1-6. https://www.dovepress.com/.

Kandel, N., Bhandari, A. R. & Lamichnne, J. (n. d.) *"Chhue, Chhaupadi and Chueekula Pratha" – Menstrual Sheds: Examples of Discriminatory Practices against Women in the Mid- and Far-Western Regions of Nepal: Considering Women as "Impure" or "Unclean" During Menstruation and Post-Partum Periods, Nepal.*http://nirmalkandel.com/wp-ntent/uploads/2014/03/Journal1.pdf.

Karki, T. B. & Khadka, K. (2019). Social Discourses on Practices and Remedies of Harmful Tradition of Chhaupadi in Far Western Region of Nepal. *Nepal Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (NJMR), 2* (1), 1-6.www.googlscholar.com.

KC, S. (2018).*Impacts on social well-being of women due to the CHHAUPADI tradition (Being untouchable during menstruation) among the women of far western Nepal* [Unpublished master's thesis] Oslo Metropolitan University.www.googlscholar.com.

Lama, D. & Kamraj, R. (2015). Maternal and Child Health Care in Chhaupadi Pratha, Social seclusion of mother and child after delivery in Achham, Nepal. *Public Health Research, 4,* 22-33. www.googlscholar.com.

Maharjan, S. (2010). *Chhaupadi Pratha: An Actus Reus*. http://nepaenglish.com/.

Mazzulo, Y. P.(2011). *Chhaupadi Pratha*: The taboo of menstruation:
    http://www.examiner.com/.

Rebaud, J. T. (2011). Monthly stigma: The practice of '*Chhaupadi*' in Nepal. *Ethics in Action*, *5*(5).http://www.ethicsinaction.asia/.

Sandbakken, L.D. (2011). The Practice of *Chhaupadi*: The Link between Local Cultural
Understanding and Women's Rights in Rural Nepal. *Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Technology Management, Department of Geography*.www.googlescholar.com.

Sharma, R. (2010). Chhaupadi. *Nyaya Health*. http://blog.nyayahealth.org/.

Buddhist Literature: A Cosmopolitan Philosophy

Pradeep Kumar Giri, PhD[*]

Abstract

This article argues that literatureof Buddha's philosophy has cosmopolitan nature. Buddhists do not believe in a personal creator God. In this sense, Buddhism is more than a religion; it is not centered only on the relationship between humans and a high God. Buddhism is a philosophical tradition that believes and centers on personal spiritual development. It is a humanistic way of life which can be understood as motivated to lead a moral life; it is also conscious of one's thoughts and actions as well as in developing wisdom and compassion. Both Buddhism and cosmopolitanism assert the dignity of every human being; these ideals aim at improving the condition of life. Philanthropy, empathy, and compassion can be considered as synonyms for Buddhism and cosmopolitanism. Service to fellow human beings is at the center for a cosmopolitan. When humans ascend the material concerns like pleasure and material desire, they are free to fulfill responsibilities to fellow human beings so that they can go up and beyond the close family members to all human beings, which is the philosophy of both Buddhism and cosmopolitanism. In both the Buddhist and cosmopolitan philosophy there is basic consideration of humanity. Buddhist social thought offers something to cosmopolitan ethics that cosmopolitanism's desire to enhance 'human interconnectedness' is truly helpful to minimize the human sufferings. In this article, my goal is to explore and show Buddhism as a cosmopolitan philosophy.

Key words: Buddhism, Cosmopolitanism, humanistic way, wisdom, compassion,

Commonality in Cosmopolitan and Buddhist Philosophy

On the basis of the commonality and mutual inclusivity in the notions of cosmopolitanism and Buddhism they can march together in the issue of the development of humanity. In both the Buddhism and cosmopolitanism there is 'basic considerations of humanity' (Linklater 2007: 135). Linklater's argument is that common humanity can be the basis of harmonious unity which is treated with deep skepticism in the social sciences today notwithstanding attempts to rescue the broader ideal (Wilde 2004: 162).

[*]Dr. Giri has done PhD from Tribhuvan University and has been working as the Associate Professor of English at Trichandra Campus, TU, Nepal.

Buddhist thought accepts the notion that suffering is common and omnipresent; it considers social collectivities that give emphasis to deep bonds of accountability and affinity at all levels of both the human and on-human world. There is suffering in human. The strength of its suffering solidarity complex rests on a fundamental explanation of the self. Buddhist social thought suggests something to cosmopolitan ethics that cosmopolitanism's desire to enhance 'human interconnectedness (Linklater 2009) is really helpful to minimize the sufferings that humans face.

Altruism, empathy, and compassion are synonyms for Buddhism and humanism. Whether we call it-- enlightenment or -- the conviction that humanity has the ability to progress toward its highest ideals, and we are, indeed, on common ground.

Buddhism is a philosophical movement that follows the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama. The Buddha's philosophy of life teaches the right way to live. The Buddha's teachings aimed at eliminating ignorance by understanding and seeing dependent origination and eliminating desire, and thus attain nirvana. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity. Humanism is a philosophy inspired by art and informed by science; it is motivated by compassion. It supports the expansion of individual liberty and opportunity; it also asserts the dignity of each human being. It gives importance and advocates for human rights and social justice. Humanism, thus, derives the goals of life from human need and interest rather than from theological or ideological notions, and stresses that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny. It is understood that the 'sticky web of universalism' (Santoro 2011) mixed up in arguments for humanity produces both exclusion and integration.

A Critical Reflection on the Buddha and the Buddhist Philosophy

Siddhartha Gautama, after seven days and nights of meditation he attained enlightenment and became known as "the Buddha," --enlightened one. He taught monks, disciples, and general public of various places until his peaceful death at the age of eighty years in Kushinagar- northern part of present-day India. After the Buddha gained the insight, he started teaching his philosophy and gained a large number of followers. Then he went on a journey of teaching others the path that would liberate them from the cycle of life and death. Richard H. Robinson and others say:

> The Four Noble Truths lie at the essence of that liberating insight. These   truths are best understood not as the content of a belief, but as phenomenological categories, a framework for viewing and classifying the processes of experience as they are directly present to the awareness. . . . avoids   many of the complicated issues that come with the notion of self: for example, the need to identify what it is, to confirm or deny its existence, and the imperative to maximize its well-being either by exploiting the "other" or by swallowing the

"other" into the self by equating the latter with the cosmos as a whole. (*The Buddhist Religion: A Historical Introduction* 35)

The Buddhist philosophy does not believe in the dichotomy of self and other. The Buddha stresses to consider the cosmos as a whole rather than having the parochial conviction of me and mine.

Buddhism is a practice for the spiritual attainment and liberation of the individual; it also emphasizes the need to practice for self-actualization and to liberate all beings from suffering. In this philosophy, Dharma is known as the Buddha's lessons and teachings pointed toward the true nature of the universe. He gave his first sermon on the outskirts of the city of Varanasi (India) at a deer park called Sarnath. This first sermon presents an overview of suffering and the way out of suffering.

Buddhism believes in 'samsara' - meaning the repetitive cycle of birth and death. The process of rebirth refers to a cycle of lives with many potential forms. Within this cycle there is no permanent entity as a soul. Therefore, rebirth is continuous and is governed by the laws of 'karma'. All living beings lay open to 'samsara' until they attain 'nirvana' - spiritual enlightenment. Nirvana means the removal of suffering and 'samsara'. The awakening or enlightenment that goes together with the reaching of 'nirvana' is called 'Bodhi'. In Buddhist tradition a Buddha is an enlightened one and is free from suffering and 'samsara'. By following the Buddhist philosophy, emancipation can be achieved. 'Karma' is the belief that our past actions affect us; and our present actions will affect us in the future. Buddhists try to avoid bad 'karma' and nurture good as they believe in the cycle of birth and death.

Buddhism: a Philosophy to Become a Virtuous Citizen

The Buddha- a son of a king - emphasized that he was not a god but was simply a human being who was "fully awake," attentive, and aware of the here and now. As the Buddha is not a god he is not worshipped by Buddhists as a god or embodiment of God. To get ideas on the Buddha and Buddhism the following extract is worthy:

Buddhism -as a term to denote the vast array of social and cultural phenomena that have clustered in the course of time around the teachings of a figure called the Buddha, the Awakened One. . . . Previously, the terms they used to refer to their religion were much more limited in scope: the Dharma, the Buddha's message, or the Buddha's way. In other words, they conceived of their religion simply as the teaching of the Buddha, what the Buddha himself called *Dharma-Vinaya* (Doctrine and Discipline). Whereas Dharma-Vinaya is meant to be prescriptive, advocating a way of life and practice, Buddhism is descriptive in that it simply denotes the actions of people who follow a vision of Dharma-

Vinaya without suggesting that the reader accept that vision or follow it, too.
(*The Buddhist Religion: A Historical Introduction,* 1997:1)

Buddhism is not just a religion, but it is rather related to social and cultural phenomenon and advocates a way of life and practice.

Buddhism does not have one single sacred book like the Bible; there are many sacred texts called sutras (the Buddha's teachings) which are the spoken words of the Buddha. There are thousands of sutras. The Buddha's teachings were orally transmitted through the oral tradition until they were recorded after his death. The Tripitaka (literally "Three Baskets") is a large collection of the Buddha's teachings. Tripitaka- the central sacred text of Buddhism - teaches Buddhist philosophy of life as meditation and chanting that are the forms of prayer. There is no one holy day in Buddhism, every day is sacred. Meditation is of great significance in the Buddhist philosophy as viewed in the quotation below:

> As we have noted, in the third watch of the night Gautama discovered the causes and cure for bondage to samsara. The variant accounts agree that the basis of this discovery was the realization of *pratitya-samutpada* (dependent co-arising), which came to be regarded as the heart of the Buddha's Awakening. A Pali Sutta (M.28) says, and "Whoever sees dependent co-arising sees the Dharma." "Dharma" here has three levels of meaning: doctrine, practice, and nirvana (attainment). On the first two levels, dependent co-arising   and Dharma came to be viewed as equivalent. . . On the level of practice, dependent co-arising functioned as the map for unraveling the causal process; through its complexity it also became the riddle that the practitioner tried to comprehend through meditation. *(The Buddhist Religion: A Historical Introduction*1997:23)

As prince Shiddhartha had left the palace to find the way out of the bondage to 'samsara', he discovered the causes and cure for it. 'Dharma', as mentioned in Pali Sutta, has three levels: doctrine, practice, and nirvana (attainment).

As both cosmopolitanism and the Buddhism give importance to humanism, a brief discussion on humanistic Buddhism becomes useful. To understand the potentials of a Humanistic Buddhism we have to understand the basic notions of these two loaded ideals. There is a great deal of commonality in Buddhism and humanism. Both of these ideals do not believe in a creator God; they emphases on social justice and reason. The common values which various schools of Buddhism associate with humanism center on empathy and the inherent dignity of all people. Compassion and the values of encouraging humanistic action like the deep respect for human rights are mutually inclusive in both of them. Humanism can and should be a way of life for everyone everywhere and every day.

A person with the humanistic attitude in the true sense believes in enhancing human welfare. Minimizing suffering, making fair decisions, and enhancing human freedom and dignity are other goals for him/her. Humanist ethics are based on compassion, reason, responsibility, and belief in the value and self-esteem of human beings. The efforts to avoid the barriers which the less fortunate is another goal of a humanist. Faith in the kindness of human being's devotion for the promotion of human happiness paves way to reach the summit of humanist ethics. Buddhist view of traditional concept does not have faith in the notion of a creator god, it maintains belief in the divine nature of life and the holiness of all things including animals, plants, mountains, and so on. Self-respect and goodwill toward other persons incorporated in the Noble Eightfold Path are the Sutras which outlook the altruistic points of view ultimately focusing on humanism.

In *Humanism as The Next Step* (1998), Lloyd and Mary Morain present a general idea of the history and principles of modern humanism. Concentrating on caring for the living, working for the benefit of others, compassion and altruism are mainly concerned with issues of the world than on how to leave the world behind. It, therefore, is concerned with doing good to others rather than oneself. Furthermore, it is a fundamentally optimistic belief in the dignity of humans and their ability to transform themselves in a positive and altruistic manner.

Humanism, Humanistic Buddhism, and Secular Buddhism are mutually inclusive to each other. Humanism-based Buddhism rather than entirely faith-based is getting popularity and in practice today. Various Buddhists today are doubtful of faith-based claims and have the conclusion that they do not believe in gods, gurus or the supernatural, but they still practice some Buddhist techniques and traditions mostly as instructions of the philosophy of life. The Buddhists who advocate only those beliefs and practices that are set by reason and science are secularists. They are more humanists than religious as they do their utmost to be ethical, sympathetic and altruistic. In core, they who meditate and honor Buddhism's secular contributions are humanists. For that reason, they call themselves secular and humanistic Buddhists.

A Critical Overview on Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism is the ideology that gives an insight that all human beings belong to a single community based on a shared morality. It hints that all human beings, regardless of their citizenship, religion, political affiliation and other forms of boundaries, belong to a single community. This ideal considers the individual human being as the basic unit. The roots of cosmopolitanism are in the thought of the Ancient Greek Philosopher Diogenes, who lived around the time of Plato. In ancient Greece a "kosmopolítes" was a "citizen of the world." The term came to indicate someone who

considered the entire humankind as more meaningful than his or her own city, group, region, religion, or nation. Ulrich Beck writes in *New Statesman*:

> The key idea for cosmopolitan manifesto is that there is a new dialectic of global and local questions, which do not fit into national politics. These questions are already part of the political agenda–in the localities and regions, in governments and public spheres both national and international. But only in a transnational framework can they be properly posed, debated and resolved. For this there has to be a reinvention of politics, a founding and grounding of the new political subject: that is– cosmopolitan parties. (29)

Cosmopolitanism does not believe in certain community or group of any kind having special ties and obligations to its members, rather it believes in equal treatment from the point of view of humanity which lies at the core of this theory. Writers like Salman Rushdie are engaged in "thinking and acting beyond the local." They have imagined collective rights and obligations in retreat from the nation. Talking about Goethe's concept on cosmopolitanism, Hans Kohn says that Goethe would agree, "The fatherland of the man who thinks without prejudice, who can rise above his time, is nowhere and everywhere" (qtd. in Kohn 414).

Cosmopolitan Conception in Buddhist Philosophy

Notions of cosmopolitanism richly passed through the writings of the major Enlightenment thinkers. They viewed all races and all continents with the same human interest and concern. Montesquieu (1689-1755) wrote that if he knew something useful to his fatherland, which was prejudicial to Europe or something, which were useful to Europe and prejudicial to humankind, he would consider it a crime.

Compassion and help for the suffering of others is a defining characteristic of the original teachings and, a virtue in Buddhism. It is much-loved across the different traditions as belonging to a family. On intensification of the reality of the emptiness of self and of our own suffering, we draw on these essential qualities to respond with compassion. In this sense, compassion for others is not separate from compassion for ourselves. For Cho (2000: 80) selflessness provides the basis for a Buddhist theory of a rational social justice, it is the doorway from ontology to phenomenology. Altruism becomes a rational response to suffering in the world (Harris 2011). Thus, compassion is not directly related with the idea of an emotionality or with a subjective feeling but becomes a relationship quality (Her shock 2006) that arises in a world of radical ontological rationality. For Buddhist social theorists, compassion is, therefore located alongside suffering in a socio-existential account of the human condition (Jones 2003: 212–3).

Sanchez-Flores (2010) initiates for a cosmopolitanism that expands the self to overcome cosmopolitanism's negative identification with the project of modernity. Delanty reworks of critical theory that argues that cosmopolitanism arises with the transformation of collectivities in the light of 'the encounter with the Other' (2009: 253), occurring equally indiasporic exchanges and creolisation as in the process of globalization today. The refusal of the self is ontologically separate and distinct. Its viscerality is captured by a Thai activist, cited in Harris (2001: 66): . . . is to explore what Buddhist thought can tell us about suffering and solidarity following Linklater's founding argumentsfor cosmopolitan solidarity. If the point of solidarity between strangers rests most immediately on common vulnerabilities to mental and physical suffering, in order to create an overlapping agreement about inhumane behavior (Linklater 2011: 1–28). Zestern thought principally imagines suffering as standing against or as opposed to our humanity (Wilkinson 2005: 1) exemplified by Fineman's (2008) account of suffering and helplessness as a split to the normally functioning, autonomous person.

Cosmopolitan thought signals towards a reconception of the 'self' which shifts its boundedness in sociality towards a hold of the 'society of strangers' (Ossewaarde, 2007). Buddhist thought offers a way of conceiving a cosmopolitan self in which all inscriptions of forms of identity like cultural, ethnic, national are empty and impermanent to begin with. For Buddhism, appreciation of the emptiness of that 'self' is both the source of our liberation and of solidarity. A Buddhist social theory exemplifies normative cosmopolitanism and offers, following Linklater, one 'structure of consciousness' (2011: 266) that is essentially cosmopolitan.

Conclusion

In the teachings of Buddhist philosophy what we find is that the flesh could and should be transcended because it was thought to be of lesser importance to perfect reason and virtuous living. Our most important goal in life is to become a good world-citizen. Buddhist philosophy aims at achieving a pureness in soul which helps become a virtuous citizen; it also asserts that happiness is attained by personal development. This is possible to achieve by rejecting the desires of the flesh through reason. Cosmopolitan philosophy believes that humans are responsible for not only himself/herself but others also who are part of the universal whole. Therefore, in ancient Greece a "kosmopolíte" was considered as a "citizen of the world." The term "kosmopolíte" came to indicate someone who considered the entire humankind as more meaningful than his or her own country, city, group, region, religion, or nation. In this article endeavor is made to prove that both in the Buddhism and Cosmopolitanism there is basic consideration and affinity in the issue of humanity.

References

Beck, Ulrich (1998). "The Cosmopolitan Manifesto." *New Statesman,* 29.

Cho, S. (2000). ' "Selflessness": Towards a Buddhist Vision of Social Justice'. *Journal of Buddhist Ethics,* 7, pp. 76–85.

Delanty, G. (2009). *The Cosmopolitan Imagination*. Cambridge University Press.

Fineman, M. (2008). 'The Vulnerable Subject: Anchoring Equality in the Human Condition'. *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism,* 20(1), pp. 1–23.Harris, E. (2001).*What Buddhists Believe*. One World.

Harris, S. (2011). 'Does *An¯atman* Rationally Entail Altruism? On *Bodhicary¯avatara* 8, 101–103', *Journal of Buddhist Ethics,* 18, pp. 93–123.   Hershock, P. (2006).*Buddhism in the Public Sphere*. Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies. Routledge.

Jones, K. (2003).*The New Social Face of Buddhism: A Call to Action*. Wisdom Books.

Kohn, Hans (1944). *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in Its Origins and Background*. Macmillan.

Linklater, A. (2007). 'Towards a Sociology of Global Morals with an "Emancipatory Intent." ' in N. Rengger and B. Thirkell-White (eds), *Critical International Relations Theory after 25 Years,* Cambridge University Press. - - - (2009). 'Human Interconnectedness', *International Relations,* 23, pp.481–97. - - - (2011). *The Problem of Harm in World Politics,* Cambridge University Press. Lloyd and Mary Morain (1998). *Humanism as the Next Step.* The Humanist Press,   revised edition.

Ossewaarde, M. (2007). 'Cosmopolitanism and the Society of Strangers', *Current Sociology,*55(3), pp. 367–88.Richard H. Robinson, Willard L. Johnson, and Sandra A. Wawrytko (ends),(1997).*TheBuddhist Religion: A Historical Introduction,* an International Thomson   Publishing Company. Fourth Edition. Santoro, D. A. (2011). 'Review of Sharon Todd, Toward an Imperfect Education: Facing Humanity, Rethinking Cosmopolitanism.' *Studies in Philosophy and   Education,* 30, pp.303–10.Sanchez-Flores, M. J. (2010).*Cosmopolitan Liberalism: Expanding the Boundaries of   the Individual*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Wilde, L. (2004). 'A "Radical Humanist" Approach to the Concept of Solidarity.' *Political Studies,* 52, pp. 162–78.

Tantric Nuances Arguing Gender Order in Mithila Paintings

Pragya Paneru[*]

Abstract

This article reviews the Tantric influence in the traditional Mithila paintings and argues how Tantra's emphasis on femininity can challenge the traditional patriarchal notion toward women in general. In doing so, firstly, the article examines the studies in Tantra and its views toward women in general. Secondly, it analyzes the studies in Mithila paintings and their connection with Tantra and the actual women context in the Maithil community. Lastly, it reviews some of the examples of Mithila paintings to study the presence of tantric symbols, as claimed by the studies in Mithila paintings, followed by a conclusion. The findings suggest that being a highly patriarchal culture, with limited authority to women even in their personal life decisions, Mithila culture yet contains seeds of resistance within itself. On the one hand, Maithil women lack the liberty of sexual expressions, decision makings, and involvement in outdoor activities as the veil in their head symbolically separates them from the rest of the society, except the traditional feminine chores. On the other hand, traditional Mithila paintings mocks the patriarchy through the feminine images and symbols as eminent cosmic power, a source of creation, and destruction. The Tantric images and signs in Mithila paintings shout out the power of femininity, challenging patriarchal beliefs of men as a center and women as a margin. This article stresses that Tantric dualism and its equal emphasis on femininity reflected in Mithila paintings can be used as a powerful religious, cultural, and artistic tool to empower women and subvert the general binary of men and women. Mithila paintings that have become a source of economic empowerment, emotional expressions, and means of awareness of women in the present-day, can also be used to harmonize the male-female tensions and as an effective religious, cultural, and artistic device to tear-off shackles of patriarchy.

Keywords: *Khobar, Chaturthi, femininity, rituals, patriarchy, Tantra, empowerment (Minimize the key words to 4-5)*

Tantra and Femininity

Tantra has a close connection with femininity. It is a branch in Hinduism and Buddhism where duality is accepted, and both masculine and feminine energy is

---

[*]Ms. Paneru is a Lecturer in Enlglish at Nepal Commerce Campus. She is currently in Australia for higher degree research studies.

emphasized instead the general emphasis of masculinity over femininity. Landesman, (2008) claims that female role models were promoted in the *Tantric* culture in Buddhism with goddess *Tara* as the central figure in religion and rituals. Tantra goddess *Kamakhya* is regarded as a 'matrix of power' and 'mother womb,' a creative source of cosmos (Urban, 2009). One of the unique features of Tantra is its respect toward women as tantric rituals require women's presence and their active participation, which challenges the patriarchal notion of men centeredness (Biarnacki, 2007). Tantra is a practice of spiritual-attainment, transcendence, and extraordinary powers (Feuerstein, 1998). Tantric goddess is violent, dangerous, and all-powerful, who alone can engulf the hostile forces of the cosmos (Urban, 2009).

Even though *Tantra* is used and emphasized from different perspectives, one of the undisputable aspects of the *Tantra* is its pedestal positioning of the feminine power as the superior and the most esteemed. In this sense, *Tantra* positions women power, that is, *Shakt,* in an exalted position, and women are integral parts of *Tantra* rituals, unlike general Hindu and Buddhist traditions that put men at the center. "Central to *Tantra*'s teachings is the concept that reality is unity, an indivisible whole. It is called Shiva-Shakti, Cosmic Consciousness" (p. 15). Mookerjee and Khanna (1977), define *Tantra*as the union of *Shiva* and His creative power, *Shakhty* who are "eternally conjoined" and cannot separate as a symbol of the potentiality of an individual that is integrated into the entire cosmic scheme. According to *Tantra*, emancipation is possible not in negation but by the experience of totality, and the totality is only possible by accepting both masculine and feminine power.

Mithila Paintings and Tantric Symbols

Mithila Paintings or Madhubani paintings are the traditional paintings done by the women in the Mithila culture. These paintings include three different types of paintings called *Aripan* (floor paintings), *Kobhar* (wall paintings), and *Pata Chitra* (paper painting). These paintings are traditionally made differently by different caste groups (*Brahmins, Kayasthas, and Dushad*) using their traditional skills and available materials. *Brahmins*' paintings are full of bright colors and their style is called *Bharni* style, *Kayasthas*' minutely sketch with bamboo pens with fine lines, which is called *Kachni* style, and *Dushad's* (so-called low caste people) paintings are not much colorful and made from lowly materials like cow dung and ashes. These paintings also reflect their social status, hierarchy, and traditional professions in their elegances. Studies claim that in all types of Mithila paintings *Tantric* logos are used, and feminine images and symbols are regarded as essential parts. This, however, indicates the dual nature of Mithila culture: flaunting of feminine power in a highly patriarchal culture.

The inclusion of *Tantric* images in Mithila paintings are acknowledged by many scholars (Mookerjee & Khanna, 1977; Subedi, 2015; Suman, 2020; Vequaud, 1977). Maithil women consciously or unconsciously brandish the *Tantric* way of feminine power in their paintings through the recurrent images of *Tantric* goddesses, geometric symbols, and male female sexual symbols as a part of tradition. Since *Tantra* gives equal and essential value to the existence of females as a form of *Shakhty,* unlike mainstream patriarchal culture prevalent in Maithil Region, the *Tantric* overtone in the Maithil paintings seems to celebrate the male-female union as the source of creative energy. Also, it is challenging the patriarchal tradition of Mithila culture in which women have little agency outside the household chores. The *Tantric* symbols of *yoni* and *lingam* are the most repeated and inevitable images in the Mithila paintings that celebrate both masculine and feminine energy and contribute to harmonizing the hierarchies of gender by giving the message of significance to both sexes.

Mithila culture has an influence of philosophy of *Tantric* dualism in which, perfect goal is achieved in the union of the two matters: *Priority* and *Prussia*. This union is shown in almost all types of *Kobhar* paintings. Even the images of a cosmic pond,' (*Kamala Daha)*, vegetations, the deities, images of the married couples, bamboo grooves, and all other images depicted in the paintings are the effect of this union. There are different opinions about the symbolic representations of each motif among some scholars. For example, Camphol (2008) takes "bamboo as alluding to the male of phallic principle" and lotus leaves as *yoni* (34).Similarly, Archer (1949) claims, "the most flagrant images of bamboo trees and the ring of lotuses as fertility and male/female sexual organs. The circle represents lotus as well as the bride's sex, whereas bamboo is representative of the phallus" (28). Whereas, for Jain (2005), the 'bamboo grove' motif represents male energy but not their sexual organ and the leaves are symbols of the bride but not her genitals (55-7).Singh (2020) claims that there are multiple interpretations of symbols according to the artists. According to Singh (2020), different motifs in the form of different animals and objects are used in *Kobhar* paintings symbolizing different auspicious meanings such as, lotus symbolizes wealth, Fish symbolizes breeding, tortoise means copulation, snake means protection, and scorpion suggests readiness suggesting fertility and union as an important aspect of the Mithila culture. Nevertheless, it is a well-accepted fact that Mithila Paintings has a balanced representation of male and female energies.

A unique Mithila painting called *Aripan* uses the *yantras* (geometrical signs) with *Tantric* influence. Mookerjee and Khanna (1977) mention, "Yantras are the diagrammatic equivalent of the deity and consists of linear and spatial geometrical permutations of the deity" (p.33). In *yantras,* point, line, circle, triangle, and square are combined to provide static and dynamic balance. These kinds of *yantras* are widespread

in Mithila paintings. We do not miss these things in any of the Mithila paintings, which prove *Tantric* influence and even its dominance in the Mithila paintings. Unlike the patriarchal culture that is practiced in the Maithil region, *Tantrism* gives more focus to the women's creativity and takes her as the source of all cosmic creations. This aspect of Mithila paintings can be used as a feminist tool to critique the pseudo-Hinduism practices and cultures, which are more tilted toward patriarchy. Regarding highly patriarchal Mithila culture, Brown (1996) comments upon rural Maithil Brahman and Kayastha women:

>…observes *purdha*. There is an annual fair, *Saurath Sabha*, conducted by the Maithil Brahmans for the purpose of arranging marriages, but no woman, and certainly no potential bride, is present at this event. In 1980 I was the sole woman, among ten thousand men who had gathered to negotiate marriages for their sons and daughters. (p.720)

Brown's description of *Saurath Sabha* gives glimpses of how women are secluded from one of the most important decision-making meetings of their lives. The exclusion of women from such meetings and her traditional costumes, which require her to veil her head in front of the male members of the family and society, shows the patriarchal dominance in Mithila culture. Maithil women's sufferings and seclusions are also reflected in the Maithil women's folk tales practiced in the Janakpur areas (Davis, 2009), suggesting Mithila culture's male dominancy and women's sufferings in folk tales. Dahal (2018), also gives references to patriarchal pollutes in the Mithila culture where girls from a young age are cultured into a typical kind of womanhood and a practice of *Dahej* (dowry) from the bride's natal family as something which devalues women's self-worth. These studies show the situation of women in Mithila culture in general.

In contrast to Mithila culture's patriarchal part, *Tantric* inspiration in Mithila paintings enlightens another aspect of the same tradition where femininity is also equallycelebrated.*Tantra*denounces traditional patriarchal practices, which regards women as lowly beings. Unlike patriarchal culture, *Tantra* gives higher status to woman and takes female principles as the dynamic consciousness to require getting rid of the three knots: shame, hate, and fear. If we compare the *Tantric* philosophy with the patriarchal edge of Mithila culture, *Tantrism* in Mithila culture can impact both men and women in society to bring gender harmony and equality. It needs to be discussed openly and brought into the debate for that purpose. In this context, the Mithila paintings with *Tantric* overtone can be an instrument to uplift the women's position and status.

Mithila art's recurring motifs like sun, pond, bamboo groves, copulating parrots, snakes, mango trees, elephant, lotus flowers, fish, *Shiva-Shakti* union, and *Naina Jogan* (symbol of *Tantric* goddess *Kamakhya*) are the symbols suggesting *Tantric* influences.

According to Mookerjee and Khanna (1977),in *Tantra*, a lotus is one of the archaic symbol, which means door, an opening game of the "womb of universe" (p. 67), unfolding of self, expanding consciousness, and also a symbol of the *Sahasrara Chakra* (highest human energy center on the crown) when it is put upon the head. Similarly, planetary signs and the *Kali* images are also important recurring images in Mithila paintings, which are equally important images in *Tantric* art. Planetary signs show astronomical influence in the Mithila paintings whereas, *Kali* is one of "the most important *tantric Dasa Mahabidhyas*", and an "active cosmic power of eternal time (*Kala*)" (p. 75). Triangles are the common *Tantric* symbols used in Mithila paintings, which are regarded as very auspicious. If the triangle is kept straight, with a point upward, it is regarded as mother earth, and if kept upside down, with the point downward, it is a symbol of the *Yoni* (vagina). Here, *Yoni* is not taken as a sexual organ or object like in the Western tradition, but a symbol of goddess *Durga*, who is the source of creative power, and who represents women in general. This celebration of the source of creativity through *Yoni* symbol is a very positive sensitivity toward the prominence of women in Mithila culture. The similarity of the images used in *Tantra* and Mithila paintings also proves the influence of *Tantrism* in Mithila arts.

Another scholar, Vequaud's (1977), while claiming Mithila paintings as "heavily charged with tantric symbolism" (p.17), acknowledges the importance of *Tantric* symbols in Mithila arts. A very prominent Maithil artist, Suman, in a personal interview, with the researcher claimed that *Tantric* symbols have a very long tradition, and a widespread influence of *Tantra* is found on a *Janam Patri* (a Hindu traditional way of recording birth details in the paper) in Hindu tradition. Suman accepts the *Tantric* mark in the Mithila paintings, and according to him, most of the women are using *Tantric* symbols unconsciously. He argues that Mithila culture acknowledges women in the form of *Durga Puja* (worship of the female goddess) in which *Durga* prayers are used to begin all types of ceremonies. He believes that there was an equal emphasis to both males and females in our ancient religious practices and the patriarchy was just the latter development, not a tradition. He further claims that even in the patriarchy Mithila culture has subtle rituals like *Chaturthi* (ritual when bride and groom are kept in *Kobhar Ghar* in bride's home for four days and physical intimacy is restricted)*, Gaur Puja* (worshipping of goddess *Gauri* who is the wife of Lord *Shiva), Bidh Kauri (*a ritual when a mature woman from both bride and groom's sides takes all the responsibilities of teaching rituals, monitors the immature activities, and actively takes in charge of the safety of bride and groom during and after the marriage until the couple are mature enough) respecting the women sentiments and protecting their dignity.

　　　　　Sex education is also considered as one of the motives behind traditional Mithila arts. Especially *Kobhar* paintings have special significance in a culture with a tradition of child marriages. Tradition of *Chaturthi* in *Khobar Ghar* has special significance in protecting the young bride from a sudden sexual abuse as sexual intimacy in immediate days of marriage are restricted in the ritual of *Chaturthi.* Also, the *Chuman Puja* at night indicates social acceptance and preparation for a newlywed for their conjugal life. Subedi, (2015) in "Maithil Cosmos" mentions Maithil paintings' significance, in giving sex education and as a celebration of physical and spiritual union. He mentions, "Every element in Mithila painting has a deeply rooted symbolism in it focusing around passion, sex, fertility, and tantric ritual." Also, Kapadi, (2013) in his article, states that in *Mithila* culture, talking about "sex awareness" is not allowed, but in paintings, especially through *Kobhar*, symbolically, this message is given. In *Kobhar,* "parrot, tortoise, and fish are drawn representing love, longevity, and fertility, respectively" (p.150). The sexual symbols in Mithila paintings are not just a modern invention instead a part of *Tantric* influence, which has a long history back in the ancient Hindu traditions which regards the conjugal relationship as auspicious.

　　　　　Being a highly patriarchal culture, and yet having the influences of *Tantra* and traces of rituals that protect women's sentiments and dignity, Mithila culture carries contradictions. The rituals are very thoughtful and helpful for the women in a traditional society where child marriage, unmatched marriage, and arranged marriage were on practice. *Tantric* symbols show men and women in the equal podium and in a way, women's agency is much more emphasized. This paper argues that a conscious use and understanding of these symbols can be used to uplift women's position and to challenge the patriarchal norms prevalent in the society.

Review of some symbols in Maithil paintings

　　　　　Some Mithila paintings by both male and female artists are discussed in the section below to analyze the symbols and images presented there. Mithila paintings are traditionally Maithil women's domain, although male artists are also involved in commercial Mithila paintings in these days. Keeping this in mind, paintings by Maithil women are included more in the discussion.

　　　　　The painting below belongs to Baua Devi that presents an image of lord *Kamadeva* (god of lust and copulation) and a pond in the right-hand side. We can also see a pair of snake copulating in the pond. The image of vegetation in the background of *Kamadeva* makes the picture more colorful and attractive. *Kamadeva* is a god of '*Kama*', meaning lust, who initiates the entire organism into sexual indulgence to continue the work of creation. Even if the picture overtly does not show the female agency, the copulating snake imagery, the green pond, and the vegetation hint that

without feminine help, the creativity is not possible. Projecting sexual intimacy in terms of the source of creation is another imperative factor of Mithila paintings that portrays sexual indulgence as a work of creation.

Artist: Baua Devi

Another painting by Ganga Devi, portrays one of the most important motifs and recurring images used in *Kobhar* painting. This painting presents *Naina Jogan*, an amalgamation of powerful positive as well as a negative force, which is a representative of *Tantric* goddess *Kamakhya.* Goddess *Kamakhya* is supposed to be originated from the falling off Satidevi's (*Shiva's* wife) vagina. Goddess *Kamakhya* is one of the most important goddesses to be worshipped in *Tantra Sadhana* and also one of the prominent *Shakti Pith* (religious place worshipped for power) of Hinduism. An image of *Naina Jogan* in *Khobar Ghar*is believed to avoid the evil eyes, protect the newly-wed couples, and guard the impulsive sexual union among the couples for four days. According to Mithila culture, newly-wed couples should compulsorily observe the tradition of *Chaturthi,* that is, sleeping in *Kobhar Ghar* for four days and doing different religious prayers. The couples performing *Chaturthi* cannot have a sexual union. The sociological implication of this ritual is to give time and space to a newlywed bride to understand her partner and to get an emotional connection before the sexual union. In a society where most of the marriages are decided by the parents without much consultation with the brides, this ritual gives them time to understand their grooms in those initial days. And an image of *Naina Jogan* in *Kobhar* symbolizes Goddess *Kamakhya,* who watches the activities of the newlyweds in the *Kobhar Ghar.*

Artist: Ganga Devi, *Naina Jogan* 1998

Biernacki (2007), while referring to *Kamakhya* writes: "When we find a references in *Tantric* literature to rites of sexual union, we also often find reference to the worship of goddess at *Kamakhya* and *Kamakhya*itself as the preeminent place for the practice of these rites" (5).Here, the author associates *Tantric* literature and the rites of union with Goddess *Kamakhya,* who is regarded as the goddess of *Tantra*. *Naina Jogan* in Mithila paintings is the representation of Goddess *Kamakhya* herself, who is used as a special motif in *Kobhar* paintings, which is drawn on the wall of *Kobhar* room where newly-weds are supposed to sleep. *Naina Jogan* also blesses the couples for the longevity of married life.

According to Mookerjee and Khanna (1977), *Tantric* imageries are grouped into four forms: "psycho-cosmic form and diagrams such as *yantras* and *mandalas*, visual representation of the subtle body or its constituents, astronomical and astrological computations and iconographic images, *asanas* and representational" (p.48). Maithil *Aripans* are a kind of blending of *mandalas* and *yantras,* where the sketches are made by the use of predominant elementary forms of *Tantra* itself. *Aripan* uses point, line, circle, triangle, square, and the lotus symbol combined, which is a floor Mithila art, unlike *Kobhar*. The following *Aripan* by Madan Kala Karn shows the *Tantric* influence as it uses the *Tantric* symbols on its form. We can see the cosmic pond, fish, and the

lotus flower images in the painting. Images of women are depicted on both sides of the big lotus flower image. And the image dominantly uses the circular image and the triangular shapes in the painting. The triangle symbolizes the mother earth and also the primordial image of creative center or the *Yoni*. By depicting these images, Mithila art is celebrating the women's creative force and their value in human civilization.
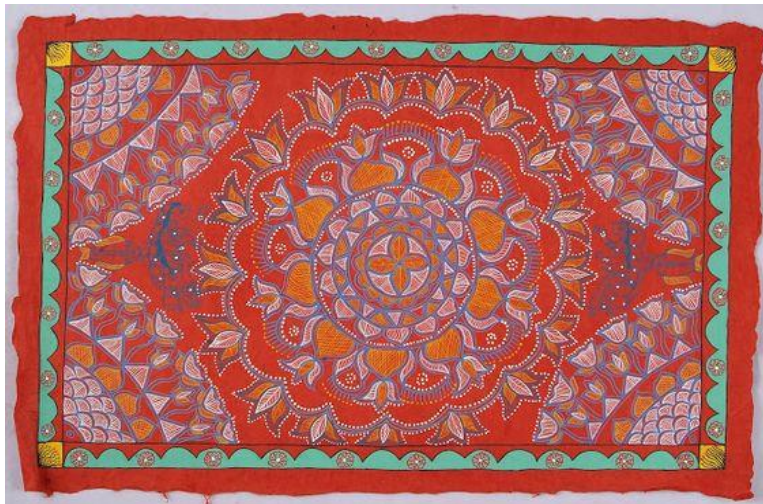
Arian by Madan Kala Karn

Another artist Aarati Kumari in her painting shows woman as Mother Nature. This sense of women as the nature or the source of creative force is the concept of *tantrism*. *Tantrism* worships women as the mother of all creativity. Mookerjee and Khanna, (1977) mark: 'The songs of *Chandidas,'* an offshoot of *tantrism* proclaims the worship of women: "You must love this woman, as no god can offer you what this woman is able to" (p.5),which proves that *Tanta* regards women in the high pedestal which is also depicted by this painting.

Arti Kumari   'Women As Mother Nature'   22"x30"   2011

Pushpa Kumari, in her painting titled *Yoni* (vagina), paints the cosmic *yoni* of goddess *Kali* to highlight the power of creation within women. We can see *Kali*'s ten hands, ten heads, and ten legs in the picture. There is an image of a baby being born from her *yoni*. Images of lotus petals are used in her palm and the breasts. The palms are turned outward in a blessing position symbolizing the eternal blessing of fertility and creativity. This painting very explicitly shows the value of feminine power. There is

also a triangular *Kali* yantra at the vaginal edge.

Pushpa Kumari's *Yoni*

It is a *Tantric* influence in Mithila paintings that gives space to the images of sexual copulations, *lingam* (symbol of the phallus), and *yoni (symbol of vagina)*. Due to the projection of femininity and celebration of the female reproductive act, LaDuke (1981) assumes Maithili culture as a matriarchal society. Seeing the traditional Maithili paintings as dominated by women artists and women images, the author gazes at Maithili as a matriarchal society. He pens, 'When girls reach marriage age, they go to one of the regular gatherings of young men to select a mate, to whom they present a *Kosher*, or marriage picture. This century-old tradition continues today" (pp.9-18).Here, the author relates the tradition of *Kosher* painting as a matriarchal tradition, which is not valid in the context of present Maithili culture as it is loaded with highly patriarchal values, but *tantrums* is, of course, dominated by matriarchy. As *Maithili* art works are highly influenced by *tantrums*, in paintings, we see the domination of women representation and women power represented as untamed and all-powerful goddess *Kali* as the main goddess of *Tanta*.

We can also see contemporary influences and an accent to women empowerment in the painting of a prominent artist Rain Jha in her painting *Together Tearing the Veil*. In the picture, few women are tearing the veil, and coming out of it. The picture shows the maximum of its portion as an image of cover and women are there almost in the center tearing apart the veil. In this contemporary painting, we can see eyes suggesting *Kali*'s eyes, peeping from behind of the veil. Along with *Kali*'s eyes, there are other

single eyes peeping from inside the veil, indicating women who are unwilling to go out of the veil. This painting encourages women to come out of the traditional norms of *purda,* which is one of the major obstacles in the way of women's progress and empowerment. This painting also acknowledges the patriarchal dominance in *Mithila* culture in the image of *purda* and the images of women still inside the veil.
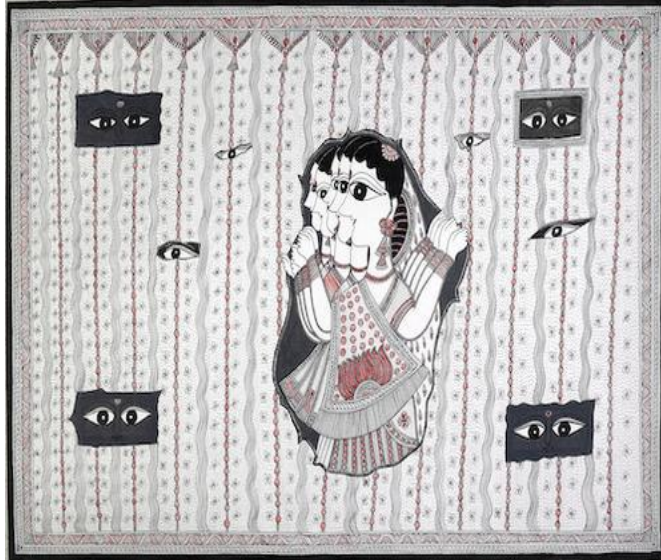
Rani Jhah *Together Tearing the Veil*

One of the most prominent Maithil artist, S. C. Suman, paints a harmonious social life blended with the motifs of Mithila arts. He has shown the sun symbolizing the heat or male energy, and the pond representing the feminine energy. The balance between them has created harmony among people and the prosperity of vegetations, fish, lotus, birds, fruits, flowers, and elephants. All the characters depicted in the painting seem happy, in the balance of masculine and feminine energy. Suman, in a personal interview, claims that each symbol in Mithila paintings have a purpose. The symbols and images give reference to the *Tantric* tone of the harmony between masculine and feminine energies. Though, *Maithil* women might be just drawing the paintings out of traditional rituals and might be unaware of the special significance of the symbols, the actual dynamics of these symbols cannot be eliminated.

S.

C. Sunman, *Nava Barsa*, 2015

These images and symbols discussed above in the paintings admit female essentiality. The male-female harmony can be seen in the images presented in different paintings by different artists. By openly discussing the implications of these religious symbols, we can promote male female parity and gender equality in the society. The conscious use of these symbols can inform equality and critique the patriarchal tendency of society. In modern days, these paintings have become a platform for women economic empowerment, a medium of women's resistance, and expression. However, the proliferation of a systemic and conscious effort in digging out the message of *Tantric* symbols is yet to be made.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that, Mithila paintings by almost all the artists use *Tantric* symbols and images as a result of *Tantric* influence in Mithila paintings. As *Tanta* is the celebration of all the aspects of life and includes women as the source of creativity, the conscious discussion of these symbols could challenge the patriarchal notions in the *Maithil*society. This article argues that if a *Tantric* evaluation of women as Mother Nature, source of creativity, and an essential power is discussed and proliferated consciously through paintings, the traditional patriarchal knowledge related to women could be questioned. Mithila Paintings could be used as an artistic symbol to question

the superstitious patriarchal culture specifically in Mithila, and generally all over Nepal where female-fetus killing is still prevalent (Lamichhane et al., 2015).

A society, where maximum people are under the influence of Hindu religion, regard son as a light of their generation, and daughters as someone benefiting to others (Panthhe, 2015), *Tantrism* can be used to harmonize the gender tensions. In my opinion, in a highly religiously stereotypical society like Mithila culture, or Nepal in general, religious and artistic motifs can be used as an effective resistance against patriarchal culture and values. Focusing upon the dualism principle of *Tantra* under the Hindu religion, *Mithila* practices of patriarchal domination can be critiqued, and gender disparity can be challenged through Mithila paintings. *Tantric* revival and its discussion through Mithila arts and paintings can have a groundbreaking influence on people as most of them are only the victim of biased religious and cultural knowledge regarding women.

References

Archer, W. G. (1949). Mithila painting. *Marg: A Magazine of Architecture and Art*, 3(3), 24-33.

Biernacki, L. (2007). *Renowned Goddess of Desire: Women, Sex, and Speech in Tanta*: Oxford University Press.

Brown, C. H. (1996). Contested Meanings: Tantra and the Poetics of Maithil. *American Ethnologist*, 23(4), 717-737.

Campoli, A. (2008). *Ritual Art of the Kingdom of Maithil*. Vajra Publications.

Dahal, K. B. (2018). Becoming Bonafide Woman. *Journal of National Development,* 31(1), 161-171.

Davis, C. V. (2009). Talking tools, suffering servants, and defecating men: the power of storytelling in Maithil women's tales. *Journal of American folklore*, 267-296.

Devi, B. (year not accessed). Kamadeva. [a picture of *Kamadeva* with other motifs].

Devi, G. (1998). Naina Jogan. [a paintion of traditional Maithil motif as a representative of a tantric goddess, *Kamakhyadevi*)

Feuerstein, G. (1998). *Tantra: The path of ecstasy*: Shambhala Publications.

Jain, J. (2005). Women Artists of Rural India. Women of India: Colonial and Post-Colonial Periods, edited by Bharati Ray, *Centre of Studies in Civilizations*, 501-523.

Jhah, R. (year). Together Tearing the Veil. [a painting depicting Maithil women's effort to come out from *purda*]

Kapadi, R. (2013). Maithil Lokchitrama Nepali Sanskritiko Chintan. *Mirmire*, 42(320), 147-152.

Karn, M. K. (year). Aripan. [a traditional floor Maithil Art]

Kumari, A. (2011). Woman as Mother Nature. [a painting showing women as nature]

Kumari, P. (year not accessed). Yoni. [a painting of cosmic vagina as a symbol of creativity]

LaDuke, B. (1981). Traditional women artists in Borneo, Indonesia and India. *Woman's Art Journal, 2*(1), 17-20.

Lamichhane, P., Harken, T., Puri, M., Darney, P. D., Blum, M., Harper, C. C., & Henderson, J. T. (2011). Sex-selective abortion in Nepal: a qualitative study of health workers' perspectives. *Women's Health Issues, 21*(3), S37-S41.

Landesman, S. S. (2008). Goddess Tārā: silence and secrecy on the path to enlightenment. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, 24*(1), 44-59.

Mookerjee, A. & Khanna. M. (1977). *The Tantric Way: Art. Science. Ritual*. United States: Thames and Hudson Ltd.

Panthhe, K. P. (2015). Gender difference in rural urban education in Nepal. *European Journal of Educational Sciences, 2*(2), 61-79.

Singh, S. K. (2020). Central Motifs in Kohbar Murals. *International Journal of English: Literature, Language& Skills*.

Singh, S. K. (2020). Folk Culture Rootedness in the Paintings of Maithili. *ISSN 2278-0742, www.ijells. com*.

Subedi, A. (2013). "Suman's Maithil Cosmos." *Mithila Cosmos: Circumambulating the Tree of Life*, edited by Subodh Chandra Das, pp. undated.

Suman, S. C. (2015). Nava Barsa. [a painting reflecting the celebration of a new year]

Suman, S.C. (2020, September 8). Personal Interview. [Personal Interview]

Urban, H. B. (2009). *The power of Tantra: Religion, sexuality and the politics of South Asian studies*: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Vequaud, Y. (1977). *The Women Painters of Maithil: Ceremonial Paintings from an Ancient Kingdom.* Thames and Hudson.

LOI: I hereby declare that this is my original work and it is not published anywhere.

Revisiting Official History in Evangel Athial's *Hitler and the Decline of Shah Dynasty*

Raj Kishor Singh, PhD[*]

Abstract

This article aims to analyze Athial's Hitler and the Decline of Shah Dynasty *to prove that the author reimagines and rewrites official history in his novel with combination and blurring of fact and fiction. It is studied from theoretical parameters of historiographic metafiction. Through an amalgamation of fact and fiction, the novel challenges the traditional version of the official history of Nepal and Germany. The subjectivity inherent in historiographic narratives is further explored through Athial's representation of historical character Hitler in the novel. The presence of major characters creates confusion about the nature of the novel as a work of fiction or as historiographic account. Through the use of irony and supernatural elements,* Hitler and the Decline of Shah Dynasty *becomes a parody of historiographic narratives which claim to be objective. The blurring of the boundaries between fiction and history and constructedness of history through discourse is the main idea in this paper. The writer imitates the genre of the historical novel but reveals its limitations and corresponds to what Linda Hutcheon calls historiographic metafiction. The novel mines the elements of the then history of Hitler, Germany, and Nepalese Shah Dynasty with the personal history of the author to revise and redefine the official version of history. This revisiting of mainstream history helps to establish the notion of plurality of historical accounts and a rejection of objectivity in historical writings. This novel has metafictional mode of writing, and the author represents metafictional parody in which historical incidents are repeated with a difference to show that history is discourse and is always open to interpretation.*

Keywords: history and fiction, official history, rewriting, blurring of boundaries, plurality, metafiction

---

[*]Dr. Singh has been working as Lecturer in English at the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Nepal.

Introduction

The present paper tries to analyze Evangel Athial's novel, *Hitler and the Decline of Shah Dynasty* and expose how the novel chronicles the historical facts related with Hitler, Germany and Nepalese Shah Dynasty while problematizing both histories through a parallel recounting of the alternative stories depicting love relations, mythical allusions and imaginative expressions. The novel does not only highlight the love story between Alexie and Nalini but also blends this love story with the histories of patriarchy, Hitler's regime and Nepalese Shah dynasty. The paper uses Hayden White's theory of metafiction to challenge the objectivity of history as it is an account of both what is factual and fictional. It serves to challenge the authenticity of official history through a blending of fictional and nonfictional elements. The novel is about the fall of historical events of Hitler's regime and Nepalese Shah dynasty while at the same time referring to black magic, firepuja and the love between Alexie and Nalini. In doing so, it blends what is fictional with the historical resulting in metafictional narrative strategy.

Metafiction is a mode of writing which is often used to problematize the objectivity and authenticity generally associated with traditional linear history. Conventional concept of history valorizes the so-called great events and deeds associated with higher classes and royal families and the rulers which are recorded in historical documents and books on history. Such representations created discourses about specific historical periods that revolved around locations of power. The modernist version of history constructed such official versions of history in the name of purity of historical accounts and narratives. On the contrary, the postmodernist notion of history, influenced by Nietzsche's and Foucault's ideas about history, power and truth, problematize the authenticity of traditional linear history. Hayden White's notion of metafiction or metahistory erodes the notion of linear history by including love, romance, magic, dream and so on in accounts of history. It violates disciplinary boundaries of historical writing and exposes the hybridity inherent in any form of writing.

Textual Analysis

History and fiction are entwined in *Hitler and the Decline of Shah Dynasty* which shows that history is fictional and fiction too can be historical. The novel constructs both of them discursively. The novel does so by combining the love story of Nalini and Alexie with the traditional narrative of patriarchy, Hitler's regime and Nepalese Shah Dynasty. The author has attempted to chronicle the historical facts associated with Germany and Nepal. The recounting of Hitler's regime and Nepalese Shah Dynasty also combines what is dreamlike and magical. The authenticity of historical chronicling is problematized by a meaningful blending of history and fiction. The novel fuses history with the love relation between two lovers who belong to two different cultural and

economic backgrounds. Such a narrative fusion of history and fiction in the novel can only be understood in the light of historiographic metafiction. For Hayden White, "Every history is shaped by its metahistory - that is, the archetypical historical narrative that the historian uses to shape and structure a story about the past. Metahistories are not embedded in the past - they are imposed on the past, to give it continuity, coherence and meaning" (Hayden, 1973, p. 8).

Every history is constructed and shaped by certain rules and regulations. So, White is of the view that there is no identical difference between history and fiction. Jago Morrision's idea, among the features of the novel, "the most striking one is the abrupt ending of the story" supports the idea that a work has no clear goal to move towards. This is a kind of postmodernist position challenging the teleology of a fictional work. As we try to untangle the intertwined relationship between fiction and nonfiction, Athial's own comments remind us that his stories are invented as he remarks," well as you know metafiction is a kind of story telling ... here as a writer I have tried to speak directly to my reader … in the process I too have become a character" (Athial, 2012, p. 1).

These lines bring to light the idea that the author is directly commenting on his work as being metafiction. Though he is a writer, he tries to speak to the readers to make them realize the fictional nature of his own writing through his writing about history. The author also admits that the same story has been told in many ways which shows that the basic story has been fictionalized in various ways. There is no one objective version of history and history does not move towards a single goal and solution. For Linda Hutcheon, "postmodern fiction suggests that to rewrite or represent the past in fiction and in history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological" (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 209). This kind of remark paves way for a belief in the existence of multiple versions of the same historical events.

The novel begins from the factual setting of Nepal which is the Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu. The writer describes the environment of the airport and the plane of visitor crew moving towards Mount Everest as the narrator describes, "the monsoon clouds were all around … we looked down to see Kathmandu scurrying away as if offended at our mission"(Athial, 2012, p. 9). Thus, it is evident that the novel begins from the factual setting which is also further suggested by the narrator's statement "eventually we reached Lukla, the Khumbu region of Nepal" (Athial, 2012, p. 9). The historical and factual setting of the novel is combined with the fictional narration of the environment and the people of the location. The comparison of natural beauty of the mountain with the beauty of Nalini in fictional manner indicates the metafictional nature of the novel.

This novel focuses on the position of fictionalization of history at the ground of postmodern concept of historical novel developed by Linda Hutcheon with supporting insight from Patricia Waugh. Though the writer is narrating his own life experiences and historical incidents with the imaginary stories, the novel can be explored as a Historiographic Metafiction because it depicts both the history of Nepal and of German with facts and fiction. This novel is a postmodern novel, and so it blurs the boundary of fact and fiction because 'history has become more literary and the literature more historicized'.

Historiographic Metafiction term was, introduced by Linda Hutcheon, usefully coined to point self- reflexive commentary on the means and possibility of the historical representation that we see in many contemporary texts. The writer depicts his self-reflexivity, experiences the historically signified events. Since, the postmodern period witnessed many crucial incidents and the writer cannot go beyond the context, in this sense literature is the reflection of society that also acquired contextual historicity. The official history is guided by the power or shaped by the dominant group but Historiographic Metafiction is the new form of postmodern fiction "best be reserved to describe fiction that is at once metafictional and historical in its ethos of the texts and contexts of the past" (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 120). Parody is one of the characteristics of Historiographic Metafiction as Linda Hutcheon claims, "gives way to the celebrated postmodernist 'paradox' "its world is both resolutely fictive and yet undeniable historical" (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 142). Parody is dominant in this novel where the main issue, which cannot be presented explicitly, is shown in paradoxical way to critique the history of Nepal with reference to Hitler.
The narrator has presented a scene of encounter with Nalini in the fictional manner as,

I was as enthusiastic as a cat would be, when encouraged to take cold shower. As the bus took a tedious turn, she swayed against me and I could feel the softness of the young breast on my left arm. This felt much more tempting than history and I moved close applying a slight reverse pressure. The hazel eyes darkened a little before giving me an eloquent look. (Athial, 2012, p. 43)

In his trip to Bhaktapur with Nalini, Alexei feels the acquainted closeness with her while travelling by bus. As the bus jolts, he happens to brush against Nalini's young breast. He narrates this intense feeling of emotion as "much more tempting than history" (Athial, 2012, p. 43). This shows how the author ironizes the history in comparison with the personal feelings and emotions. This shows how postmodernist works of art reveal a desire to understand present culture as the product of previous representations. Thus, postmodern art acknowledges and accepts the challenge of tradition: the history of representation cannot be escaped but it can be both explained and commented on critically through irony and parody.

According to Hutcheon, metafiction breaks the authenticity of the history with the use of fictional elements and it is what the narrator does in the novel. The narrator, Alexie, has mentioned the historical details of how the Mercedes Benz was gifted to the contemporary King of Nepal by Hitler in return of talismanic amulet. According to the narrator, this information is taken from the newspaper article on December 21, 2011:

I took out the newspaper from the battered attaché and re-read the news - 'The Mercedes Benz that was presented by Adolf Hitler to the former Nepal Monarch, Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah Dev, will be on display at the Narayanhiti Palace, Kathmandu.' NNA, Dec 21, 2011. The image emerged in a very slow motion and soon filled the screen. Hitler's car … the one gifted to the monarch in return for the Dark Force. (Athial, 2012, p. 13)

Hitler gifted the Mercedes Benz in 1937 and it reached Nepal in 1940. It is a real historical fact but his taking of talismanic amulet as a source of dark force seems imaginary. It shows how fiction's "values and practices are constructed and legitimized" through a blending of fact and imagination that together construct what we call writing (Waugh, 1984, p. 19). Certain works are dubbed with historiographic metafictions because of their conscious self-reflexivity and concern with history. The incident about the king and Hitler may or may not have found its way into mainstream history, but the way it has been casually dealt with in the novel shows how fiction has its own way of dealing with and commenting on what is factual and historical.

In the postmodern period, history and fiction have become the similar kind of genre. Not only history but also fiction also represents the real events of the past and the contemporary period indirectly from which readers can feel the situation what it was and is. Nalini's narration of the past is another example of historiographic metafiction. The places like Moscow, Madrid, Tokyo and Kathmandu are real as well as historical but Nalini's narration of her past lacks the authenticity, which makes it fictional. Her husband as a councilor, her two daughters Rupali and Paru, and others are the fictional elements. This blending of the history and fiction is evident in the following words of Nalini:

His Embassy duties took us to Madrid, Moscow and Tokyo. Rupali was born in Madrid. When I regained conscious, I asked the nurse to bring her. Keeping her cloths to my face I whispered your name in her ears and told her you are a real Daddy. I could see the tiny leaps moving in a small smile. (Athial, 2012, p. 102)

The past is not something escapable, avoidable, or controllable; neither it can be represented or adopted thoroughly. Nevertheless, we have only access to the past through its traces- its documents, the testimony of witness, and other archival materials. That's why; we only have representations of the past from which we can construct our narratives or explanations. These facts are clearly accompanied by Nalini's words

above. The novel also presents the manifold of historical and factual elements such as the birth date and parents of Hitler. Similarly, Hitler's autobiographical volume *Mein Kampf* is also real. But the indication of "Hitler's sexual uneasiness and the homosexual tendencies" (Athial, 2012, p. 117) are fictional.

`   For the critic Pared Campbell, *Hitler and the Decline of Shah Dynasty* is not only the story of history but simultaneously, a story of marriage, love and Church (Campbell, 2013, p. 94). It is again supported by Adams Kowaleski for whom "the events of *Hitler and the Decline of Shah Dynasty* are not presented in chronological order. The frequent shifting between a subjective first person narrator and a cold third person narrator in the multitude of voices that we find in the text strengthens its effects" (Kowaleski, 2012, p. 56). Violation of chronology and use of subjective point of view used in a novel about historical events also challenge the objectivity and authenticity of that kind of writing.

        The novelist's inclusion of his own father, Christian movement in Nepal and the issue of contemporary king Birendra are other historical incidents. Athial presents the information of his father with the factual setting of Kathmandu in addition to the fictional story of his crush on a university girl:

> My father was a missionary priest … serving in Kathmandu at that time. The church with its residential quarters at Putali Sadak, a busy street between Simha Durbar, the Nepal parliament and Narayanhiti Palace, the abode of the then monarch, His Majesty King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev. I was then a student at the Tribhuvan University and it was here I had met her. (Athial, 2012, p. 14)

In this way, fiction can represent reality in an imaginary form. Historical and factual details of locations, activities of Christian missionaries and the accounts of King are presented imaginatively. Alexie also adds some fantastic description about a pretty girl he met on a bus. The fictional description of the girl shows her as:

> She looked disarmingly irreproachable and had an eye-catching and mischievous smile on the round face … for a second I thought she was going to make a pass at me and wondered how to react in such an eventuality (Athial, 2012, p. 15).

This is a good example of how the writer presents his manipulation of history with the exploitation of imagination and fantasy within the narration of fact. In Hutcheon's view, "there is no neat dividing line between the texts of history and literature, and so one feels free to draw on both" (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 136). The blurring of the boundaries between history and fiction illustrates one's mistrust for the objectivity of history and opens up possibilities for the parody of this objective, historical discourse. Susana Onega argues that "historiographic metafiction differs from traditional historical novels in that the former does not seek historical accuracy and realistic verisimilitude but, on the contrary, challenges the repairability of the two discourses" (Onega, 1999, p. 1).

Traditional fictions do not interrupt the storyline to remind readers that the events are a work of imagination or to comment that the stories have been told before in various ways. As Athial writes about writing, he is building trust between himself and the readers. Although the love story between Alexie and Nalini is told in many different ways, readers trust they are hearing a true story because Athial tells them, "here is what actually happened" (2012, p. 16). The fictional description of Nalini makes her the object of beauty and the source of fictional imagination, "hmm... let me think… I watched her. I was in fascination as the lip went deep into the mouth, slowly came out, and again started the return journey..." (2012, p. 20). The author purposefully draws the attention of the readers to the fact that they are reading fiction. This is self-reflexivity in which a work of fiction is conscious of its own status as fiction.

Conclusion

After applying theoretical parameters of historiographic metafiction to the novel *Hitler and the Decline of Shah Dynasty,* Athial's sense of parody of historical incidents is very obvious to readers. The novel *Hitler and the Decline of Shah Dynasty* is a metafictional piece of writing which challenges the objectivity and authenticity of history and blurs the boundary between fact and fiction. It blends historical accounts with imaginative and fantastic elements to draw our attention to the idea that no writing is pure and every mode of writing is hybrid in certain sense. History is neither singular nor factual because there can be many different versions of the same historical events and the subjective and imaginative mind of the author creates some disruptions in objectivity and authenticity of mainstream history. In this metafictional mode of writing, there is parody in which historical incidents are repeated with a difference to show that history is discourse and is always open to interpretation.

References

Athial, E. (2012). *Hitler and the Decline of the Shah Dynasty*. New Delhi: Mahaveer Publishers.

Campbell, P. (2013). *History and Truth*. Ed. Richard Trenner. Ontario: Ontario Review P.

Hutcheon, L. (1988). *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. London: Routledge.

Kowaleski, A. (2012). *The American Novel.* Oklahoma, US: U of Oklahoma P.

Morrision, J. (2012). *A Spirit of Transgression.* New Delhi: Mahaveer Publications.

Onega, S. (1999). *Metafiction and Myth in the Novels of Peter Acroyd*. Columbia: Camden House.

Waugh, P. (1984). *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self Conscious Fiction.* London: Routledge.

White, H. (1973). *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe.* Baltimore. US: John Hopkins UP.

Exploring the Different Roles and Aspects of Music

Ramesh Pokharel, PhD[*]

Abstract

This paper explores different roles and aspects of music, describes its value, power and essential role in our daily life. The main objective of this article is to highlight the overall musical power in different aspects. Music affects both our body and mind. So, whenever we get time, we listen to Music. This makes us feel fresh even in old age. Music provides exercises to the mind. This is the reason why music is being used as therapy in hospitals even today. It has been seen that patients who listen to music take less time to improve. There are different genres of music like classical, semi-classical, light, folk, and their varieties of compositions with a magical quality, which we can enjoy according to our needs and requirements. Musical composition plays a vibrant part in everybody's normal life. It keeps us busy in free time. The rationalized sound, which arises from the creation of aesthetic-rasa, is called music. In eastern philosophy, Nada-Brahma (sacred-sound) is the primary source of music. This sound is called AUM, in which the whole universe remains vibrant. The impact of music on the living world is not hidden from anyone. Music is also the best way to practice yoga and meditation because it improves physical and mental health. It can be used for a therapeutic purpose too. It gives us peace in our challenging times and further enhances our happiness in good times. We can always use it to be happy. It is also beneficial for all professionals in different fields of society.

Keywords: aesthetic value, social value, therapeutic power, spiritual power, harmony, professional importance

Methods and Materials

The main objective of this paper is to highlight about the impact of music in our daily life. Overall power, value, and importance of music are analyzed with a qualitative approach. This is a descriptive and analytical study based on secondary sources of information. Relevant books, articles, journals, websites, research reports are sources of the study.

[*]Dr Pokharel is Associate Professor and currecntly working as the Campus Chief of Fine Arts Campus, Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

Introduction

Being the common language of the emotion of artistic souls, music cannot be confined in a limited geographical boundary though it is diverse from place to place, civilization to civilization, and present-generation to coming-generation. For centuries the people of the Indian sub-continent have always been seekers of truth, mysteries, and nature. Music in this south Asia is supposed to be single of the eldest continuous civilizations which go back to the Vedas. Many famous legends have grown up concerning the origins and development of classical music on the continent. Music is an influential and powerful medium that delivers a very lively message to everyone. The mother nature of music is also to encourage and promote the power of human concentration by removing all harmful thoughts and negative vibes, and its touchy quality helps us to revive all the decent memories (Sambamoorthy, 1958). The language, contents, and styles of music of different countries or society may diverge. Still, it has always been used as a source of entertainment, cultural and religious practices, and for practical and artistic communication all over the world."Concentrating our attention on the content of the sound would expose to us how music is knitted with musical sound-pitch with its dynamic movements through ascending and descending notes and scales. This lifts our mind with aesthetic appeal wherever it drives, while its rhythms unconsciously make us respond to its bends and turns making us nod our head and move the body and limbs"(Sairam, 2004).

During the 20th and the beginning of 21stcentury, the development of the automated open multimedia converted entree to music. We twisted on the radio-transistor, tape-recorder, Television-broadcast, CD-disc to various public sites and multi-media with easy access. Due to the integral part of our everyday lives, music is being consumed in a big way by individuals and societies in recent days, which would have been much more challenging in previous days. There was no any social sites and multimedia like today, to divert one's mind. Music used to help individual with monotonous lifestyles for the better connection with each other in those days. With the developing trend of our society, people gradually started to play instrumental percussion and sang various genres of folk, classical, and light songs with lively dancing to their tunes for the entertainment. In this way music became an integral part of our daily rite and ritual practice that run from our birth to funeral process (Gag, 1999).

Music is a great choice for people who are disheartened, feeling unhappy, and depressed. It has diverse components like bringing together, harmony, speed-beats, regularity, tone, melody, phrases, texture and grace, allocation of voices, dynamics, expression, appearance, communications, form, and structure. There are many things in music in which one can listen and pay attention. Music can make them feel happy, stress less, tension-free, calm, and delightful.

Music has such a power which can change our temperament in just a few seconds. Whenever we listen to some musical genre or any compositions, we can immediately enjoy it, and sometimes our mood even starts to dance in its rhythm. This is not fair to say, all types of musical genre can make us lively. It depends on the kind of music which we are listening to. But if someone comes and quickly changed the music track of the played song and sets some sad emotional song, our mood deviates at a time. We immediately start to sense the emotions which are hidden in the music compositions. That's why we should hear such pieces that cheer us up when we feel near to the ground. When we feel hopeless or unhappy, we should listen to the music, full of liveliness, not very gloomy or sensitive. While some lousy memory is disappointing us, it is one of the best options to forget that memory, at least for the time being (Fletcher, 2001).

Power

If there is one thing that continuously exists in this world, it is the power of music. It raises our frame of mind, cuts pressure, and improves our overall health. A good melody is one of the gifts of God to men. It enhances the mind and emotions and lifts the soul through the melodic and harmonious organization of sound patterns. This is the supreme one among all genres of fine arts. Sambamoorthy states that while for all other fine arts, nature provides man with great ideas; the structure of music was advanced by the brilliance of man himself. He emphasizes that music is one of the most natural and normal of entire arts (Sambamoorthy, 1958, p.1-2). Music has a collective charm to win over all levels of age group, gender, communal status, schooling, and teaching levels. It is our first-born form of communication and expression, more mature than verbal or fine arts. It originates in the vocal sound and has tremendous requirement to touch others. That connects our spirits more powerfully than verses. The existence of music will be essential so far the human race survives. It is our primary need (Yahudi and Curtis, 1979, p. l). Even the creatures respond to music. It is said that cows reacted to Krishna's flute and the snakes feel the charm of piece if the eastern classical raga is played. Recent scientific studies have shown that flowers grow faster, and farmers harvest more prosperous crops, and cows produce more milk if music is played.

Remedial treatment of Music is one of the best ways of controlling emotions, hypertension, and regenerating the working of the different organs of the body. It has been used by a psychiatrist, therapist, mediator, and peacemaker. Most of our every work starts with music in diverse ways to complete numerous goals. As reported by Bancroft (1985), vocal and instrumental Music can be used for therapeutic purposes rather than beauty or aesthetics. The communicative quality of music can be both a pleasant and therapeutic experience. For music therapy, it is crucial to vibrate the cells

of the mind and body. Through these pulsations and vibrations, unhealthy being's consciousness can be transformed successfully to encourage health.

Music researches, science, and medicine are re-experiencing the therapeutic powers of music in recent days. Musical beat stimulates the pituitary gland, whose secretions affect the nervous system and blood circulation. Melodious music helps a person relax, refresh, and calm himself. Even during working, mostly the raga based classical, light, and traditional folk genres of music improve efficiency. Difficulty, obstacles, unfairness, and frustration can be controlled by listening to a piece of good music. At rehabilitation centers, therapy has been used by musical practice forages, helping people to survive with their unrecovered pain, manage stress, and improve memory (Kalyan, 2002). Some researchers state that when patients started listen to a melodious music during their surgery, earlier or later, they felt less pain and hurt. In the concentrations of people, musical rhythm, melody and lyrics make a place worth living in many ways. Music has effect on everyone's life, from humans to plants, flowers, birds, animals, etc. Researchers have proved that the cure of diseases can be done well through music. Its usage has been very successful in the treating of lung, throat, eye disease, and heart disease.

The emotional appeal of music transfers to the mental and physiological dimensions, leading to its curative and therapeutic effect. It is said that specific classical ragas are capable of curing sicknesses. Music remedy was known not only in ancient times but even today. Some doctors use it to relieve pain during particular painful treatments and help the patients towards a speedy recovery. Thus, aesthetic could serve the same purpose as an anesthetic in eliminating pain realization, but without having any contrary effect on the speed of recovery.

It is claimed that even the heart is bound to react kindheartedly to music. While singing, the human voice gets trained, the tissues of the body also vibrate, and are kept alive. When we listen to good music, the subtle threads in the inner ear respond. Thus, they become very active. Both vocal and instrumental Music keep the nervous system perfect. The power of music to change the sensitive makeup of human beings has been acknowledged. In prisons, music has been improved to calm down uncontrollable prisoners. In some educational institutions, provocative classes have been improved through music. In this sense Music has great power to change the temperament in human beings.

Spiritual Power

The knowledge of Nada-Brahma (sacred sound) is an essential branch of the Eastern school of spirituality. There is no mantra superior or more significant than AUM or OM (supreme sound). That sound, when recited even once, uplifts spiritually.

While reciting AUM, we generate inside a sensitive trembling within our body, and for the moment we stand in harmony with the universe. Weperform AUM, as well as generate a musical quivering in our physical and spiritual coordination (Krishnananda, 1996, P. 61). "All God's creatures are the spirit of nada. Not any songs, musical notes, dance minus nada, therefore Pt. Saarangadev, a great sage and writer of Sangeet Ratnakar in13th century, stresses that nada-sound is the identical soul of singing. Instrumental music is pleasurable, as it expresses nada. Nritta-dance associates together hence altogether be governed by supreme nada"(Sharma and Shringy, 1978, pp. 21-23).

In the early days of human civilization, people habituated to perform their feelings through different types of tunes and movements of the body. Later on, in the Vedic period, music acquired some form. The saints of that time used to sing the hymns of the Vedas in a musical chant. Apart from this, theme was familiar in different sacrificial ceremonies of the Aryans. Hymns from Sama-Veda were sung at those functions. The use of music was, however, limited to performances at sacred places only (Khan, 1992, p.12).

Since ancient times, music in this continent has been practiced as a spiritual science and art, a means to enlightenment and self-interview. The proper practice and Upasana (worship) of Nada-Brahma complete the communication cycle by bringing divine messages and motivations to the Sadhaka (entirely devoted person) by the realizing of the subtle sounds -Anahata Nada in the inner self.

As stated in Vedic-literature, music created from Nada, which is the atmosphere or ether. Under the musical nada, we found two types of sound, the Aahat nada or struck sound is audible, whereas the Anahata nada or unstruck sound is inaudible. Vedic sages believed that the evolution of the Brahmand or Universe was caused as a result of atomic explosion that produced infinite waves of sound, which represent cosmic ascent and expansion. The sound was a monosyllable: OM. Since OM is related to the beginning of the universe, Hindus consider it the most sacred syllable with which Vedic mantras originated. The AUM is the origin of both Shabda-Brhma (verbal-sound) and Nada-Brahma, and both are interlinked (RgVeda.html).

Music was a part of religious rituals in ancient India. Music and incantation were needed details of Yagya (fire sacrifices) and other spiritual practices. In those days notable singers used to sing at the sacrifices to the veena's accompaniment (Ramakrishna, 2003, p.1). Later on, this form of music took the shape of classical music in South Asia. Classical music of Indian sub-continent is usually severe and devotional based on Ragas following long-established principles. It is phrase of spiritual aesthetics. It is a means of self-realization and salvation of the soul rather than a simple expression (Chakravarty, 1999, p.68).

The Yajurveda recitation was more rhythmic than the incantation of Sama-Vedic melody. (Rama Krishna, 2003, p.15). The initial formal music was the Sama-Vedic music developed by folk music. Gandharva music was the emerging form, as mentioned in sage Bharata's Natyashastra. Sam-Vedic scales, murchhna (tonal frames by origination ascents and descents, ranging over seven notes) Gram (initial music scales), which shaped different sort of melodicstructurenamed Jaati (tonal organization). Vedic music was the initial form of today's classical music and other music genres. People of South Asia and abroad have very much respect for this spiritual music genre.

Value

Without the knowledge of music, a person cannot be said to be completely human. It can be measured as one of the basic needs of a man. Music education helps a child to develop his native talents to the complete range, to improve his life and develop self-confidence in his abilities. It draws out diverse human talents from within the mind and the spirit.

South Asia is an open arts center of the great heritage of different fine arts genres like painting, sculptor, music, dance and drama, etc. The diverse cultural heritage is unified by the common identification of expression of art. Many musical genres have been used in this sub-continent as a worship tradition for a long and to express mythological stories and transmit traditional uniqueness. Fine art is a mirror of society. Various branches of painting, music, literature, dance, and other creative activities are included in art. Music has a major influence on religious conviction, civilization, and schooling. Music including other art forms e.g. painting, literature, dance and drama reflects the current state in the society. Among all fine arts forms, music has several kinds of aesthetic, collective, entertaining, therapeutic, creative, spiritual, artistic, and it shows music appealing values.

Music has a social and economic aspect too. One of the most valuable social dimensions of music is that people of fluctuating talents and backgrounds can join together. This is not only being achieved in the socialistic nations and the western countries today, but even in the caste scattered South Asian society. Musician-sages have always tried to bridge the gulf amongst people through the use of music compositions and melody.

Music is a significant economic creator of income in most advanced society and nations engaging hundreds of individuals in musical activities whereby musicians can earn money and improve the quality of life. Besides the performance, this needs a supply of artists for their economic sustainability with the requirement of extraordinary music experts and professionals.

Music is an extremely sensitive concept, and it depends on our mood and atmosphere. It is not only activity, enjoyment, entertainment, and extra-curricular activities of any school or college but an art that gives immeasurable joy to the mind and heart of the people. It has a rich heritage that has come to us from time immemorial. It is not only a pastime or amusement but an art that gives infinite joy to the mind and the heart. Music develops a sense of beauty in a person and contributes to their cultural refinement. The country which abounds with many musicians and their unique art can be rich and prosperous.

Importance

Music is like yoga. It makes us happy and also sustains hormonal balance in our bodies. It helps us to keep our body fit both physically and spiritually. It also works to care for us from mental problems.

Music suddenly touches our heart, mood, makes us enthusiastic, quiet, and happy. Every human being can get delighted in performing, listening, humming, dancing, and drumming percussion. Even though this is a common widespread interest, various educational institutions have been compelled to go out of their music teaching and learning activities. It is an injustice. It is not fair to stop them with their natural rights. Not only for the schools, but it is a significant loss of our society. Music education can heighten schoolchildren being in this world with their creativity. The aim of teaching music in schools should be to help the children to express their feelings freely, thoughts, and ideas through music. Music is suitable for their memory (Yahudi and Curtis, 1979, p. 40). From the perspective of cultural and religious value, music has been used as a good medium of communication and education. "A well-established music industry and its related educational institutions help a nation prosper artistically, aesthetically, socially, culturally, and economically creating huge opportunities for the jobs of different professionals related to this field"(http://hdl.handle.net/10603/268334, p.1).

Music helps us clarify our thoughts, ideas, spirits, and creativity. The development of creative power in an individual merits his attention. Music initiates wherever people have feelings that they wish to express or share with others. Improvement of presentation skills helps the individual become more skillful in conveying his thoughts, moods, or concepts. One learns to communicate by giving natural release to one's feelings and ideas - by actually using one's own creative powers. An expression of music is an actual physical process like how light and heat influence nature and the living world. This makes their body grow healthy. In the same way, music also has thermic and internal energy and it holds such an essential place in the development of human beings.

Conclusion

Music is a language by itself, capable of expressing refined thoughts. The impact of music on the living world is not hidden from anyone. It plays a significant role in our daily lives. There are various genres of music practices worldwide, which we can enjoy according to our needs and requirements. Music helps to practice yoga and meditation because it improves both physical and mental health. In a creative, innovative, and imaginary way, it grows our concentration, mood and gives us immeasurable peace, happiness, and spiritual feelings. Among all fine arts forms, music has several kinds of aesthetic, collective, entertaining, therapeutic, creative, spiritual, artistic, and its own musical appealing values. A good music grows our intelligence and skills. It is essential for our kids to enhance their creativity while teaching them. The emotional appeal of music transfers to the mental and physiological dimensions leading to its therapeutic effect. It is said that a particular musical genre of eastern music is capable of curing some diseases. In music therapy, doctors use it to relieve pain during specific painful treatments and help the patients towards a speedy recovery.

The knowledge of Nada-Brahma is an important branch of the Eastern school of philosophy. There is no hymn superior to AUM. That sacred sound, when recited even once uplifts spiritually. While reciting AUM, we generate inside a sensitive vibration within our body and at a time, we stand in harmony with the Universe. Nada-sound is the primary source of all the genres of music.

Music is an international language too. It has no barriers of religion, race, caste, class, faith, or philosophy. When music comes to be practiced, this world will be a cheerier place to live. The study and practice of music give taste, grace, attraction, gentleness, and fine-tuning to the person. It develops the creamy qualities of human kindness and sympathy. A composer expresses his ideas through the medium of musical sounds. The monotonous, uninteresting and routine character of life is considerably relieved by listening to a beautiful music. It is a common mother-tongue of humanity. It is a great unifying force. Music is the foundation of many arts and institutes an integral part of a nation's prosperity. Many music philosophers and scholars of the world have stressed the various aspects of power, value and significance of music through their different experiments and perception. Our worldwide musicians and composer's opinions are very lively towards the importance and supremacy of music and its spirituality too.

References

Bancroft, W. J. (1985). *Music therapy and education. Journal of the Society for Accelerative Learning and teaching, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 3-19,* (ERIC Document Reproduction No. ED 285 414).

Chakravarti, I. (1994). *Music: Its methods and techniques for teaching in higher education.* New Delhi: Mittal Publications.

Fletcher, P. (2001). *World Music in Context: A Comprehensive Survey of the World's Major Musical cultures.* New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

Garg, B. (1999). *Sangeetvisharad (23rd ed.).* Hathras, India: Sangeetkaryalaya Hathras.

Kalyan, B. (2002). *Music therapy as an A alternative medicine*. New Delhi: An Alternative Medicine' Society for Erotological Research.

Khan, M. H. (1992). *Islamic contribution to South Asia's Classical Music.* New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited.

Krishnananda, S. (1996). *The Mandukya Upanishad.* Rishikesh: The Divine Life Society Sivananda Ashram.

Majumdar, R. C. (1968). *The History and the culture of the Indian People: The Age of Imperial Unity (4 ed. Vol. 2).* Bombay: BharatiyaVidyaBhavan.

Ramakrishna, L. (2003). *Musical Heritage of India.* New Delhi: Shubhi Publication.

Sairam, T.V. (2004). *What is music?* Chennai: Nada Center for Music Therapy

Sambamoorthy, P. (1958). *South Indian Music. (Book-I).* Madras: The Indian Music Publishing House.

Sharma, P. L. & Shringy, R. K. (1978). *Sangitaratnakar of Sarangdeva (Reprint Vol. I).* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass. Pp. 21-23

Singh, T. J. (1995). *Indian Music.* Calcutta: Sangeet Reasearch Academy.

Yehudi, M. and Curtis, W. D. (1979). *The Quiver of life, The Music of Man.* London: Macdonald General Books.

http://hdl.handle.net/10603/88881

https://www.azquotes.com/quote/1358537?ref=power-of-music

https://everydaypower.com/music-quotes/

https://medium.com/the-musicpreneur/what-is-the-value-of-music-22439ee745d5

https://www.mitchdeklein.com/blog/201688-reasons-why-music-is-important-to-us

https://www.gilbertgalindo.com/importanceofmusic

https://targetstudy.com/articles/importance-of-music-in-human-life.html

http://hdl.handle.net/10603/292103

https://ayurveda-foryou.com/music/music.html

http://hdl.handle.net/10603/268334

https://www.valdostamuseum.com/hamsmith/RgVeda.html

Causes and Effects of Trauma in Bhutanese Nepali Diasporic Poetry

Ramji Timalsina, PhD[*]

Abstract

  This study aims to explore the causes and effects of trauma in Bhutanese Nepali diasporic poetry. It discusses the connection between the individual and collective trauma. Bhutanese Nepali diasporicpoetry gives expression to centuries-long marginalization and sufferings of this community. The series of suffering started from the time the people of Nepali origin reached Bhutan for permanent settlement. It continued with their expulsion, life as refugees and finally in the resettled life in the West. Their experiences of suffering caused trauma on both the personal and collective levels. To explore how it is represented in their poetic creations, I have done this study with the use of constructivist trauma theory in the analysis of the six purposively selected poems that deal with causes and effects of trauma. Constructivist trauma theory deals with trauma as a social construct. The experiences of the people are traumatic, and the discourses on trauma make the individual and social trauma acute and understandable. The study has found that the history of sufferings and the consequent experiences are the causes of their trauma. As a result of trauma, their mentality has been badly affected. The speakers in the poems and the community at the level of representation have been fearful, purposeless and disoriented. The victims' vulnerable existential condition has been reflected in their alternative mode of living on, disability, helplessness and aloneness that has caused significant bearing on the construction of their identity. Their psychology has been filled with troubling past and unstable present mentality resulting into the feeling of being demeaned and diminished. At the same time, these poems have depicted the combination of personal and collective trauma. I believe that this study paves way to further studies on Bhutanese Nepali diasporic literature from the perspective of trauma theory.

Keywords: Bhutanese Nepali diasporic poetry, disturbed mentality, existential condition, trauma, vulnerability.

[*]Dr. Timalsina has done PhD from Tribhuvan University and has been working as Lecturer in English at the Department of English, Mahendra Multiple Campus Dharan, Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

Introduction

Expulsion of more than one hundred thousand Nepali speaking people from Bhutan in the 1990s was the greatest ever historical shock for the Nepali Diaspora as people of Nepali origin were never evicted by a state in such a large number. This massive expulsion of the people on the cultural ground was the next form of genocide. Once they were out of the nation which they had thought their own, they were forced to stay as refugees in Nepal, the nation their forefathers had left to settle in Bhutan. Finally, most of them resettled in the West (Subba & Sinha, 2016). This historical reality is the generator of trauma in Bhutanese Nepali diasporic community. At the same time, this reality gave them a new identity, "historical traumatic experience is the source that marks and defines contemporary individual identity, as well as racial or cultural identity" (Balaev, 2008, p.152). Theirs was also a form of collective trauma that "emerged and deepened gradually through an accumulation of distress and suffering" (Schonfelder, 2013, p. 318). Creative writers of the community have given expression to this collective shock.

Literature gives expression to the conditionality of life and existence; and it is practically true in case of the Bhutanese Nepali diasporic creations. AbhiSubedi (2014) argues that their condition of being a refugee gave birth to very original literary creations, full of high level human sensitivity. He observed that the creative writers of this community have given expression to the same in their writings (app.). Subedi further stresses that diasporic literature of this highly marginalized community happened to be primarily emotion oriented (p.10). In the same tone, some other critics have termed these creations as oppressed literature, too, because of the background reality of their composition. I. P. Adhikari (2010) claims that Bhutanese Nepali literature was a proof of the fact that "[e]ven the end of civilization cannot end the literature" (p. 1). This expression symbolizes the level/extent of torture these creators had to undergo in life: The emotions developed with the same experiences worked as the background to their creative works. Adhikaridepicts the situation of their life: "The empty bellies, naked bodies and absence of a good platform ruled the society and thus squeezed the creative talents within huts to shut up their imaginations" (p. 3). These realities showcase the pain and difficulties they had to undergo. Such situations created trauma in community members and the same has been reflected in their creations.

Among all literary genres, it is poetry that represents the most intensive human emotions in a very short space. The titles of some of the poems by this expelled generation of the Bhutanese Nepali poets at the first sight capture the intensity of traumatic experiences and their consequences. Some of such titles are: Devi Subedi's "Agonies of Being Exiled", Prakash Dhamala's "Standing on the No Man's Land of Life", Chakra Acharya's "Horror of Living", Dona Kafle's"I am a Melancholy Night

Traveller" , Miro Heynik's"I Cry When I Yawn" , and Rup Narayan Pokhrel's"I'm Still Alive …". Similarly, there are some lines from poems that make a reader muse on the traumatic mentality of its creator. **"Horror of Living"** by Acharya (2010) contains the following lines:

> Where is the extreme of wild dread and where is the bound of grotty drama?
> Where did we bypass the apostle like Dalai Lama?
> Where is the end of havoc and where is the end of killings?
> Where are the instruments of thought for humanity and heart of feelings?
> Where does humanity outflow?
> When lightless dark generosity dimly glows . . .! (ll. 9-14)

The poems mentioned above and such lines inside them raised my interest to takes up the exploration of the impact of their trauma in the Bhutanese Nepali diasporic poems to see how these poems represent the trauma they have undergone for long.

Methodology

This study has used constructivist trauma theory as a tool for the interpretation of the selected poems that are the primary data for analysis. The poems that represent causes and effects of the trauma of the Bhutanese Nepali Diaspora have been selected. Their poetic quality and the theme they deal with have been the bases of the selection of these six poems used in the analysis. The interpretative method of analysis has been used with the postcolonial constructivist trauma theory. In constructivist approach, trauma is taken as a political and emancipatory enterprise that deals with the lived experience of oppressed peoples. Jeffrey Prager (2011) explains why it is also called social or cultural trauma: it is caused by "the external world" that "can dramatically impinge on a given population's ability to develop freely". And it finally promotes "traumatic deformation". This category has "now come to signify an extremely wide range of phenomena, e.g. war, genocide, racism, rape, enslavement, kidnapping, forced migration" (p. 431). The concept is further clarified by Olajide Oloyede (2009) who proposes that "collective trauma would imply, in a rather simple sense, trauma that affects a group." He argues that trauma is perceived as a cultural trauma "when members with a sense of belonging to a collective such as state, ethnic or religious group feel they have been subjected to a fearful and painful event that leave marks upon their collective consciousness and memory" (p. 6). Angela Onwuachi-Willig (2016) specifies how collective trauma becomes the cultural one: "to become a cultural trauma, an event or situation must not only be disorienting, but must also get defined and narrated as trauma" (p. 339). Once narrated in the community, such a traumatic event or story (if it has taken a long time) takes the form of myth and affects the imagination of the whole community for many generations.

The case of the Bhutanese Nepali diasporans was that of collective eviction. Its consequent sufferings were the causes of the trauma of the community and its individuals. Thus, the constructivist approach is appropriate in the analysis of trauma represented in their poems. Based on the combination of theoretical inputs from Jeffrey Alexander, Kai Erikson, Michael Balaev, Negin Heidarizadeha, Roger Luckhurst, and Ron Eyerman, this study has argued that the selected poems have represented the collective trauma of the community.

Causes of Trauma the Poems Reflect

The poems "Agonies of Being Exiled" composed by Devi Subedi (2014) and "Standing on the No Man's Land of Life" by Prakash Dhamala (2010) depict the causes of trauma in the Bhutanese Nepali diasporic community. These poems show that the experiences of being expelled out from the nation are the basic causes of their trauma. The speaker in Subedi's poem relates his childhood experience that caused his trauma. The poem reports that the bad time started when the speaker was four years in age. He was an innocent child and was "barely uttering the word of motherhood" (Subedi, 2014, l. 4). Heidarizadeha's (2015) argument that "particularly childhood experiences" (p. 789) are the bases of trauma is noteworthy in this connection.

Real experiences of some severe shocks cause trauma of many kinds. The case of the Bhutanese Nepali diasporic community is also the same. Erikson (1991) argues that a "constellation of life's experience as well as . . . a discrete event" (p. 457) causes trauma. Subedi's (2014) poem presents this reality. The monarch of Bhutan grew tyrannical with the slogan of "One country, one race" (l. 9); and "it declared Nepali-race people as anti-national" (l. 6). With this development in the politics of the nation, there started the torture upon the people of the Nepali origin. The first step was the action of "seizing the citizens of the speaker's grandparents" (ll. 7-8) followed by the torture on the parents. The most severe time of suffering followed. The poem presents this in the following lines:

> Kidnapping, raping and killing many young ladies,
> thrown in the river many saplings and babies.
> Our parents' bank accounts were seized,
> made penniless and treated as wild beast. (ll. 11-14)

This racial discrimination and the state-sponsored torture show how the diasporans are treated in some cases by the mainstream in the host land. The Bhutanese Nepali people could not bear all these injustices meted out to them from the government in which the people of the other races were in power. So they were compelled to leave Bhutan: "Ultimately we were levied to leave the country, /where our seven generations had their cemetery" (ll. 15-16). The land they had inhabited for seven generations could not be

theirs at that moment of history. Suddenly, they were made landless, homeless and finally the identity-less. It was the primary cause of the trauma of the community. The cause of trauma was intensified with the suffering they had to undergo after they left their homes. The poem presents the scene of the time they left the land: "Distressed countrymen sobbing and crying, /left the birthplace in dying" (ll. 17-18). This condition was the cause and the resultant mentality was surely traumatic. The series of suffering continued. The life in the refugee camps was not good and their attempts of repatriation were not successful. This situation added the severity of their trauma. In this condition, many people in the community were depressed. There was no way out for their good days ahead.

The above mentioned conditions show that such shocking occurrences profoundly affect individual's life (Eyerman, 2013, p.41). The major causes were "discrimination, police brutality, and bullying" (Heidarizadeha, 2015, p.789). Such inhuman events were "something alien" that "[broke] into" an individual "smashing through whatever barrier" the individual's mind "has set up as a line of defense" (Erikson, 1991, p.458). Such a shattering experience and its effects dismantle the individual and social mentality. Dhamala's (2010) poem "Standing on the No Man's Land of Life" presents a shattering memory of the speaker. Before presenting it, the longest and largest river of Bhutan namely the Manas is shown to be producing a "mourning cry" (l. 5). This disturbing atmosphere is set to announce a shattering experience of his life i.e. the killing of his daughter, "Where the rosy lips of my daughter/Haunted me once in every dusk" (ll. 7-8). This, though indirectly, refers to the indiscriminate killing the Bhutanese army unleashed upon innocent Nepali community in the late 1890s and the early 1990s. Such killing of innocent people haunts the speaker. At the symbolic level, it also refers to the killing of their dream of good future in the land. The first stanza (ll.1-8) of the poem thus symbolically presents the history of the Bhutanese Nepali community around the time of their expulsion from the land.

These two poems show the shattering of humanity by the rulers. Tuon (2015) argues that it so happens because "the individual's humanity is erased during the moment of trauma" (p.607). Dhamala's (2010) poem describes what the speaker and his community did once the rulers gave them "a cold shoulder" and their "passion of mankind was letdown" (ll. 10-11). The Bhutanese Nepali diasporic speaker with the people of his community raised the voice for equality. The result was that he was banned for such expressions; and he was "banned from dreaming/The world of life / The world of happiness" and the "world of liberty" (ll. 13-16). Those days were so troublesome for them that even the memory of the time troubles them. Oloyede (2009) discusses the basic characteristics of such disturbing events: "it is out of the ordinary,

directly experienced and perceived as a threat to survival and self-preservation" (p.5). These poems depict the same conditions.

Dhamala's (2010) poem exhibits how a person undergoing trauma feels shattered. The first line of the poem is: "My dreams were shattered" (l. 1). Nothing in the world is good for him and the life is not worthy to live once the dreams are shattered. This first line is connected with the second that explains how the speaker's dreams were shattered: "And I was expelled from the womb of my native land" (l.2). This line shows the speaker's love and intimacy with his land of birth, Bhutan. The use of the word 'womb' is symbolic. It means that the land where he was born is equal to his mother. The land provided him the cozy luxury of the womb. So, to be expelled from this space is the cause of trauma.

In these poems the causes of an individual's trauma are intertwined with the causes of the collective trauma. The poems show that all the causes of their trauma are the ruler's inhuman treatment of the Nepali community and the consequent pitiable life they had to live as refugees in Nepal and diasporans in the West.

Effects of Trauma that the Poems Depict

The poems selected for this study and the poems in general that deal with the effects of trauma highly outnumber the poems that deal with the causes of trauma in Bhutanese Nepali diasporicliterature. One of such poems is Chakra Acharya's "Horror of Living" that presents an example of the expression of a traumatic mentality through poetry. It shows how a trauma inflicted subject thinks. Similarly, the next poem "Farewell, Oh New Year" composed by Yati Raj Ajnabee presents extreme negativity and a sense of terror trauma creates in one's thinking. The third poem entitled "My Many Ways" shows the effects of trauma on the existence of the subject and consequently the Bhutanese Nepali community as a cultural and political collective. The portrayal of traumatic mentality is further shown by the fourth poem: "I am a Melancholy Night Traveller". It balances the causes and effects of trauma. These poems exhibit two prominent aspects of the effects of trauma: victim's vulnerable existential condition and the condition of victim's psychology.

Trauma makes its victim's existential condition vulnerable. Cloyed (2009) defines trauma as a condition in which the victim's "basic assumption of him/herself and the world" (p. 5) has been shattered. So is the stand of Prager (2011) who takes trauma as "an event or series of events remembered as so dangerous as to be impossible to preserve an equilibrating belief in a world that presumes our presence" (p.429). Michael Rothberg (2008) adds the element of the victim's life in these definitions and argues that "trauma implies some 'other mode of living on'" (p.231). In the same line of thought Christa Schönfelder (2013) argues that trauma "involves a complex conjunction

of subjectivity and alterity." This feature shows how trauma "exposes a basic but troubling fact of human condition—vulnerability" (p.321). The poems under this analysis exhibit this aspect of trauma inflicted people and their community.

Ajnabee's (2009) "Farewell, Oh New Year!" displays how even good times and things at present remind a trauma victim of bad old experiences. Even a lovely tickle turns into terrible tease for him. Moreover, he is determined not to be creative at any cost because his seed of creativity may be sown on a wrong soil and it may cause the sower's death. So, he wants to stay away from any creative collaboration. The poem shows that despise or hatred is his way to look at the world. This is the reason why he does not believe anybody in the world. Every man is an image of a carnivorous destroyer in his eyes. He believes that being away from the world is the single solution to the problems the world is undergoing these days. Rothberg's (2008) argument has been supportive to this condition, "all traumas and individual experiences are particular— and ultimately disabling" (p. 229). It shows the idiosyncrasy of the experience and the damaging effect of trauma on the victim.

Siskin (2010) in his poem "My Many Ways" presents a troubled vision of life that combines rare hope and unbearable troubles of the existence. This is the vision created in the mind badly affected with trauma and its consequent existential effect on the community. The poem starts with the dim possibility, at the end of the tunnel, of their existence and ends at a very sad note reflected at the portrayal of a nightmare. Such a thought is the result of the feeling of 'overwhelming helplessness or aloneness" (Prager2011, p.428). Another such example is Acharya's (2010) speaker who is a Bhutanese Nepali diasporan. He has undergone all the experiences of being chased away from the land of birth, living as a refugee back in the forefathers' homeland and finally relocated in the third country that has no natural connection with him and his community. He is situated in such a condition as if he is a traveller stuck amid terror and experience of horror. His position is only that of the person who can just see and realize the situation, but cannot make any significant change in the existential condition. Siskin's (2010) speaker muses, "my marrow sees light at the end of the tunnel" (l. 1). The personified image of the speaker's marrow symbolizes the depth of the effects of trauma. To the deepest down of his bodily existence, he is convinced that the good days ["light"] are still far away in his journey of life. The journey is not very easy because it is the journey through the tunnel, not an overland travel. While walking through the tunnel, the walker is not seen: it refers to the hidden identity of the traveller. It connotes the condition of the lack of identity of the speaker and that of the Bhutanese Nepali community in total. One generally does not see the light at the next end of the tunnel. It is a mere imagination or the memory of the time once the speaker had seen the light at

that point of life in the past. This line, in total, indicates the possibility of long and troublesome journey of the identity-threatened Bhutanese Nepali community.

The last stanza presents the nightmare of the speaker with negative forces that a poet can put into the poem. Once he sleeps, he has a dream in which a wolf appears at the door. It is guttered and its limbs are even-tempered. Suddenly, he finds himself in a coffin of blue colour. He also finds himself in "the black rue of [his] light brown face" (l. 15). Looking at him, he is terrified and so finally yells: "What am I, a bare book, a wallet penniless!" (l. 16). This is the expression of his absence of identity and existential value. It is what the Bhutanese Nepali community mostly suffered from. This is the condition that caused their trauma and is also the result of trauma at the same time. As a result, there is a "significant bearing on the construction of identity" (Oloyede, 2009, p.5). All these conditions damage the victim's ordinary life pattern. The most debilitating effect of trauma is seen on the subject's psychology. It is the primary locale where the blow of an incident impacts on. Connecting trauma with such blows and its effect Negin Heidarizadeha (2015) definestrauma as "the state of mind which results from an injury." Though it is a real state of mind, it has some elements of "fantasy which can be read as an articulation of trauma", too. At the same time, it is "a devastating and damaging experience" that is "lived belatedly at the level of its unspeakable truth" (p.789). These definitions connect trauma with the victim's troubling past and the unstable present mentality.

Acharya's (2010) poem "Horror of Living" presents a bizarre thought of a traumatic mind. Developed with the help of bizarre images and their symbolic use, the poem is an example of the expression of a traumatic mentality. It displays the way a traumatic subject thinks about his/her past, present and future. The terror of the past experiences, the horror of the present living and hopelessness for the future are significant ingredients of a traumatic mind and its deliberation. This poem displays these conditions.

This idea is presented with the action of the greyhounds that attack the termites that live peacefully in their own beautiful garden. Here, the greyhounds symbolize the Bhutanese army that indiscriminately attacked the innocent people of the Nepali origin and their beautiful garden like country settlements. The villages that were the symbols of peace and harmony were then turned into the battlefield where one army attacked and killed the disarmed and innocent people. The bizarre scene is reflected with the meadows full of "heated wounds" (l. 4). The poem also presents the depressive rambling of the speaker with a bizarre mentality. The atmosphere the poem has portrayed is dim and gloomy. The scene of the destroyed garden is desolate and the attack of the carnivorous greyhounds on the innocent termites is horribly terrific. The

"pinching and piercing into the chest" (l. 5) of these innocent being and the hunters chasing the deer add the horror in the scene.

This poem is a practical example of what Erikson (1991) reports about the cause of trauma: "an assault from outside that breaks into the space one occupies as a person and damages the interior" (p.455). Such a psychology is troublesome and abnormal and it displays "aggression and self-destructiveness" along with the manifestation of "a desire for self-annihilation" at some times. It creates "serious long-term negative consequences" (Heidarizadeha, 2015, p.789). It is because the traumatic events "inflict fear and suffering, induce pain, anguish, fear, loss and grief and bring about the destruction of a 'coherent and meaningful reality' thus pushing the traumatized to the limit" (Oloyede, 2009, p.5). It leaves people "feeling demeaned, diminished, devalued" (Erikson, 1991, p.465). The speaker in Kafle's (2009) "I am a Melancholy Night Traveller" is such an uncouth night traveller: "I am night traveller. An uncouth night traveller I am" (l. 1). He explains it in the second line: "A distressed traveller laden with the passé political aphorism" (l. 2). It connects the reason of the speaker being an uncouth night traveller. He does it because he is distressed and has been carrying some political aphorism that makes him different from the travellers in the day. He is somebody different from the people who belong to the mainstream and believe on it. The third and the fourth lines further explain the reason behind his condition: "Each midnight I wake up to wish a living/Each next day I am a living dead" (ll. 3-4). He feels that his existence is like that of a dead person. People treat him not as a commonly alive man, but as somebody that is an object, not a person. So, he feels he is a living dead.

Erikson (1991) explains the situations of trauma victims in length. Her study finds that trauma invades the victim(s), takes them over, and becomes "a dominating feature of [the victim's] interior landscape" (p.458). These conditions are displayed in the poem "I am a Melancholy Night Traveller" that is full of negative imagery of killing and destruction. The contrast between the devastatingly devilish destroyers and the innocent victims highlights the theme of the text. Mixing negativity with destruction is next technique employed in this creation. The fourth line of the poem is an example: "I see nothingness in the hub of meadows, but the heated wounds" (l. 4). It shows that to put someone into traumatic condition means to put one under some troubles that "move to the center of one's being, and in doing so give victims the feeling that they have been set apart and made special" (Erikson, 1991, p. 458). As a result, the victim views itself as marked, cursed.

The event that inflicted trauma on the whole community along with the subject (individual) happens to be a recurrent reference in the creations resulting from traumatic mentality. Pragerm (2011) reports his research finding that "at any moment, memory can be triggered and the past can reassert itself as if it were present" (p.429).

Heidarizadeha (2015) also asserts the same feature: "past trauma and traumatic memories affect the mind of the character [i.e. the person who is victimized]" (p.789). So is the finding of Erikson (1991) who reports that "trauma involves a continual reliving of the original experience in daydreams and nightmares, flashbacks and hallucinations, and in a compulsive seeking out of similar circumstances" (457-58). All these features connect trauma with the past event and its effect on the victim's psychology at present. Almost each of the poems selected for this article has this quality.

Connecting Individual and Collective Dimensions

Bhutanese Nepali diasporic community underwent traumatic experiences that have affected every member of the community. Their individual trauma was, thus, personal and communal at the same time. Alexander (2012) discusses such a connection between collective and individual experiences of trauma. He argues that trauma primarily is the matter of a collective i.e. a community or a cultural group. Even the personal psychic sufferings are not merely personal; they are to some extent connected with the community in which the person lives as its member. So, trauma is personal and collective at the same time. Alexander takes mere individual suffering of any "extraordinary human, moral, and intellectual import" as a matter of "ethics and psychology", but not the matter of trauma. He explains his position: "The cultural construction of collective trauma is fuelled by individual experiences of pain and suffering, but it is the threat to collective rather than individual identity that defines the suffering at stake" (p. 2). Bhutanese Nepali diasporic poetry gives voice to this condition of the community. He further explained the idea of collective trauma: They can become so if they are conceived as wounds to social identity. This is a matter of intense cultural and political work. Suffering collectivities – whether dyads, groups, societies, or civilizations – do not exist simply as material networks. They must be imagined into being. The pivotal question becomes not who did this to me, but what group did it to us? Intellectuals, political leaders, and symbol creators of all kinds make competing claims. They identify protagonists and antagonists and weave them into accusatory narratives projected to audiences of third parties. (p. 2) So, this theory projects trauma through symbols and discourse creations. Bhutanese Nepali diasporic community has gone through the same process and their poetic creations symbolize that historical reality.

Alexander (2012) further argues that "a social theory of collective trauma" explains "how collective agency develops, or fails to develop, in response to the experience of social suffering." He discusses "religion, nation, race, ethnicity, gender, class – each of these dimensions" as media for "inflicting social pain" (p. 1). It is not

only what happened but also the narratives developed about them are equally the valid causes of collective trauma. Here trauma is related even to the "performative power" of the groups. It establishes that "The emotional experience of suffering, while critical, is not primordial" (p. 2). Thus, trauma is the sum total of real social or group experiences and the narratives including the narratives and imaginations related to those experiences. Seen in this light, it can be argued that Bhutanese Nepali diasporic poetry not only works as the means of expressing the traumatic mentality of the community, but it also makes the community realize that their history has caused trauma on them. So, these poems work as the means of creating the discourse on trauma.

In the constructivist perspective, trauma is not the matter of isolated individual case. It is a social case and a matter of collective concern because "When social groups do constitute events as gravely endangering, suffering becomes a matter of collective concern, cultural worry, social panic, gut-wrenching fear, catastrophic anxiety." Unlike in the individual case that goes through "denial, repression, and working through", the collective cases are the matters of "symbolic construction and framing, of creating stories and characters, and moving along from there" (Alexander, 2012, p. 3). As this quote clarifies, trauma is not merely experienced; but it is collectively constructed. So is the case of the trauma experienced by the Bhutanese Nepali diasporic community. And their literary creations play the role in this direction. At this point, collective trauma takes a symbolic turn. When trauma scripts are "performed in the theatres of every day collective life" they become "reflections of neither individual suffering nor actual events, but symbolic renderings that reconstruct and imagine them." So, rather than being "descriptions of what is," they become "arguments about what must have been and what should be." So, "[t]he truth of a cultural script depends not on its empirical accuracy, but on its symbolic power and enactment." It further shows that "the trauma process is not rational", but "it is intentional" because it is "people who make traumatic meanings, in circumstances they have not themselves created and which they do not fully comprehend" (Alexander, 2012, p.4). The poems that have been analysed above have exhibited how the expulsion of the Nepali speaking community from Bhutan caused trauma and how it exerted serious effects on the community. So, these poems have helped in the construction of politico-cultural discourse of the Bhutanese Nepali diasporic community.

Like the poems discussed above in this study, "I am a Melancholy Night Traveller" by Kafle (2009) is an expression of the effect of trauma on an individual's mentality that represents the mentality of the community in total. The poem has the balance between self-portrait and the depiction of the environment that caused the trauma. The content of the text is the mixture of the speaker's thought about his life and

existential condition with the description of the fateful experience that caused the trauma.

Conclusion

Bhutanese Nepali diasporic poetry depicts the causes and effects of the poets' trauma that represents the trauma of the community. Their history of suffering from the time they left their homeland Nepal two centuries ago was cumulated up to the early 1990s when a large collective was expelled from Bhutan. The primary cause of the expulsion was their cultural difference from the ruling community. During the expulsion, the brutal suppression of the army left a deep psychological wound in the community as a whole. The life-threatening troubles they had to undergo as refugees in Nepal added the intensity of their trauma. Once the whole community was trauma inflicted one, its members experienced its effects even in personal levels. As a result, the major effects the poems exhibit are intellectual and emotional imbalances, threatened existence, depression, hauntingly recurrent bizarre imagery and nightmares. In total, the poems analyzed in this study show how collective and individual traumatic experiences are related to each other. It is possible that the study of Nepali diasporic literature in future can take this direction.

References

Chary, C. (2010, November). Horror of living.*http://bhutaneseliterature.com*

Adhikari, I. P. (2010, January). Revival of the oppressed literature.*http://bhutaneseliterature.com*

Ajnabee, Y. R. (2009, December). Farewell, oh new year.*http://bhutaneseliterature.com*

Alexander, J. C. (2012). *Trauma: A social theory*. Polity Press.

Balaev, M. (2008). Trends in literary trauma theory. *Mosaic: A Journal for the Comparative Study of Literature and Ideas,* 41(2), 149-66.

Dhamala, P. (2010, June).Standing on the no man's land of life.*http://bhutaneseliterature.com*

Erikson, K. (1991, Winter). Notes on trauma and community. *American Imago*, 48(4), 455-472. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26303923

Eyerman, R. (2013, February). Social theory and trauma.*Acta Sociologica*, 56(1), 41-53. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23525660

Heidarizadeha, N. (2015). The significant role of trauma in literature and psychoanalysis. *Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences,* 192, 788-795. www.sciencedirect.com

Kafle, D. (2009, August). I am a melancholy night traveller.*http://bhutaneseliterature.com*

Luckhurst, R. (2006). Mixing memory and desire: Psychoanalysis, psychology and trauma theory. In P. Waugh (Ed.), *Literary Theory and Criticism* (pp. 497-507). Oxford University Press.

Oloyede, O. (2009). Biafra in the present: Trauma of a loss. *African Sociological Review / Revue Africaine de Sociologie*, 13(1), 2-25. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/afrisocirevi.13.1.2

Onwuachi-Willig, A. (2016, December). The trauma of the routine: Lessons on cultural trauma from the Emmett Till Verdict. *Sociological Theory*, 34(4), 335-357. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26382875

Prager, J. (2011, Fall). Danger and deformation: A social theory of trauma part I: Contemporary psychoanalysis, contemporary social theory, and healthy selves. *American Imago*, 68(3), 425-448. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26305234

Rothberg, Michael. Decolonizing trauma studies: A response."*Studies in the Novel,* 40(1/2), Postcolonial Trauma Novels (Spring and Summer 2008), 224-234. https://www.jstor.org/stable/29533869

Schönfelder, C. (2013). Conclusion. *Wounds and words: Childhood and family trauma in romantic and postmodern fiction*, 315-322. https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1wxrhq.12

Siskin, W. (2010, December). My many ways. *http://bhutaneseliterature.com*

Subba, T. B., & Sinha, A. C. (Eds.). (2016). *Nepali diaspora in a globalized era*. South Asia Edition, Routledge.

Subedi, A. (2014, February). Sharanarthi Saahityara Nepaalee Sandarbha. [Refugee literature and Nepali context].*http://bhutaneseliterature.com*

Subedi, D. (2014, July). Agonies of being exiled. *http://bhutaneseliterature.com*

Tuon, B. (2015). Writing trauma, writing life in Chanrithy Him's When Broken Glass Floats. *Comparative Literature Studies*, 52(3), 585-612. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/complitstudies.52.3.0585

Internet Public Sphere as a Counter-Public Sphere: The Question of Effectiveness

Roshani Dhamala[*]

Abstract

This article explores the nature of public and counter public spheres by studying some existing scholarships on these topics. It discusses the nature and efficacy of internet, especially the Social Networking Sites, when it comes to serving as public and counter public spheres to facilitate discussion and deliberation within a democratic setting. It then relates the feminist groups of Nepal, who have been relentlessly staging online protest movements against the existing citizenship provision in the constitution of Nepal, with the counter-public groups as described by Frazer. It finally delves into the question of how effective these counter-public groups have been in achieving their proclaimed aim of amending the citizenship provision. Through the literature review of existing literatures on these topics, it elaborates on the possible reasons behind the limited effectiveness of advocacy and protests that take place in the online or digital public sphere. Some of the reasons explored are lack of accessibility to the online platform run through internet, inequality in terms of the accessibility to these platforms because of the digital divide created by caste, gender, and class, disproportionate representation of the voices of social groups, failure of internet based protest movements to ignite enough interest and engagement in the public to bring any major change, and failure of online discussions to follow the high ideals set for deliberative democracy. The paper concludes on a note that in order to make such internet, particularly the Social Networking Sites, based discussions and deliberations more effective and change-causing, there is a need to come up with structural and more formalized procedures to connect such internet based deliberations with the real decision making process.

Keywords: Public Sphere, Counter-Public Sphere, online digital protests, Internet and Social Networking Sites

Introduction and Background

[*]Ms Dhamala is Lecturer in English currently working at Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus, Tribhuvan University, Nepal. She holds master's degree in English from Pokhara University, Nepal, and also from Virgina Polytechnic Institute and State University (V-Tech), Virginia, USA.

The new citizenship provision in the Constitution of Nepal, promulgated in September 2015, has run into controversy for being discriminatory on the basis of gender. This provision states that a child born to a Nepali father and a non-Nepal mother is eligible for a citizenship by descent, whereas a child born to a Nepali mother and a non-Nepali father can obtain the citizenship only through naturalization process. Similarly, another clause in this citizenship provision states that a non-Nepali woman married to a Nepali man is eligible for a Nepali citizenship immediately after the matrimony, whereas in the case of a non-Nepali man married to a Nepali woman, the law about the right to citizenship for that man is missing. These provisions in the Constitution of Nepal, once they got promulgated, encountered civic reactions and protests from several public groups, both nationally and internationally.

The feminists groups in particular are vehemently against these citizenship provisions, and they have been demanding its amendment ever since the constitution's formal promulgation. In fact, civil protests against this citizenship protests were organized even before its promulgation when it was only in the drafting phase. It is also important to note that these protests are taking place in both the offline and the online world.

However, not much has changed due to these protests, and the provision was not amended despite these protests. So what went wrong? Why were the feminists' voices not incorporated in the process of constitution drafting and promulgating? Is the reason purely the fact that the lawmakers decided to model the citizenship provision after the ancient Roman model of citizenship, which reinforces male superiority, and deliberately turned their ears deaf to the feminists' protests and demands? Or is this event also telling us something about nature and efficacy of these protests and advocacies conducted by the feminist groups in Nepal, especially in the online/digital platform – also calledthe internet public sphere. The answer does not have to be either one or the other of these two: it can very well be the both, or even a combination of a lot of other factors that collectively constitute the socio-political scenario of Nepal, both then and now.

Objective

This paper explores the nature of public and counter public spheres by studying some existing scholarships on these topics. It then relates the feminist groups of Nepal with the counter-public groups as described by Frazer, and then it finally delves into the question of how effective these counter-public groups have been in achieving their proclaimed aim of amending the constitution.

Plenty of scholarly attention has been directed towards the nature, function and effectiveness of the public sphere and counter-public sphere in political communication and democratic deliberation. So, it is worthwhile to examine these theoretical and

conceptual models of the public and the counter public sphere. This paper attempts to do that in the first section. It examines the theories of public sphere, with a special focus on the public and counter public sphere in online space of the internet and the World Wide Web. Later, while analyzing the case of Nepal, it forwards an argument that the internet, particularly the social networking sites, provided a space for feminists to conduct their advocacy and protest movements regarding the citizenship provision in the constitution of Nepal. In that sense, the internet serves as a counter public sphere, and feminists who are advocating against the existing citizenship provision act like the counter-public.

However, the effectiveness of what they have been doing can be rightfully called into question, since the constitution provision has not yet been amended. Through literature review of the existing literature on the nature and function of internet, the paper elaborates on the possible reasons behind the limited effectiveness of advocacy and protests that take place in the online or digital public sphere.

Public Sphere and its Function in Political Communication in Democracy

This section elaborates on the concept or theory of public sphere, and the way it functions within democratic setting. Gaining an understanding of how the founding theorists conceptualized public sphere is instrumental in understanding how it facilitates discussion, deliberation, and protests within a democratic setting. Habermas is one of the first people to conceptualize public sphere in a systematic and scholarly manner. Habermas et al. (1974) provided not just a basic definition of the public sphere and what it means, but also laid a foundation for the theory of public sphere upon which much of the later works on the theory of the public sphere and the counter public sphere was built. This article defines public sphere as "a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens…private individuals assemble to form a public body" (Habermas et al., 1974, p. 1). This definition of a public sphere forwarded by Habermas frames public sphere as a free body that functions for the sake of public opinion formation about the matters of the public interest. Fraser (1990) much later also reiterates this idea of the public sphere in her work despite with some reservations and criticisms.

If we look back into the history and understand how Habermas conceptualized the idea of a public sphere, we understand the interrelationship between the terms public sphere and democracy. Habermas et al. (1974) trace the history of public sphere during various socio-political and economic phases of human society. For him, the idea of public sphere came into existence for the first time in eighteenth century – "existed-- they grew out of a specific phase of bourgeoisie society" (Habermas et al., p. 3).In the high middle age, there was no distinction as such between public and private. However,

the sovereignty represented their power "publicly". So, the medieval representative public sphere was related directly to the ruler. However, a process of "polarization" took place during the end of 18th century as a result of which the "private" and the "public" got differentiated. At this point a new kind of public was formed, which constituted of people who held no position inside public bodies and organs of authorities. In fact these people stood in opposition to the public bodies and authorities. Habermas et al., (1974) noted, "Public no longer referred to the "representative" court of a prince endowed with authority, but rather to an institution regulated according to competence, to an apparatus endowed with a monopoly on the legal exertion of authority. Private individuals subsumed in the state at whom public authority was directed now made up the public" (p. 5). This was the bourgeois public sphere, which was the "sphere of private individuals assembled into a public body," (p. 5), and which started communicating through newspapers to speak against the public authority. This practice of communicating via press and assembling together to formulate opinions is something that is facilitated only in a democratic setting.

Habermas' idea of public sphere significantly informs Warner's (2005) understanding of the public. Warner in fact extends Habermas' idea of the public sphere. Like Habermas, for Warner too the public sphere is a private entity that stands in opposition to the state, and possesses self-consciousness about its formation as a critical "reading public" (p. 47). In his book *Public and Counterpublics,* Warner (2005) defines public and its characteristics. According to him, a public "is self-organized [usually around text]" (p. 67). This particular quality of organizing itself around text, newspapers, and discourses makes the bunch of individuals with their private self-consciousness a public in the eyes of Warner.

However, Habermas' idea of the public sphere has been criticized for not being democratic enough, in the sense that it fails to take into account the differences that exist between individuals and groups in a society in terms of class, caste, race, gender or power. It also fails to take into account the way these differences impact the nature of deliberations and discussion that take place within the public sphere. Fraser (1990) comes in to fill in this gap, by explaining how a public sphere is constituted and how it functions within a democratic and multicultural or differentiated society.

Nancy Fraser and the Counter-Public

Fraser (1990) offers one of the most popular and enduring definitions of the term counter public, as well as ideas about how it functions within a democratic society. Fraser (1990) criticizes Habermas of two things: idealizing the public sphere as it existed in the burgeoise society, and falling to take into account multiple and parallel existing competing public spheres within a single society (pp. 60-61).

Fraser (1990) claims that "the public sphere is always constituted by conflict" and that "there were conflicting publics from the start, not just from the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries as Habermas implies" (p. 61). She also calls the public sphere conceptualized and idealized by Habermas et al. (1974) a "bourgeois masculinist" (p. 62) one.

> We can no longer assume that the bourgeoise conception of the public sphere was simply an unrealized utopian ideal; it was also a masculinist ideological notion that functioned to legitimate as emergent form of the class rule…the official public sphere is the institutional vehicle for a major historical transformation in the nature of political domination…the official public sphere, then, was indeed, is – the prime institutional site for the construction of the consent that defines the new, hegemonic mode of domination. (Fraser, 1990, p. 62)

Here, the author is arguing that the idea of a singular public sphere that is representative of all social class and groups in a society is a hegemonic one. So the idea of a dominant public sphere as conceptualized by Habermas is a hegemonic one. Fraser rejects to embrace such hegemonic idea of a public sphere and proposes an alternative.

For Fraser, Habermas' idea of public sphere is hegemonic one because it excludes women's voice and agency. She explains some of the assumptions that underlie Habermas' idea of the unitary public sphere that contribute to making it more exclusive rather than inclusive of everybody in a society. These assumptions are: "it is possible for interlocutors in a public sphere to bracket status differential and to deliberate as if they were social equals", "proliferation of a multiplicity of competing publics is necessarily a step away from, rather than toward, greater democracy," "the appearance of "private interests" and "private issues" is always undesirable" (Fraser, 1990, p.62). She argues that these underlying assumptions keep the Habermas' idea of the dominant public sphere from being inclusive of all social groups and their voices. Fraser (1990) argues that this is not how public sphere functions within an actual society. According to her multiple counter publics exist at once within any society. She calls these "subaltern counterpublics". She explains:

> History records that members of subordinated social groups – women, workers, people of color, and gays and lesbians – have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative public. I propose to call these subaltern counterpublics in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs. (Fraser, 1990, p. 67)

The feminists groups in Nepal who have been protesting against the existing constitutional provision about citizenship rights for men and women are an example of such counter-publics. These groups, that are diverse in nature and focus, are also an

example of the way public sphere is constituted and functions within a society that is stratified in its composition and yet believes in facilitating discursive deliberation about the matters related to common interest. In the context of Nepal, such counter public groups like feminists have been using various platforms like social networking sites, blogs, and twitter to conduct their protest movements. In fact, internet happens to be one of the most frequently used spaces, given the fact that is it more easily accessible to the counter-publics in comparison to the traditional print and broadcast media.

Public/Counter-Public and the Internet

This section elaborates on how internet serves as a platform for public and counter-public groups to voice out their opinions. Due to the unlimited proliferation of the internet in the last decade, it has attracted audiences from all over the world and extended the reach of texts. Public sphere can be anything from a hall where people meet and discussion and have meetings, to a public place where a politician is deliberating his speech or engaging in conversation with his voters or citizens. A public sphere can also be media, both traditional version like print, and digital like television or online, where people participate collectively in opinion sharing, forming and deliberating. Internet in this sense is a public sphere.

Dahlgren (2005) makes a case for the need of such space where people belonging to a myriad of social groups and cultures, and coming from different ethnic and cultural and lingual background find an opportunity for meaningful participation in the discussion and deliberation on the matters that affect them. Dahlgren writes,
For about a decade now, many researcher and other observers have been asking whether the Internet will have – or is already having – an impact on the public sphere and, if so, the attributes of this impact…the hope is often expressed that the Internet will somehow have a positive impact on democracy and help to alleviate its ills…yet, given the variations in democratic systems and cultures around the world, and given the pace of change – social, political, and technological – we should not expect to soon arrive at some simple, definitive answer to these questions. (Dahlgren, 2005, p. 1)

Dahl redraws attention to complexity of the matter when it comes to deciding on the impact of internet and digital movements in the democratic deliberation. One thing that problematizes the scenario, he adds, is also the difference that exists due to gender, ethnicity, culture, geography, political orientation, and the like. He argues that the internet offers a space for different groups to work out internal issues and/or cultivate collective identity (p. 60). The World Wide Web and one of its offspring, social networking sites, have created the public sphere on the internet since they offer a space in vast and sometimes unlimited spaces in the forms of blogs, social media pages, and advocacy platforms to everyone irrespective of their social, cultural, economic, and/or

geographical background. In this sense, the internet public sphere seems to serve the cause of the counter-publics more easily than any other public sphere platform. Goodling (2015) too explains the relationship between the internet and the counter public sphere. She writes, "Where street papers and zines have long served as a vehicle for expression of ideas and individuals who do not fit neatly into a dominant place in mainstream society, online spaces continue to provide an opening and a medium for the establishment of such "counterpublics" (p. 6). She emphasizes that digital media is particularly effective for "disrupting the existing power dynamics in politics and media, making it an ideal situation for activists to do their work" (p. 6). So internet, given its accessibility and vast reach out, can serve as an effective counter-public space in the view of Goodling too.

Internet offers itself as an ideal place for democratic deliberation in today's world. Goodling (2015) argues that the public sphere existing in the social media is a clear and simple extension of the public sphere of the world outside of the internet. She writes, "If social media is examined closely, it becomes clear that the kind of activism conducted digitally encompasses many of the already valued face-face forms of activism" (p. 5). In this sense, internet or digital space for Goodling, is an extension of the real world. In this sense, the digital space might function as effectively as any other non-digital spaces when it comes to protests and advocacy movement in the view of Goodling.

However, in Nepal's case the digital protest movement organized by the feminist counter-public groups on the matter of citizenship provision has not yet succeeded in achieving its initially set aim of bringing about an amendment in the provision. It is important to acknowledge that such online protest movements have been successful enough to raise awareness among the public. Yet, when it comes to the evaluation of these protest movements in terms of the degree to which they have achieved their goals, they still seem to have a long way to go before the ultimate aim is actualized.

Analysis of the Failure of the Digital Media Protest Movement of Nepal

A qualitative data coding study, guided by the method proposed by Geisler (2004) of the public posts like Facebook, blogs, and the supporting materials form newspaper such as editorials, articles, and features disseminated through the SNSs by the feminist counter public groups in response to citizenship provision reveals that the feminists groups have been arguing that the existing citizenship provision is gendered in numerous ways. The data coding, analysis, and frequency calculation process reveals that such counter-public groups have forwarded several arguments in the online sphere against the existing citizenship provision. Some of most frequently occurring claims made by the feminist counter-public groups in the digital space are: the existing

citizenship provision promotes unequal treatment by law for men and women, it reinforces patriarchy by putting men first and validating masculine superiority, it goes against the international conventions on human rights and women's rights, and that it brings humiliation and shaming for women, particularly those who have become the victims of rape and trafficking. This result is drawn after compiling a sample of 30 public posts and segmenting 100 set of data for coding.

However, despite all these publications in the internet public sphere, little change is visible in the actual political field: no changes whatsoever have been made to the existing citizenship provision. On the contrary, the makers of this citizenship provision defend and justify the provision on the ground that a provision like this helps national security and integrity by protecting the borders from foreign invasion. Yet, the feminist counter-public groups have not given up on the battle and they are still relentlessly publishing articles, posts, and write ups in the internet public sphere. One of such articles notes, "The issue here is the pitting of nationalism against gender equality – a binary that creates a false dichotomy. The problem lies in the narrow – racist and sexist – definition of Nepali nationalism and 'Nepalipan'. These misogynistic understandings of what it means to be a Nepali must be challenged" (Panta, 2015).

Only the future can show anything about the actual results of these endeavors. However, it becomes important to analyze the significance of this exercise that is unfolding in the realm of internet public sphere. And this brings us to questions like, does digital media, the internet in particular, offer an effective space for activism? Are the voices of the "subaltern counter publics" adequately represented in this sphere, and is it influential enough to bring about actual changes at the policy level?
Albrecht (2003) engages in the question of whether or not the internet public sphere offers a space for voicing out the opinion of people who are otherwise normally not heard. And the result he draws is that though it is undoubtable that the internet provides a space where the otherwise underprivileged and underrepresented groups find their spaces, internet and the online public sphere is still not free from limitations. Proponents of e-democracy assume that the technology of the Internet can be exploited to make the political process more inclusive and deliberative. However, experiences with online communication made so far raise doubts. The digital divide being one obstacle to participation, even more astonishing is the fact that online discourses are constrained in ways similar to those in the offline world. (Albrecht, 2003)

One of the concerns that Albrecht (2003) brings up in his presentation is the problem of digital divide. Albrecht argues that an invisible but prominent division between the rich and poor, the powerful and the marginalized exists in the online environment which constrains the effectiveness of any activism conducted in this space. He emphasizes, "Access to the Internet is not universal, nor is it distributed equally

among the population of most western countries, but it follows well known factors of inequality, i.e., income, education and race, as well as factors of new inequalities, like gender and age" (p. 4). The digital divide is certainly one of the issues in the case of Nepal too. Not all people have access to the internet, which inhabits both the public's engagement with the civic issues in online space as well as the impact this might have upon public. This fact of inequality in terms of the accessibility to the digital platform can be one of the several reasons why the digital activism of such feminists counter-public groups is not yet achieving its desired impact in the policy level.

Goodling (2015) too engages in the debate about the merit of new digital form of activism. She ponders on the meaning of change and the effectiveness of physical engagement versus the engagement in the online world to bring about this change. Goodling's primary argument is that "Because of access, convenience, and simplicity of use, the digital realm invites participation from those who might not otherwise be compelled—or able—to participate in person" (p. 1). However, where does this participation lead to, and whether or not it yields any substantive results are the questions that still linger.

In order to strengthen her argument, Goodling also quotes a New Yorker writer Malcolm Gladwell's position on the effectiveness of social media activism. Goodling stresses that social media may not be effective to deliver changes that society requires. She calls these social media activities "the low effort online activities" done by e-advocacy groups that may not always yield tangible results, because often they do not succeed enough in igniting interest and engagement in the public to bring any major change. Dahlgren (2005) agrees with Goodling's argument when he says that although democratic theories posit internet as an ideal space for citizen interaction, "online discussions do not always follow the high ideals set for deliberative democracy" (p. 157).

Conclusion

Therefore, the factors highlighted by these scholars can very well be the factors that also affect the outcome of digital activism in Nepali digital activism and protest movements. The factors that limit the power of internet public sphere might range from anything like lack of accessibility, to disproportionate representation of the voice of social groups, to the existing socio-political composition of any society at any given time. All these played a role in the case of Nepal, thereby making the digital activism of the Internet public sphere not so powerful.

However, all is not gone. Sparks (2001) offers a solution to this problem. He writes, "The public sphere, per se is no guarantee for democracy: There can be all kinds of political information and debate in circulation, but there must be structural connections—formalized institutional procedures—between these communicative

spaces and the processes of decision making" (p. 75). Therefore, it is up to the future to see if any formalized procedures as suggested by Sparks (2001) to bring together all political information and debate circulating in the online public sphere can effectively be built in the case of Nepal in its contemporary socio-political scenario and if such structure can affect any real time changes in the socio-political scenario of the country.

References

Albrecht, S. (2003, September 17-20). *Whose voice is heard in the virtual public sphere? A study of participation and representation in online deliberation* [Conference Presentation]. Research Symposium Information, Communication, Society, University of Oxford. http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.85.9101&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Dahlgren, P. (2005). The Internet, Public Spheres, and Political Communication: Dispersion and Deliberation. *Political Communication 22*(2), 147-162. DOI: 10.1080/10584600590933160

Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy. *Social Text*, *25*(26), 56-80.

Geisler, C. (2004). *Analyzing streams of language: Twelve steps to the systematic coding of text, talk, and other verbal data*. Pearson Longman.

Goodling, L. (2015). MOAR Digital Activism, Please. *Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, Pedagogy19* (3), 1-25.

Habermas, J., Lennox, S., & Lennox, F. (1974). Public Sphere: an Encyclopedia Article. *New German Critique* (3), 49-55.

Panta, S. B. (2015, January 2). Citizenship in mother's name: Equality vs. Nationalism debate. *Setopati.* http://setopati.net/opinion/4931/.

Sparks, C. (2001). The Internet and the global public sphere. In Bennett, W.L. & Entman, R.M. (Eds.), *Mediated politics: Communication in the future of democracy*. Cambridge University Press.

Warner, M. (2005). *Publics and Counterpublics.* Zone Books.

Female Masculinity in Radclyffe Hall's Novel *The Well of Loneliness*

Shankar Subedi*

Abstract

This paper aims to analyze Radclyffe Hall's novel The Well of Loneliness *from the perspective of female masculinity. For that purpose, it uses the concept of female masculinity developed by Judith Halberstam. Seen from the angle of female masculinity forwarded by Habersham, the present paper comes to the conclusion that masculinity falls into crisis as we compare it to how it was defined and understood traditionally. Most of the female characters in the novel show boldness, strength and ability to face and tackle different situations filled with danger and hopelessness. A young woman named Stephen Gordon pursues her passions and embarks on her own subjective world. Her activities and choices are anomalous to the established mores concerning the role and position of women. This is what goes against the conventional paradigm of gender and supports the idea of subversive female masculinity.*

Keywords: female masculinity, heterosexual normatively, inversion, gender roles, paradigm shift

Introduction

This paper intends to analyse the issue of female masculinity in relation to Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* from Halberstam's notion of female masculinity. The issue of female masculinity is distinctly present in the novel. Female masculinity is not a byproduct of male masculinity. It is a specific gender with its own cultural history. Those who have female masculinity are not simply manly trying to copy heterosexual males. They follow and develop their own unique gender identity. Examining female masculinity along with normative masculinity sheds light on the important ways that fictional characters can contribute to showing how masculinity is a construct.

Stephen Gordon shows appreciable features of masculinity. She follows her fiancé to the war-hit area and finally has no option other than confronting the vicissitudes of life. She comes to love Mary Llewellyn, whom she meets while serving as an ambulance driver in the First World War. Their happiness at the same time is diluted by social rejection and a kind of loneliness. Stephen starts dressing up as a male. She falls in love with Angela. Angela is the American wife of one of her neighbors.

---

*Mr. Subedi has done Mphil in English and is pursuing PhD from Tribhuvan University. Currently he has been working as Lecturer in English at the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Nepal.

Angela finds Stephen as a remedy against boredom, permitting her some friendly kisses. Then she finds that Angela has an affair with a man. Afraid that she will be exposed, Angela shows a letter from Stephen to her husband, who sends a copy to Stephen's mother to inform her of her daughter's socially unacceptable sexual orientation.

Stephen doesn't like going to the parties. She hates trivial discussions and dressing up in colorful clothes. She would rather like to dress as a gentleman. She has no interest in what women talk about and men also rarely talk about her. She meets young man, Martin Hall who shows keen interest in her talk. Over the course of one winter, Stephen and Martin become very close. They spend nearly every day together exploring many beautiful natural sites. But the relation does not develop along the lines of traditional man-woman relation because of Stephen's sexual choices. Lady Anna, Stephen's mother allows herself to hope that this relationship will turn into marriage and creates a normal life for her only child. However, the moment Martin declares his love for Stephen, she pushes him away. This is because Stephen is a woman and she doesn't want her relationship with a male to evolve into marriage. This goes against the traditional understanding about heterosexual normatively.

Lady Anna chides her daughter Stephen for using the word love and her willfulness as well as her boldness to face reality pertaining to war and her unpalatable difference from the traditional kind of femininity are some of the main ingredients of her masculinity. Mary Llewellyn assumes that the war belongs to what we call the man's domain. Military uniform signifies her sense of masculinity. Her view of war and masculinity is taken seriously by Stephen. But she longs to experience the consequences of battle closely standing by those who take part in the fight actively.

A writer friend of hers advises Stephen that she needs to gather more experience to refine her writing. Departure from fixed roles and dislike for heterosexual norms force Stephen to pay expensively for it. Stephen joins the French Army Ambulance Corps. She brings soldiers from the war hit areas to hospitals in the rural areas.

In course of time, Stephen becomes intimate with fellow drivers, a young girl called Mary Llewellyn is a special one. After the war is over, they go vacationing as a remedy for stress created by the war. Stephen does not really want to be attached to Mary because she has a fear that her relation with Marry would bring a taint with it in society. However, Mary convinces Stephen that she understands her and is strong enough to handle their relation.

Some traits associated with heterosexual masculinity have negative meanings. A noted critic of Hall, A.K.M. Aminur Rashid finds the decline of heterosexual norms and remarks about "Violent social upheaval . . . showing off masculinity, drinking alcohol and womanizing. In *The Well of Loneliness* Mary tends to see the world through a military lens. She enjoys the male camaraderie of war" (Hall, 1981, p. 29). The feelings

of despair and disenchantment brought about by war fills the entire account of Hall. Although she is mainly reputed for *The Well of Loneliness*, her other works engage with the lives of various members of the middle class. Her actions, and her desire to cross the boundary forms an important part of her manliness. She is very different, compared to the destiny of many women in England during the Victorian period.

Her courage to work in a volatile area affected by war is extraordinary. The social assumption to be confined in a narrow domestic role where patriarchy controls and maintains its rule is directly rejected by her. Mary's will to survive and work in the war-hit area is indicative of how masculinity fuels her activities. Usually it is the males who enlist as soldiers and show bravery and strength in the battlefield. Valor and the tendency to take risk were conventionally regarded as alien to women. They were supposed to belong to the periphery of domestic life and it was understood to be their only destiny. If we look at the history of war, we come to know that there were almost no woman warriors. Even when there were some, the number was very negligible. Stephen and her friends' decision to take part in the war is a supreme example of how women can display traits of masculinity and challenge conventional notions of gender roles.

Theory and Textual Analysis

The article uses the theoretical notion of female masculinity forwarded   by Judith Halberstam. Halberstam puts forward the new concept of alternative masculinity. For Halberstam, female masculinity is "about women who feel themselves to be more masculine than feminine" (Halberstam, 2005, p. 21). In other words, female masculinity can be described as persons born as females feeling more at home behaving as masculine. Cora Kaplan's view, more focused on the relation between language and gender, claims "Our individual speech does not… free us in any simple way from the ideological constraints of our culture since it is through that forms that articulate those constraints that we speak in the first place" (Kaplan, 2005, p. 10). In this sense, female masculinity has to be regarded as a specific gender in its own right. There is no need to compare it with other models of masculinity because it stands on its own and enjoys an independent existence.

Halberstam remarks that the analysis of the contemporary idea of masculinity cannot be understood without paying equal heed to the kind of masculinity naturally present   in women. Halberstam, in her book *Female Masculinity*, remarks "Female masculinity is not merely a perverse supplement to dominant configurations of gender, but masculinity itself cannot be fully understood unless female masculinity is taken into account. Female masculinity has played a crucial but unrecognized role in the emergence of contemporary formations of the masculine" (Halberstam, 2005, p. 43).

Masculinity, known as a state of being, suggests ownership that other words related to masculinity do not denote.

To refer to this state of existence, one should have masculine traits. But this idea of owning creates problem for men. It may carry the sense that men can have these qualities whereas women cannot even imagine of having these qualities. It sounds like what we understand as masculine traits are the sole properties of men and women cannot make any claim as to the right of having them. Many intellectuals, have inspected masculinity with a major focus only on males. In this connection, Halberstam contends, "If what we call 'dominant masculinity' appears to be a naturalized relation between maleness and power, then it makes little sense to examine men for the contours of that masculinity's social construction" (Halberstam, 2005, p. 2). By examining masculinity of women we broaden our understanding of masculinity and its multifarious functions in the political and cultural situation of the Eighteenth century.

It is understood that a person's biology decides sex and sex decides gender, and gender decides sexuality. To use the word "determine" may not be appropriate as it will remain open to new socio-cultural norms and constraints. In *The Well of Loneliness,* the notion of female masculinity is presented clearly. Stephen's childhood spent in the company of Violet and Roger serves as a fine example of how certain masculine features are obtained by a woman who is disposed to masculinity. The presence of the opposites may create frustrating situations as the people belonging to two different genders may be compartmentalized within the categories they are considered to belong to. A masculine person is stronger in the sense of being more assertive, confrontational, and competitive. He or she acts in a way that is indicative of autonomous manner in which individuals may perform themselves. The categories created by society are porous and can always be violated by the real people functioning in the actual world.

Whatever is masculine is a social construct and cannot play any decisive role in the determination of gender. Power and discourse play a vital role in constructing it. Whatever is said by the people in power comes to serve as a definition of what is manly and what is womanly. Foucault claims that this is exactly what came into being in the eighteenth century and was carried over into the next. For Foucault, "Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions; but they also loosen its hold and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance" (Foucault, 1998, p. 101). In this way, we cannot undermine the role of discourse in the generation of truth about what is true and false. In this context, the masculine and the feminine are also social constructs and it is always possible for women to perform as masculine females.

Halberstam's *Female Masculinity* studies the social and political positions of masculine women. She analyses women whom we cannot think to fall into the group of

the women. "Female masculinity is a way of representing oneself in a manner that challenges the dominant discourse on gender and sexuality, according to which men should be masculine and women should be feminine; it also shows the constructed nature of masculinity S (Halberstam, 2005, p. 1-2). Thus gender role is expressed through the way a person speaks. Halberstam's understanding of the effect of language is in line with Foucault and Butler. She argues that language is "a structure that fixes people and things in place artificially but securely" (Halberstam, 2005, p. 7). In this way, gender is a manner in which people do their roles in different ways in real life. Roger and Violet make fun of traditional gender roles. It is a proof that gender roles are not fixed and what they mean depends on how people perform them.

Thus, Stephen's dislike for Roger and Violet shows that her gender identity does not define itself in terms of binaries. Violet is the cause of the nuisance. At one-point Violet says, "Can't you knit? She would say, looking scornfully at Stephen, I can– Mother called me a dear little housewife! Roger strutting about in his Etons, and bragging, always bragging because he was a boy" (Hall, 1981, p. 65). This description shows Stephen's loneliness. She does not show any identification with any one of them but has a stance on her own position. Stephen has no envy for Roger but envies his behavior as a man. Stephen also does not imitate Roger and would just like to teach her a lesson. Stephen's gender seems to be unique because she looks like a boy and wants to take part in the battle which goes against the traditional understanding of what men and women usually go for.

Stephen's disillusionment with the beauty and boldness affects her mother because, as the narrator remarks, "But Anna, looking gravely at her daughter, noting the plentiful auburn hair, the brave hazel eyes that were so like her father's, as indeed were the child's whole expression and bearing, would be filled with a sudden antagonism that came very near to anger" (Hall, 1981, p. 6). It is obvious that Stephen has always felt lonely from early on. The only child of her parents, she is grown up as the son and is close to her father in terms of activities that denote masculinity. This is the reason why her mother finds it difficult to love her child and it serves as the cause of her detachment from the other people in the community and the society as a whole. She is treated as the odd person out and stands aloof from the other people in the neighborhood.

Female masculinity does not simply mean to attain to the status of men, it also means to assert the kind of feelings and emotions that women have and an attempt to give an expression to them. Manhood or masculinity, in turn, is a 'continual dynamic process' through which men seize public authority (Halberstam, 2005, p. 49). Female condition is not only the result of what men have done but also the consequence of what women have been willing to endure. Nevertheless, Halberstam argues against such a

monolithic view of female masculinity: "after all, it can also function as a form of social rebellion or a 'sign of sexual alterity" (Halberstam, 2005, p. 9).

Angela in a way betrays Stephen in her relation with the girl. They spent a lot of time together talking about friendship and the kind of gifts they could exchange. Angela mentions this to her hubby in some of the casual conversations they have. Stephen's penchant for doing something unconventional and radical is indicated by, "How she hated soft dresses and sashes, and ribbons, and small coral beads, and openwork stockings! Her legs felt so free and comfortable in breeches" (Hall, 1981, p. 12).

As she grows up she does not even know that the things she does can have a name of their own. Stephen's father understands her but he has difficulty explaining it to her. When Stephen's father dies she wonders what is going to happen to her from her risky love affair. This allows her mother to know her and it brings a kind of closeness in the relation between the mother and the daughter. *Female Masculinity* is not an inclusive book due to its vague and inadequate explanation of some key ideas. Some of the key ideas are left unexplained and when they have an explanation it really falls short of the kind of length that it justly requires. Stephen comes to know that there are others like her and masculinity is something that everyone can lay a claim to if he or she has the necessary traits needed to qualify as one. She is too willing to take a lover who she thinks is sure to provide her the kind of affection that she has long been after. She is aware of the reasons why the society she lives in is finding it difficult to accept her. This is the kind of society that only takes from an individual but refuses to give to them what they are worthy of. Stephen Gordon has her first crush at seven. It does not occur to Stephen that there is "anything unusual about having a crush on a woman until she catches the object of her affection kissing a man. Stephen turns to her father for understanding" (Hall, 1981, p. 76). Sir Philip turns to the popular psychological writers of the time to learn what kind of socially challenging future lies ahead for his unusual daughter.

Halberstam asks us to look at familiar texts and problems in new ways and leaves space for new scholarship to expand the critical thought. In her book Halberstam makes it clear that the masculinity of women can be studied without referring to the masculinity of males. Halberstam argues that female masculinity is not merely a supplement to influential definitions of gender. To understand female masculinity, we have to take into account the idea of masculinity itself. In this regard, Halberstam postulates that "Female masculinity has played a crucial but unrecognized role… cultural intolerance towards the gender ambiguity that the masculine woman represents" (Halberstam, 2005, p. 78).

In the novel Stephen meets a young man named Martin Hallam who is interested in what she has to say. During the period of one winter, Stephen and Martin become

very close. They spend nearly every day together exploring nature. Lady Anna hopes that this relationship will turn into marriage. She expects that it creates a normal life for her only child. She wants her child to have a normal life and it is only possible when her child lives life the way a normal individual does. After Martin leaves, Sir Philip grows stronger in his plans for Stephen. The following confession on the part of Sir Philip throws light on the peculiar power of Stephen to face reality in an unconventional way, "For this reason, Stephen chooses to remain at Morton rather than attend school at Oxford. Sometime after her father's death, Stephen meets Angela Crosby, an actress from New York. Stephen falls head over heels for Angela and it appears that her love is returned" (Hall, 1981, p. 66).

Unable to develop a stable psychic state, Stephen is divided between nostalgia for a womanliness and a strong sense of self hood. The husband sends this letter to Lady Anna, which creates tension in the relation between the father and the daughter. It shows that every culture has its constraints in the form of cultural values and assumptions and these rules of expectations play a decisive role in the formation of identity of the members of that particular society. The external world and the language we are provided from childhood have enormous impacts on our understanding of the world as well as our self-awareness. Addressing this side of impact of gender normativity, Toril Moi contends, "Moreover, it is easier to identify which factors have an important role in the formation of female identity than which factors actually comprise that identity. Stating that identity is a sum of particular constituents would mean claiming that identity itself is fixed" (Moi, 2004, p. 14). The examination of female identity is a both a risky and a thrilling task in which one can reach certain points of determinacy but new doors of possibilities open up and we may have to ask new questions and explore the new issues in a new light.

The most common understanding of what a woman is has to do with the fact that she is an individual with a female body. This assumption highlights the anatomical and physical differences between men and women and points to the importance of the body in a social context. Anatomy is one thing but femininity or masculinity implies that the roles individuals play in society have a greater role to play in deciding the gender of people and the borders between different genders are always porous and are always open to change and challenge.

Defining identity in terms of the body has certain drawbacks and scholars have always tried to move the emphasis from the study of the body to sociocultural forces that largely contribute to shaping the gender identity of an individual. Stephen is always wary of the difficulties that her relation with Mary would create. With its own values and expectations, the society would see the relation as a problem and something unconventional. The first few months they are together are the happiest Stephen has

ever experienced. Stephen returns to her writing. She leaves Mary without an occupation to fill her days. When Stephen notices Mary's unhappiness, she takes her to parties at the home of Valerie Seymour, a lesbian living in Paris. Through Valerie, Mary and Stephen meet many people like themselves.

Lady Anna becomes excited, imagining Stephen marrying Martin and living a normal life. However, it all comes to a pause when Martin declares his love to Stephen. Stephen becomes terrified and goes away from him not considering the ties of friendship that had developed over the years. Deeply hurt by the rejection, Martin leaves London soon after that. Stephen, traumatized by the death of her father, "decides to remain at Morton rather than go to Oxford. Puddle wants to help Stephen, to explain why her father so desperately wanted her to go to Oxford, but she cannot speak the truth out of fear of Lady Anna's reaction" (Hall, 1981, p. 141). Stephen refuses to concentrate on her studies. The only comfort Stephen can find is in the horses. However, an attempt to hunt without her father fails miserably and Stephen cannot do it again.

In terms of heterosexual assumptions masculinity and femininity are in opposition to one another. This binary view of gender stems from "the idea that there are only two sexes: male and female. In fact, it is impossible for a concept to escape discourse, as even extra-discourse, that which is outside discourse is produced by discourse" (Hall, 1981, p.11). This concept echoes Foucault's idea of power, in which resistance can never escape the power with which it is in opposition. There is a link between power and discourse, but it is tentative: all at once, discourse can be "an instrument and an effect of power" (Foucault, 1998, p. 101). Foucault states: "Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (Foucault, 1998, p. 101).

There is also a link between power, language, and discourse: "power's hold of sex is maintained through language, or rather through the act of discourse that creates, from the very fact that it is articulated, a rule of law" (Foucault, 1998, p. 83). Language is a means of producing discourse so that both speech and writing can be considered as examples of discursive practices. Every discourse is based on the principle of exclusion as it keeps outside itself whatever fails to abide by the formations that it has brought into existence. Yet, the same subjects are unable to evade the discourse. In the case of gender, those who present a "non-viable gender has their very humanity scrutinized and may be denied cultural intelligibility" (Butler, 1990, p. 15). This sort of expulsion has also been viewed as "a strategy of domination" (Butler, 1990, p. 144), which can be seen in the case of women, minorities, and gay rights.

Stephen goes scratching for sand lances, a species of small fish. While on their way to a beach, where they plan to fish, "Stephen follows the others up the road. She feels a keen identification with the night and is reluctant to leave it. All the wildness of

her spirit night liberated with a touch" (Hall, 1981, p. 312). She could only "wait at the window, desolate with lost adventure, desolate with a boyishness that might never put to sea, denied the secrets of the wind and dawn a sailor has by heart" (Hall, 1981, p.377). The wildness of the hour took Stephen's heart in its strong grasp. Stephen's love for what is risky and adventurous defines her as an individual who is all the time on the lookout for something new and unconventional for woman. Her behavior and activities show her as a masculine female.

Conclusion

To sum up, Stephen represents a masculine of a unique type. Her masculinity stands in its own right and cannot be treated as a byproduct of the masculinity of males. It emanates from an individual female's subversive acts, different nonconformist choices and anomalous patterns of thinking. Stephen stares at the mainland, rigid with rebellion. This identification with the night can be considered to symbolize Stephen's falling outside the limits of hetero-normative society. Her very name is suggestive of what the author wants her to represent. She does not like to enter into heterosexual relations with males and instead pairs with other females and behaves as a masculine male herself. She opts for dressing up as a boy and deliberately chooses to work in the military which we can understand as an inversion of traditional expectations about gender roles.

References

Rashid, A.K.M. Aminur (2001). Radclyffe Hall's loneliness. *The Journal of Lesbian Studies,* vol.3, no.1, pp. 151-158.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York, Routledge.

Foucault, M. (1998). *The history of sexuality*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Halberstam, J. (2005) . *Female masculinity*. New York: Duke University Press.

Hall, R. (1981). *The well of loneliness.* London: Jonathan Cape.

Kaplan, C. (2005). *Subversive femininity*. New York: Vivian Publication.

Toril, M. (2004). *Fluidity and failure: Spectrum of masculinity.* London: Edinburgh, Cannon Gate.

Tracing the Traditional Contents and Forms in Contemporary Nepali Paintings

Yam Prasad Sharma[*]

Abstract

    Contemporary Nepali paintings integrate contents and forms of early Nepali arts using impressionist, expressionist and surrealist techniques from western arts. The artworks have intertextuality since they share western art trends and Nepali artistic traditions. These works decontextualize the shared contents and forms and recontextualize them in the contemporary Nepali context through appropriation. The artworks use the same thing for different purposesat different times and places. Contemporary Nepali paintings like Laya Mainali's Saswat, Yogendra Dangol's Vajra Mandala, Buddhi Thapa's Cosmic Wave, Shankar Nath Rimal's Dance of Shiva-Shakti and Puran Khadka's The Form to the Formless have integrated the icons, images and symbols of the Hindu and the Buddhist mythologies, the contents of traditional Nepali paintings and sculptures. The figures of gods and goddesses, their attributes and associated symbols have been presented in traditional Nepali arts in reference to the related myths. Structure of paubha and mandala, decorative patterns, two-dimensional colors and distinct contours are the formal qualities of these traditional artworks. These forms and contents of traditional arts have been reintegrated in contemporary Nepali paintings exploiting western techniques like fragmented lines, rough texture, distorted colors and figures, and dreamlike images and symbols. These playful western art forms facilitated Nepali artists to express their personal feelings, emotions, experiences and imagination in response to contemporary context of Nepal. These artworks present the cultural dialogue, interaction, and coexistence of traditional art forms and contents, and western techniques.

Keywords: Traditional Nepali arts, western techniques, contemporary Nepali paintings, referential, ambivalent, intertextual

Introduction

[*]Mr. Sharma has been working as Lecturer in English at Fine Arts Campus, Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

Contemporary Nepali paintings have integrated the images, symbols, ideas and forms of traditional Nepali arts using western techniques to respond to the modern context. Western techniques have been shared from impressionist, expressionist and surrealist paintings. Impressionists capture the impression of the thing at a particular transitory moment of the day (Gilbert 1998, p.459). The image of the thing can change due to the change in the intensity of light and the change in atmosphere. The same thing can appear different at different times in the same day. The picture of the same thing can be other when painted in the morning, afternoon and evening. To capture the particular moment, the artist paints hurriedly. Otherwise, there can be a change in light and atmosphere. When the artists paint quickly, the picture appears rough. As a result, there is a distance between the painted pictures and the real objects. Expressionists distort or alter the colors and images to express the inner feeling and emotions (Canady 1959). The colors and images in the paintings are unconventional and unusual. Surrealists juxtaposed the contrary images with the free association as in dreams (Gilbert 1998). The images are melting and changing shapes. The images and forms are considered to have emerged driven by the unconscious mind. The artists also emphasize on artistic automatism. Contemporary Nepali artists decontextualize these art techniques from western art and recontextualize the shared practices in Nepali paintings. The artists have used same methods for the different purposes, and this process is called appropriation.

In the domain of Nepali painting, features of contemporary art appeared after the end of the Rana regime in 1950 due to the western influences and the cross flow of artists and people within the country and beyond. Nepali artists got exposure to various contemporary western art forms and style. The artists directly encountered western art forms and techniques. Despite the influence of the west, Nepali artists integrated traditional icons, images and symbols in their artworks. One visual text has connected to other visual texts having intertextuality. The artists have created artworks in reference to other artworks (Barthes 1992). Such interconnection of different artworks is called intertextuality. Before interpreting and discussing contemporary Nepali paintings in relation to its tradition, it would be worth mentioning the essential features of traditional Nepali arts. Traditional Nepali arts are referential, for they represent the images, characters and events from myths. They are symbolic, magical and didactic. The artists created these works mainly for the religious purposes like worshipping, praying and meditating.

Traditional paintings are in the form of manuscript illuminations, *paubhas* and *mandalas*. These paintings depict the Buddhist and Hindu divinities along with associated ideas. The images and symbols in arts have been connected to myths and rituals (Ray 1967).There is the coexistence of art, life and mythology. People worship

these arts as images and icons of gods and goddesses. Percy Brown (1912) traces the magical and didactic aspects of traditional Nepali arts:"Nepalese artist either elevates the observer by the transcendental nature of his celestial conceptions or terrorizes him into docility by his suggestions of purgatory" (p.130). The works are worshipped rather than admired. These traditional arts were an integral part of religious and cultural rituals.

     Prajnaparamita manuscript dated 1054presents various scenes from Buddha's life, and various bodhisattvas. Scenes from Buddha's life include Buddha's nativity and meditation under the *bodhi* tree to achieve nirvana. Hindu manuscript illuminations present the characters, events and symbols of Hindu myths like *Bhagavata Mahapurana* and *Shiva Purana*.

     The *paubha* paintings attempt to resolve the dualities between the individual self and cosmic being. In the *paubha*, principal deity resides at the center, and subsidiary deities and other images are around the central figure. Pratapaditya Pal (1978) mentions the stylistic features of *paubha* painting: "*Paubhas* are essentially religious icons, the artist was bound by certain immutable iconographic rules and aesthetic canons which had been established by theological precepts and long-standing tradition" (p.65). Some *paubha* paintings are created in the structure of the*mandala.* Such *mandalas* are magical and symbolic, and used as the *yantra* (instrument) for meditation (Sharma, 2014). The principal deity resides at the center within circles. The design and the images take the individual to the center of the composition where one is supposed to unite with the central divinity. About the structure and features of *mandala*, Stella Kramrisch (1964) further explains:

     *Mandala*s are visual supports of concentration and mediation, ritual aids on the
     way toward the center of the cosmos and self. Cosmos and self coincide in the
     image of the central and main divinity of the *mandala*. This divinity resides in
     principle, in an eight- petaled lotus. (p.44)

Shivalinga, lotus, *vajra* and meditating figures are recurrent images in both paintings and sculptures. These traditional forms and contents have been integrated in modern Nepali works exploiting western techniques of art. The statement has been supported by analyzing and interpreting contemporary Nepali paintings like *Saswat*, *Vajra Mandala*, *Cosmic Wave*, *Dance of Shiva-Shakti* and *The Form to the Formless*using theoretical tool of intertextuality.

Research methodology

     This research has used qualitative approach to analyze and interpret the paintings since art appreciation, criticism and interpretation are highly affected by critics' subjective perceptions and responses. The area of research is contemporary Nepali

paintings. The theory related to intertextuality and interconnection of arts has been used as a tool for analysis and interpretation of paintings in the research area. This paper has used secondary sources like books, magazine articles, journal articles and exhibition catalogs of artworks to introduce the research area and develop the theoretical tools. The primary sources are the paintings that have been analyzed and interpreted to support the statement. The researcher visited art galleries and artists' studios to locate the artworks and interview with the artists.

Connection of a work of art to the other

In contemporary Nepali paintings, there is the coexistence of both traditional Nepali art and western techniques. Before tracing these features in the artworks, it would be better to throw light on how different art forms and cultures are interconnected. This section attempts to make a theoretical base on how different artworks are linked and meanings are constructed. When two cultures and art forms encounter to each other, they face contradictions and differentiations which give way to dialogue and interaction in the process of reconstructing identity.This is a process of "making local sense of the collision" (Lechner and Boli 2000, p.320). Being located at the ambivalent space, the artists reread both global and local images. The native artists appropriate alien art forms and techniques. In the process of appropriation, the artists used the shared techniques for different purposes in other contexts. Such artworks incorporate the images of traditional arts with different significance in different contexts.

According to Homi K. Bhabha (1995), artworks are constructed in "contradictory and ambivalent space", and the meanings of art works are continuously constructed and reconstructed making sense of the available cultural forms (208). Similarly, Edward Said (1994) states that artworks are the matters of "appropriations, common experiences and interdependencies" of cultures (pp. 261-62).
Roland Barthes (1992) argues that a work of art is a "multi-dimensional space" where several art forms are "married and contested"; a text consists of "a fabric of quotations, resulting from a thousand sources of culture" (1132). A work of art interconnects to many other artworks. Earlier arts influence the arts of contemporary time. A piece of art is a response to another composition. To carve one's space, new artist misinterprets the earlier artists' works (Bloom 1988). According to Umberto Eco (1988), "works are created by works, texts are created by texts" (447).   In this sense, artworks are always intertextual and interconnected to other works.

John Carlos Rowe (1992) states that contemporary arts revitalize traditional art forms with intertextuality. The works present the "creative appropriation of tradition" (Delanty 2000, p. 154). There is the play of historical allusion and stylistic pastiche

(Jameson 1988).With the arrival of different cultural images in a particular context, the meaning is constructed provisionally and always remains in process of becoming (Hall1997).In the same manner, contemporary Nepali paintings are interconnected to traditional art forms and contents along with western techniques of art, and their significances are plural. In the forthcoming section, the analysis and interpretation of the artworks has traced these features.

Interpretation and discussion of contemporary Nepali paintings

Contemporary Nepali paintings are the mélange of subject matters and forms of early Nepali arts along with western techniques and forms. Traditional icons, images and symbols have been integrated through western art techniques of the twentieth century. Different cross-currents encounter and interact at ambivalent space creating open-ended art forms. The artworks present heterogeneous images and forms being inter-twined. In this sense, there is plurality in their significances. The meanings of these art forms are not fixed and specific but provisional and ever-shifting.

Laya Mainali's painting *Saswat* represents the entire universe within and around the *Shivalinga*by exploiting surrealist art techniques. The image of *Shivalinga* is one of the famous icons of traditional Nepali arts. The circular disc which the *Shivalinga* has penetrated, and the *Shivalinga* itself are altered. The surface of the circular disk is not even as we see it in the *Shivalinga* that one finds in Hindu temples. The rough texture brings up other pictures in our imagination. The images of hills, roads, the bank of the river, and grassy land appear within the uneven surface. Although the pictures seem abstract, as we view closely, they vaguely resemble the figures of the Himalayas, hills, fields, houses, rivers, ocean, boats and human beings. The background of the *Shivalinga* is also unconventional because it is crowded with strange abstract colors and shapes. The combination of some of the images is surrealist. The flowers on the circular disk do not seem to be flowers offered to the *Shivalinga* while worshipping but the flowers on plants that grow on the disk. The appearance of the images like hills, rivers and ocean in the *Shivalinga,* as mentioned above, are contrary because traditionally, *Shivalinga* appears in particular places of the world, not the world within the*Shivalinga*.The *Shivalinga* seems to contain the entire universe within itself. The image symbolizes the union of the Shiva and Shakti. Lydia Aran (1978) writes about *Shivalinga*:
Shiva cult in Nepal comes in the form of *Lingam* (Phallus), which was the early form of *Shiva* icon. The *Lingam* is roughly cylindrical in shape, standing upright on its narrow end and rounded at the top. It usually stands on a flat rimmed disc called yoni being possibly the female symbol. There is an indentation on one side of the yoni. (p.78)

All the things in the world appear to exist within *Shivalinga*. The distance between the individual *sadhaka* and the external world has vanished. When the *sadhaka* identifies himself with *Shivalinga*, he realizes the entire world within. The appearance of various images within and around the *Shivalinga* represents the enlightenment who finds the cosmos within himself. Mainali's *Saswat* depicts the whole universe within and around the *Shivalinga*. Though the artist uses the surrealist technique, the artwork links itself to the tradition of Nepali art. Abhi Subedi (1992) states: "The westernization of the Nepali art does not mean the loss or the complete rejection of the traditions. Nepali identity of the artist in this country should be sought in their own cultural and folk environments" (p.123). *Shivalinga* is one of the frequent icons in traditional Nepali paintings and sculptures (Sharma, 2014). Furthermore, the theme of union between individual self and the cosmic being are also the themes of many traditional Nepali *mandalas*.

Yogendra Dangol's surrealist painting *Vajra Mandala* integrates the *mandala*, a form of traditional Nepali art, and tries to resolve the dualities of the inner self and the external world. *Vajra* is the *yantra* (instrument) held by different Buddhist deities in the traditional Nepali arts. In traditional *mandalas*, the figure of central god who holds the *vajra* is more important than the *vajra* itself. It is one of the many instruments of the deity. Obviously, the size of the divinity is more significant than the instrument he holds. But in Yogendra Dangol's *Vajra Mandala*, the artist subverts the structure of traditional *mandalas* by making the *vajra* as big as the canvas itself, symbolically encompassing the entire universe, and depicting the divinity in tiny size within the *vajra* at the center. Such condensation and displacement are the techniques of surrealism. *Vajra* is the symbol of the union of *prakriti* and *purusa.Vajra*, the symbol of *purusa* or phallus, penetrates open lotus, the symbol of *prakriti* or *yoni,* suggesting that nirvana is possible only through the union of *prakriti* and *purusa*. In this painting, at the center of the open lotus, where *vajra* intersects, a Buddhist divinity appears in small size, suggesting the realization of the *nirvana*. The artwork aestheticizes the tabooed concept, like the union of *yoni* and phallus.

The concept of the union of the *prakriti* and *purusa* may be associated to the union of individual self with cosmic being. According to Buddhist mythology, *prakriti* is the symbol of worldly elements, including the individuals that get power through the union with *purusa*. Then the individual self creates a harmonious relationship with cosmic being by achieving the *nirvana*. The association of lotus and *vajra* presents the worldly thing's union with celestial being. The images of mountain, forest, lakes, and some other abstract images represent the innumerable things of the world that appear around and within the *vajra*. Julia Hegewald (1996) comments that the artist considers tradition not as something static, but as a continuously changing and progressing

movement, out of which he has emerged; he is working on developing the ancient artistic heritage influenced by new and foreign ideas (p.100). The painting shares the content and form of traditional *mandala* painting. The work is rooted in the tradition, and at the same time, goes beyond the convention. The composition revisits early Nepali artworks with a new form.

Radheshyam Mulmi's surrealist painting *Untitled* presents Buddha's teachings, one of the themes of Buddhist manuscript paintings with objective correlative of colors, visual images, and symbols. The principal figure of the picture is meditating Buddha on the lotus seat. Buddha's body and the edges of his garment are connected to the lotus petals, and they merge and melt into each other as in a dream. There is no distinct line between his body and lotus. Similarly, lotus petals melt into the water below and a female figure on the right side.

The fish seem to be dissolving in water. The birds' feathers appear to be melting and moving spontaneously into the body of the female figure. Because of the melting shapes and rhythmic colors, the boundary between sky, land and ocean has been blurred, suggesting playfulness and plurality. The fish goes above the water and reaches the side of Buddha's seat. Both fish and birds are flowing together with musical movement. The figures of folded hands appear bigger than meditating Buddha. Though the artwork juxtaposes contrary images as in a dream, all the living beings exist in harmony suggested by the rhythmic lines, colors and shapes. Older woman at the top is helping the younger one below. The painting presents Buddha's teachings after his enlightenment like one should have compassion, kindness and love towards fellow beings. Such relationships and attitudes help human beings to become real humans and create a harmonious society with peace and spiritual prosperity.

The folded hands at the back of the meditating Buddha present the artist's attitude. He respects Buddha for his love for all living things. The figure of meditating Buddha refers back to *Prajnaparamita* manuscript illuminations. The visual compositions of this manuscript represent the events from Buddha's life, including his meditation, achievement of enlightenment and his preaching. The artist's approach towards western forms and techniques has been his "strength," and he appears to combine "tradition with modernity" through stylistic experiments (Subedi 2005,p.117). In the painting *Cosmic Wave*, Buddhi Thapa presents cosmic harmony, one of the themes of traditional *paubha* paintings using the expressionist technique. The use of a wide range of colors symbolizes the existence of almost all the items of the world. Instead of the figures of the things in the world, the artist includes only their colors to represent them through metonymy. He takes a part from the whole thing. Then he depicts his vision of cosmic harmony using rhythmic waves. Most of the images of waves are unconventional although few colors resemble the waves in the ocean. The

waves are in yellow, brown, red, green, white, blue, and other variations of these colors. The objective of altering the colors in the wave is to integrate the innumerable colors found in the different things of the world. He changes the images of various things into the form of waves. These are all-inclusive waves as the universe is all-inclusive. The artist strikes a balance between realistic and expressionist techniques in the sense that some waves are objective representations of the real waves whereas others are arbitrary and unconventional.

The artist shares the Hindu mythological belief of the omnipresence of cosmic power or *prabrahma* in everything, and that remains in perpetual harmony. According to *Bhagavata Gita*, God created all the things in the universe, and everything moves and grows due to the power of God. Since everything happens because of almighty, they have an underlined purpose. The universe is harmonious and in the constant rhythm, which can be felt and realized only through meditation. As one reaches the state of nirvana, there is no conflict in the self and cosmic being. There is no clash between the individual and the other things around. The person is supposed to find the presence of the same spirit in all things. Buddhi Thapa (2006) himself states in the exhibition catalog of his artworks about his outlook toward spirituality and his motive for creating a painting:

My desire was not just to understand the physical arrangements of nature but the abstract expansion of the cosmos surrounded by the realm of my curiosity. I was able to comfort this curiosity by going through various books on Hindu religion and mythology, Christian & Muslim philosophical & spiritual beliefs. Questions of science & its calculative verifications of existential phenomena also grew larger in my mind. Books on meditation helped me to understand my discovery of the existential mysticism. (Exhibition catalog)

As the movement of waves in the painting, the universe and its constituents emerge, develop and dissolve within cosmic being in a rhythmic manner. In his creation, the artist presupposes the existence of world spirit. K. L. Kaul (2006) comments that his artworks integrate several ideas and elements connected with cosmic lore using abstract images. One can find such contents in traditional Nepali paintings like manuscript illuminations, *paubhas* and mandalas. Similarly, the content of Hindu mythology comes into dialogue with contemporary art. The artist appropriates the western technique of expressionism to depict the peace, harmony and coexistence in the cosmos.

Shankar Nath Rimal's expressionist painting *Dance of Shiva-Shakti*also depicts the theme of cosmic harmony by integrating the content of the traditional Nepali *paubha* painting, *Nritesvara.*The traditional art and western technique are interconnected to each other, having intertextuality. *Nritesvara* presents the erotic

union of Shiva and Shakti, and their rhythmic dance at the center of the *paubha* painting, and other minor deities are around the central divinity. The gods and goddesses are the representations of the mythical characters. They have many hands with weapons and other symbolic images. The artist, in the artwork, *Dance of Shiva-Shakti*, takes the content of their dance, and their union is implied but not presented overtly in the state of the erotic union. The artist does not depict the deities with their many hands. The figures of Shiva and Shakti occupy the entire canvas omitting minor deities. Rimal leaves every detail of the traditional art form. He takes the part of the early work and presents it in the expressionist form. Rimal's work is more anthropomorphic than the early painting, for he presents Shiva and Shakti in human form, leaving the mystical many hands, weapons and symbols. Dance of Shiva-Shakti appropriates the content of *Nritesvara* painting. This artwork creatively shares the tradition using the western techniques.

According to Hindu mythological beliefs, Shiva represents *purusa* or the male principle whereas Shakti represents *prakriti* or the female principle. The union of these two forces is supposed to create cosmic concord with continuity of life and world. When an individual *sadhaka* or the practitioner of *yoga* as *purusa* unties oneself with *prakriti* through meditation, s/he is supposed to gain the status of Shiva, the almighty himself. The person finds himself as Shiva united with Shakti, and dancing in cosmic rhythm. The obstacles between the individual self and the world vanish because he finds himself in everything of the world and the whole universe within himself. This is the transcendental experience at the time of enlightenment. In the painting *Dance of Shiva-Shakti*, the artist presents the same theme with the expressionist technique. The artist alters the images of dancing figures. Their gender is indistinct, suggesting the absence of duality after the union of *prakriti* and *purusa*. Himalayan mountain, the abode of Shiva and Shakti, appears small in the background. All the things in the world become integral parts of the dancing couple. The presentation of the pervasive dancing figures of Shiva and Shakti suggests that the universe is within the bodies of the divinities. Western artists used the expressionist technique to explore the tragic subject matters but Rimal's painting exploited the same method to present cosmic harmony. Hence, the artist has creatively applied the western approach to integrate one of the essential issues of the early Nepali paintings.

Puran Khadka's painting *The Form to the Formless* attempts to present the hidden aspects of human life and the world through abstract composition. He tries to present the experiences that our sense organs are unable to perceive and feel. The quest for invisible power beyond tangible reality is one of the themes of traditional Nepali arts. He explores this theme using lines, colors and unusual abstract shapes in his work. The shapes do not represent recognizable things and characters. The viewers can see the

new shapes and curves that are unlikely to be found in the externally visible and tangible world. Nevertheless, they are likely to participate and flow in the rhythmic movement of colors and lines. The more one goes ahead the more one finds new aesthetic shapes. The journey goes on and on. The abstract composition creates a meditative mood in the viewers.

General belief is that the world of tangible reality, and the experience perceived through senses are most important. But Khadka's painting goes beyond this reality, and brings such questions: who created the universe? How was it created? How do the plants grow? How do the animals move? What drives them forward? How one day the same animal becomes inanimate? The work is a visual exploration of the underlined essence that governs life and the world. The artist himself states that his paintings represent his quest of the self in relation to the universe (Khadka 2014). According to Uttam Nepali (1998), Puran Khadka's painting offers spiritual solace to the viewers. Traditional Nepali paintings also present such theme. The composition shares the western technique of abstractionism and explores the Hindu myth regarding the soul. Western style and the content of conventional Nepali art coexist in harmony on the same canvas. Saroj Bajracharya (2003) argues that the painting shares the values that our tradition had to offer us with a blend of fresh ideas. The use of western techniques as tools in contemporary arts revitalizes the early art forms. Contemporary Nepali artists have incorporated traditional art forms in their artworks to express their imagination.

Conclusion

Contemporary Nepali artists have been exposed to different western art techniques like expressionism's distorted colors and figures, surrealism's dreamlike images, and abstractionism's forms. These western art techniques helped the Nepali artists to break away from referential representations providing them the opportunity to express their imagination and personal feelings in the artworks. Simultaneously, the contents and forms of conventional Nepali arts come forth as their artistic root. Then referential traditional art forms and plural and subjective western art forms interacted and cooperated through cultural dialogue. The artworks have an ambivalent attitude toward both tradition and modernity. The artists have decontextualized the shared forms and contents, again recontextualized, and appropriated them in their compositions. The artworks have reformulated and revitalized the structures of the *mandala*, the icon of *Shivalinga*, the images of divinities, and cultural symbols using western techniques as tools. Although the artists shared modern art techniques, they have connected their creations to their cultural roots. Such an approach may be useful in other genres of art, and social practices as well. These issues can be the subject matter of another research.

References

Aran, L. (1978). *The art of Nepal: A guide to the masterpieces of sculptures, painting and woodcarving*. Kathmandu: Sahayogi.

Bajracharya, S. (2003). Nearness of difference: Sikkim art tour. Exhibition catalog. Kathmandu: Zero Century Nepal.

Barthes, R. (1992). The death of the author. *Critical theory since Plato*. Ed. Hazard Adams. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College, 1130-33.

Bhabha, H. K. (1995). Cultural diversity and cultural differences. *The post-colonial study reader*. Eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. London: Routledge, 206-209.

Bloom, H. (1988). Poetic origins and final phases. *Modern criticism and theory*. Ed. David Lodge. London: Longman, 241-252.

Brown, P. (1912) *Picturesque Nepal*. London: Adam and Charles Black.

Canady, J. (1959). *Mainstreams of modern art*. New York: Hult, Rinehart and Winston.

Delanty, G. (2000). *Modernity and postmodernity: Knowledge, power and the self*. London: SAGE.

Eco, U. (1988). Casablanca: Cult movies and intertextual collage. *Modern criticism and theory*. Ed. David Lodge. London: Longman, 446-55.

Gilbert, R. (1998). *Living with art.* Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Hall, S. (1997). Cultural identity and diaspora. *Contemporary postcolonial theory: A reader.* Ed. Padmini Mongia. Delhi: Oxford UP, 110-121.

Hegewald, J. (1996). Our studio is nature- the work of the new art circle in Nepal. *Journal of the Nepal Research Centre*. Vol. x.: 95-101.

Jameson, F. (1988). The politics of theory: Ideological positions in postmodernism debate. *Modern criticism and theory*. Ed. David Lodge. London: Longman, 373-83.

Kaul, K. L. (2006). The exhibition catalog of Buddhi Thapa's contemporary paintings, Kathmandu.

Khadka, P. (2001). "Puran Khadka: Artist, Painter." Unpublished essay. Artist's studio in Nepal Association of Fine Arts (NAFA), Kathmandu.

Khadka, P. (2014, December 12). Interview. Kathmandu.

Kramrisch, S. (1964). *The art of Nepal.* New York: Asia House Gallery.

Lechner, F. J. and J. Boli (2000). eds. *The globalization reader*. Massachusetts: Blackwell.

Nepali, U. (1998). Exhibition catalogue of Puran Khadka's paintings, Kathmandu.

Pal, P. (1978). *The arts of Nepal part II.* Leiden: Tuta Sub Aegide Allas.

Ray, A. (1967). A note on the character of the plastic art of Nepal." *Journal of the Tribhuvan University* 3.2: 10-15.

Rowe, J. C. (1992). Postmodernist studies. *Redrawing the boundaries*. Eds. Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 179-280.

Said, E. (1994). *Culture and imperialism.* London: Vintage.

Sharma, Y. P. (2014). *Nepali painting: A critical analysis*. Kathmandu: Nepal Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA).

Sharma, Y. P. (2019). *Contemporary Nepali paintings: A distinct cluster*. Kathmandu: Society of Modern Artists (SOMA).

Subedi, A. (1992). Nepali art: Nepali utopia. *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* 22.2: 113-130.

Subedi, A. (2005, Feb). Modern Nepali art: An overview. *Jamini*, 108-117.

Thapa, B. (2006). The exhibition catalog of Buddhi Thapa's contemporary paintings, Kathmandu.

Tāpa as an Underrated Nepali Novel
(Book Review)

Indira Acharya Mishra, PhD[*]

Tāpa, the debut novel of Sharada Sharma, though it is the winner of Padmaśrī Sāhitya Sammāna 2012, is an underrated Nepali novel. The novel forms a part of my Ph.D. Dissertation. I chose Sharma as a representative woman novelist in Nepali literature.   I was impressed by the narrative techniques and characterization in the novel. The author has chosen characters from diver backgrounds to highlight the theme of humans' sufferings. The characters are portrayed as particular individuals and have unique experiences of life. Nonetheless, they all, in one way or another, suffer in their lives. To impart this message, she uses multiple narrators and handle them skillfully. So far as my reading of Nepali novels is concerned, I was dismayed by the fact that the novel has failed to gain a satisfactory readership from the readers of Nepali literature. One of the aims of my Ph.D. thesis was to analyze the narrative techniques of the selected novels. I found Sharma's skills in handling multiple narrators quite praiseworthy. She uses multiple narrators to reveal the multiple perspectives of the characters who belong to different socio-political, economic, educational, and geographical background. It shows her understanding of human psychology. Likewise, the flashback and foreshowing techniques are aptly used to relate the events that happen in different periods. The techniques provide the necessary information to the readers. In terms of characterization, also she appears skillful. Most of the characters sound authentic.

Set primarily in monasteries, and in *āśramas* in and around the Kathmandu Valley, some of the incidents of the novel, however, take place in India, England, and partially in Dhaka. The narrative of the novel goes back to the Rana Dynasty and deals up to the events that happened during the Maoist Insurgency of Nepal, covering more than a hundred years. However, the main plot of the novel relates to the events that occur within the fifty years of its main protagonist, Chandrika Maharani's life. The novel explores the failed marital and family lives of its protagonist. It traces the worries and tensions that she has to bear despite her economic affluence and intellectual integrity.

---

[*]Dr. Mishra is Associate Professor of English currently working at Mahendra Multiple Campus Dharan, Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

Divided into thirteen chapters, besides the opening and the ending, the novel is narrated by various narrators from diverse socio-economic, cultural, and even political backgrounds. These various narrators, who peep into their own life using monologue, at description, and letter, reveal that despite the surface differences among people, no one is free from typical human desires. Though people try to escape the social problems, they fail. People suffer for they have different types of physical, mental, and spiritual worries and tensions, which the author names as *tāpa* in the novel. Even the monasteries and hermitages, where people go to achieve peace and harmony through mediation, are not free from common human emotions like mutual affection, rivalry, competition, hatred, and antipathy towards each other. Because of these common human emotions, humans have to bear *tāpa.* Even the hermits, who have been living the spiritual life, also aspire for power and position. They, too, have the same physical and psychological desires   as ordinary people living the typical social life. They are also lured by modern affluent lifestyle and have sexual attraction towards the opposite sex. Here, in her dealing with the sexual psychology of humans' Sharma comes closer to B.P Koirala. The plot of the novel is circular. It begins with the end of the novel, and goes on unfolding with the use of the flashback technique. This technique is correctly used to relate the earlier events. Six principal characters, who are the narrators of the novel, narrate their private lives and their collective lives marked by friendship, love, and betrayal. They tell their stories as they perceive them. The use of multiple narrators helps to understand the different ways of perceiving things. Besides, these homodiegetic narrators reveal the secrets of their lives. In addition to these first-person narrators, the author uses a third person omniscient narrator who narrates the incidents beyond the reach of the first-person narrators.

The beginning of the novel named "Aamukh," is narrated by the third person omniscient narrator. The all-knowing narrator describes the incidents of Sujata, an important female character of the novel, being appointed as the chief monk of the monastery by the monk Tulku Chhoden Rinpoche. The narrator reads the psychology of the senior nun: "'My Buddha daughter!' She might have kissed her with love more than fifty times. She has been too happy for the last few days." Sujata's appointment as the head of the monastery is a historical event. She is the first woman to achieve this position in the history of Buddhism in Nepal. Then, with the flashbacks techniques, and multiple narrators the novel tells how a carefree, highly educated girl from an aristocratic family has been lead to live the life of a nun. The flashbacks grab the readers' attention, though a little bit slower.

Sujata, a Master's degree holder in Philosophy from the USA, has been appointed as the chief of the monastery because of her hard work and depth of knowledge in the religion. Guru Tulku Chhoden Rinpoche confirms that among the

female characters, she is a rear one. She has achieved the state of equilibrium and has an equal response to both pleasure and pain. She neither feels hatred nor disgust when she thinks of her mother and the army personals who had tortured her; rather, somehow she remains thankful to them because if they had not been in that way, she would not have been there. The readers become curious to know her relation with her mother and the reasons why she was tortured by the police. The all-knowing narrator also suggests that even the recluses tend to have an ego and fight for power. The story of the novel progresses with Sujata, a twenty-four-year old university graduate narrating her past. She recalls her first day in the monastery, her terrible dream in which she had been attacked by four persons in combat dress in an awful underground lane. She remembers the mechanical life that she had spent in the USA while doing her Master's, and how she decided to return to Nepal, being fed up with the American mechanical life. She expresses her dissatisfaction towards the discriminatory rules of the monastery as it has different rules for males and other rules for females. She also discloses the fact that though people in the monasteries are searching of spirituality, they fail to control their desires for material things. This fact is highlighted by *ani* Yanchhen's expensive getup and other *anis'* attraction towards her style. Sujata eavesdrops on other nuns talking about Yanchhen apparel: 'Have you seen Yanchhen's watch?' A young nun was asking to another nun while I was coming to the courtyard. / 'Was not her robe made up of silk?' / 'Bag was rather beautiful!'" Looking at the nuns watching movies, giggling and whispering to each other, Sujata wonders how "much difficult it would be for these innocent girls, clad in the maroon gown to protect themselves from the volcanic lust of life." Through Sujata the author critically analyzes the religion's futile attempts to make the inexperienced girls indifference towards the worldly pleasure.

Sujata recalls her friendship with Mukti and the whirlwind of circumstances that have changed the course of her life. She says that one night while coming from the disco, she got arrested as a suspected Maoist. Her narration reveals police brutality towards the female inmates. Sujata reports the inhumane torture given to the prisoners. She observes the pathetic condition of Maya, a Maoist cadre in the jail as she was beaten to death. She also explores the problems faced by the female inmates for the prisons do not have female friendly infrastructures. She has been menstruating and she has to wear the same underwear for more than a day.

Mukti, one of the major male characters in the novel, narrates how the Maoist war devastated the life of ordinary people. His narration reveals the suffering of poor rural people like Santosh Chaudhary who was murdered by the Maoists in the pretext of spying against them. When he recalls his daughter, Rubel Chaudhary pleading for mercy from the Maoists he is reminded about his own mother pleading the army not to kill him. He realizes that both of them belong to the same class as the war victims. The

senseless killing of the innocent people from the state and the revolutionary group forced him to analyze the revolution's relevance. No matter who gets killed, it is the same poor parents to mourn the death of their children.

Likewise, Chandrika Maharani tells her own story from the sixth chapter onwards. Using the flashback technique, she narrates her sheltered childhood days in her parents' company in Simla, India as the great-granddaughter of Bir Shamsher Rana, the then Prime Minister of Nepal. Despite being grown up in a closed patriarchal family, Chandrika managed to go to England for higher education. Her narration exposes different types of gender-based violence experienced by women. Through the description of characters like Arbinda and Sebakram she shows the misuse of women's bodies as sexual objects that the rich can buy for their pleasure. The way Arbinda behaves reveals how women are exploited in a conjugal life under patriarchy. She was doing her Master in Gender Studies when she met Prabhakar, from Gorkha, a PhD scholar in Microbiology. After completing her degree, Chandrika married Prabhakar, and they returned to Nepal. The conflict appeared in their married life as Chandrika was unable to cope with the role of a lower middle-class house-wife demanded by Prabhakar's family. She finds herself reduced to the status of domestic labor. Her understanding reminds Beauvoir, who   believed that "marriage trapped and stunted women's intellectual growth and freedom." As an educated gender-sensitive lady, she believes that husband and wife are equal; and the daughter-in-law is not there to work as a domestic servant. It would not be possible for her to invest all her energy in the domestic trifle. Chandrika could not adjust to this position, and when things did not get changed she divorced him and lived the life of a single parent for her daughter Sujata. Her struggle as a woman does not end here. Sujata's arrest creates a different type of tensions and worries which the mothers of grown-up daughters have. Through Chandrika's narration the readers know how the powerful men's bargain for women's bodies when the women turn to them for help. Her description of Parashar suffices this aspect. Selection of Chandrika, a gender expert, as a character to explore gender-based violence against women is an authentic one.

Her observation of Parashar reveals how women are harassed in the day to day life. Though he has been the Home Minister, the one supposed to provide safety to the citizens, he was the cause of terror. In "Kaiwalya Āśram," Chandrika shares that she had been suffering from acute depression, and to get rid of her suffering through meditation, she went to the āśram. However, she could not experience peace as she noticed that such ashrams were also not free from domestic problems and tensions. She questions the use of such training as people are forced to meditate despite being physically unfit. Chandrika acknowledges that she was sensually attracted towards the Guru; but she felt insulted by the indifferent look towards her physique. This reflects

her psychology. Her monologue also reveals her attraction to the Guru, which was the cause of tension to Upasika, the Guru's wife.

Professor Yaman also peeps into his past. He also describes the incidents that he observed when he went to the ashram, accompanying Chandrika to meet her daughter Sujata. Similarly, "Mātā Upāsikā," narrated by Upasika, Guru Kaiwalya's wife, is an address to Chandrika. In the flashback, she tells how a daughter from a well to do family became a dancer, met the Guru, who is fifteen years older than herself, and married him on her own. She says that she had sacrificed everything for the sake of her husband Kaiwalya, but her husband after he had been appointed as the head of the ashram started being indifferent towards her. Her husband, without her consent, had started sleeping in a separate room. Upasika's narration reveals the existence of a double standards in patriarchy. The husband expects to have sex with his wife any time he likes. But in the pretext of gaining enlightenment, he disregards his wife's sexual urges. Men, in general, take it for granted that a woman does not demand means that she has no urges. But Upasika's narration proves it wrong. She argues:" "Naturally, I have both physical and psychological desires. It has been months since those desires are not satisfied by my husband. . . . I still have sexual urges." From Upasika's perspective, Sharma reveals the issues of sexuality and pleasure for women along with women's right to enjoy sex.

The last chapter, "Guru Kaiwalya," narrated by the Guru, reveals his disturbing mentality because of witty and intellectual ladies like Gargi and Chandrika. The Guru confesses despite his attempt to remain indifferent to women and sex, he has desires, and he has been provoked by the attractive women in the ashram, and despite his effort, he has been dripped. He felt guilty as he could not share this with his wife. It reveals the hierocracy of the so-called enlightened people. The Guru has not been sharing bed with his wife but he confesses that he has been unable to resist intelligent and beautiful women.   Nonetheless, he admits that women are more practical than men as they do not have to make any pretext for power and position.

Besides the omniscient narrator, the six main characters take the turn to narrate the story of the novels. The use of   multiple narrators helps to understand the different aspects of the same incidents. For example, the incident of Sujata's missing is narrated by Sujata herself, Chandrika and Mukti. Likewise, the Guru's feeling of Chandrika is narrated by both. Chandrika thinks that the Guru is indifferent towards her, but the Guru confesses that he finds her provoking and is unable to resist her. The relation between Upasika and the Guru is narrated by both of them from their own perspectives. The repetition of the same event/s with different narrators shows that the same events can be viewed differently depending on the belief and focus of the narrator. For example, when the Guru takes his turns, his psychological state gets revealed different through his

confession. Until now, he has been seen as a charismatic figure, who has achieved enlightenment and has already gained control over bodily desires. But, he, too, is revealed as having physical weakness, i.e. he is not devoid of worries and tensions, though he pretends to be.

The novelist skillfully handles the multiple narrators to cover the incidents that take place across time and space. The characters are authentic and reliable. They are portrayed as unique individuals, and they have   unique experiences because they are different from the mundane people. However, their suffering is universal. The way she selects characters from the various strata of society and makes them sound authentic shows the author's wider exposer to life. The vivid description of the innermost secrets of these characters reveals the novelist's sensibility towards human psychology. The use of poetic and refined language proves her command over the Nepali language. Consideerd as a whole, the novel is one of the best Nepali novels and deserves more reading from the reading public.

References

Abott, H. P. (2002). *The Cambridge introduction to narrative*.   Cambridge UP.

Astaphal, S. (2010). Tāpa upanyāsmāabhibyanjitamanawiyarāpaharū[Human Tensions Revealed in the Novel *Tāpa.*]<http://www.pallawa.com.np>.

Bal, M. (2009). *Narratology: Introduction to the theory of narrative*. 3rd ed. University of Toronto Press.

Beauvoir, de S.(1993). *The Second Sex*. Tran & Ed. H. M. Parshley. David Campbell Publisher Ltd.

Belsey, C.& Moore, J.Eds., (1998). *The Feminist reader: essays in gender and the politics of literary criticism*. Macmillan.

Booth, C. W. (1987). *The rhetoric of fiction*. 2[nd]ed. Penguin Books.

Currie, G. (2010).*Narratives &narrators*: *A philosophy of stories*. Oxford UP.

Koirala, K. (2017). Tāpamābyānjitauttaraādhunikanāribādīsoca[Post-modern feminist approach revealed in *Tāpa.*]*Garimā,31*.9, 71-78.

Mishra, I. A. (2018). Dynamics of women's narratives in Nepali novels. Ph.D. dissertation, TU.

Sharma, S. (2012). *Tāpa* [*Heat*.]Sangrila Publication.

Author guidelines

The researchers/ paper writers/ article contributors are requested to strictly follow these author guidelines:

1. The article can be on any topic in any discipline or field of interest, which is related to nature, culture, economy, and society and should be written in the English language.
2. The author should initially submit an abstract in 200 - 300 words including 5-7 key words, which contains their research question(s), objective(s), hypothesis (if any), methodological approach, and the expected finding.
3. The article should contain about 5000 words which may vary depending on the nature of the topic. But book review article can be in about 2500 words. It should strictly follow the latest version of APA Manual style sheet/format.
4. It should be typed in 12 point size Times New Roman fontwith 1.5 inches on the left margin, 1 inch on the right, 1 inch at the top and 1 inch at the bottom.
5. The author should submit the complete manuscript in electronic version before the fixed date. Any submission after the deadline shall not be considered for publication in the current volume/issue/number.
6. Along with the manuscript, the author should submit a letter of interest (LoI) for publication in which they should declare that the article is based on original research and writing and has not been published and considered for publication elsewhere. They should also declare that they shall not hold the Editorial Board responsible for any controversy that may arise from the debatable issue raised by the author. In case of joint authorship both writers can sign on the same LoI. The author should include a brief biography in 50-100 words that contains their academic interests and notable publications, involved institution/ organization, email address and phone number. In case of two or more than two writers, each has to follow this point (see the sample of LoI below).
7. The Editorial Board will initially check the general structure of the manuscript and its compliance with the author guidelines. If the article contains plagiarism, duplication, or any other irregularities against the publication motto, it may automatically be rejected. If it complies with the minimum conditions but needs further improvement, then it will be returned to the author with suggestions on

behalf of editorial board. If it is suitable for review, then it will be forwarded to the peer-reviewers for the review process.

8. The author should assume that the article is subject to editorial scrutiny and necessary change. They should strictly follow comments and suggestions offered by the reviewer(s), or the Editor-in-Chief. They should accept the final decision made by the Editorial Board regarding the publication of the submitted article for the fixed volume/issue/number.

9. The author should follow the notice and information of any change in timetable or guidelines and instructions that can be sent from The Editorial Board from time to time.

Reviewer Guidelines

Peer reviewers are cordially requested to consider the following guidelines while reviewing the manuscripts of the articles.

1. While reviewing the manuscript please consider that *Molung Educational Frontier* publishes high quality articles related to nature, culture, and society and that it aims to add to the existing knowledge and contribute to the policy formulation in governance/management, development, and prosperity of the nation and society as a whole.
2. Please assess if the title is clear and concise and if the abstract reflects the key ideas of the manuscript.
3. Please consider the strength of the manuscript, its significance, its relevance to the context, and if it contains unique information.
4. Please make sure research design and methodologies of the manuscript are consistent with research question(s)/objective(s)/hypothesis.
5. Please assess the style and format of the manuscript in terms of the organization of ideas, presentation, clarity, grammar & spelling, citations, referencing, tables, charts, graphs, etc.
6. Please see if the researcher has followed ethical considerations such as fairness and impartiality. Also identify the points if there is any ideologically bias.
7. Please recommend to the Editorial Board for publication by choosing the best alternative from among the following:
    (a) Accept the manuscript without any change.
    (b) Accept the manuscript with minor revision.
    (c) Accept the manuscript with major revision.
    (d) Reject the manuscript with an option of submission for the next issue.
    (e) Reject the manuscript.
8. Please offer your critical comments and suggestions to the writer at the margin of the manuscript in track change mode as well as at the end of the manuscript that you have reviewed.
9. Any other valuable information?

Signature of the reviewer
Date:

Review Process

1. The Editorial Board (EB) announces a call for papers through a public notice in the website of Molung Foundation and other sources of media stating the time table and deadline for submission of manuscripts.
2. The EB first examines the manuscript in terms of the originality of content, plagiarism, style, and the author guidelines.
3. If the manuscript is found based on original research and if the writer has complied with the guidelines, the EB sends the manuscript to peer reviewer(s) without mentioning the author's name following the principles, norms and values of blind peer review.
4. As the peer reviewer sends back the reviewed manuscript to the EB, it is sent back to the author for revision as per the comments and suggestions of the reviewer (s).
5. Once the author revises the manuscript following the comments and suggestions of the peer reviewer(s), he/she submits the final version of the manuscript.
6. Then the EB examines whether the author has revised the manuscript as suggested by the peer-reviewer and makes final decision regarding the publication.
7. As the manuscript is finally accepted, the EB edits it and sends for web/print for publication.

MOLUNG EDUCATIONAL FRONTIER